PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 88

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
2 DECEMBER—13 DECEMBER 1985

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IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 88**

THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 2 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Rail Investment

1. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many major investment applications by British Rail he has approved over the past year.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Since 2 December last year we have approved seven major investment applications worth £272 million in all.

Mr. Gregory: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that impressive record, which clearly gives the lie to Opposition parties who suggest that we are not investing in the infrastructure. Has my right hon. Friend refused any applications during the period under consideration?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks and I agree that British Rail is going through a high-level investment period, with beneficial results. I have not refused any schemes that BR has put forward, but two schemes—the Bournemouth-Weymouth electrification and the Stansted airport rail link—are still under consideration.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Secretary of State tell the work force and management of British Rail Engineering Ltd. how they can sensibly plan to fall in line with these investment decisions when they can beat the competition hollow yet still see that competition win the contracts that BREL should have?

Mr. Ridley: The winner of any competitive bid is decided by British Rail, and the hon. Lady should address her inquiries to BR. I do not see any harm in keen competition developing to supply the railways. It means that we shall get better and cheaper stock.

Mr. Adley: While perhaps sharing with the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) the view that the railways face unfair criticism in terms of safety and in some other respects, is it not a fact that my right hon. Friend's record on rail investment is impeccable? Indeed, is it not a fact that that record is the best of any Government for the past 20 years? Will he continue to keep me happy by giving an early yes to British Rail about the Dorset electrification to which he referred?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that my hon. Friend will feel that my record is impeccable on all transport matters. I am delighted to accept that the Government have endorsed a high level of investment in BR. I shall not be able to give my hon. Friend an answer about Bournemouth-Weymouth until the studies have been completed.

Mr. Madden: While I am in agreement with and welcome the electrification of the east coast main line, does the Secretary of State appreciate the widespread concern in Bradford about the refusal so far to electrify the line between Bradford and Leeds? Will he consider meeting representatives of Bradford city council on the matter? Will he read the report recently published by the city council and British Rail and sympathetically consider the proposal? Is he aware that if it does not proceed the efforts of the city to overcome the unemployment and economic crises facing it will be that much harder?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows that either I or another Minister will always meet hon. Members who wish to see us. Investment in the railways is decided not by political pressure but by whether the investment makes good sense in terms of the return that is likely from it.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend explain why this investment has meant the inevitable closure of the

Swindon railway works in my constituency — *[Interruption.]* For the benefit of Opposition Members who still fail to understand the point, will he confirm that even if all the investment to which he referred had been awarded in the form of contracts to BREL, it would still not have made any difference to the Swindon works?

Mr. Ridley: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that there are growing signs that British Rail Engineering Limited is likely to begin obtaining substantial orders overseas. It has already obtained some. I think that there is still much business to be hoped for. It should be able to compete for and win orders in world markets as well as in domestic markets. A high level of investment in British Rail has the effect of reducing the need for maintenance and repair, because the new stock is better built, lasts longer and requires less maintenance. Indeed, that is why some of BREL's workshops have had to be slimmed down or closed. The higher the level of investment in the railways, the more that has tended to happen.

Mr. Snape: Will the Secretary of State accept that the recently announced British Rail fare increase of between 8 and 10 per cent. is higher than the rate of inflation, that the workers at Swindon and York could well be employed in building rolling stock for BREL and thereby improve the quality of cross-country rail travel, and that, instead of listening to some of his Back Benchers, who are more anxious to curry favour than to defend the interests of their constituents, he should talk to regular passengers, who are fed up to the teeth with paying higher fares for a declining service?

Mr. Ridley: I do not quite know what the hon. Gentleman can mean by that, since BREL has already won orders to build 170 DMUs and 184 EMUs, and the amount of work at York is certain to keep the staff occupied for at least two years.

There is no question but that the Government's high investment policy is providing jobs for newbuild in BREL, but, as the hon. Gentleman seems to be completely incapable of understanding, the result is that there is less repair and maintenance work, such as was carried out at Swindon.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my right hon. Friend able to say how much of the £272 million is being spent on rolling stock, particularly passenger rolling stock? Could he also say how much of that investment is likely to find itself on the London Midland region?

Mr. Ridley: In reply to my hon. Friend's first question, in the past 18 months, £590 million has been spent by British Rail on investment. Nearly half, £272 million, was devoted to passenger rolling stock. I cannot give details of stock to be used on the line that my hon. Friend mentioned, but I will ask the chairman to give my hon. Friend the information that he seeks.

British Rail Catering

2. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the subject of British Rail catering.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): No, Sir. Railway catering is a matter of management for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Boyes: If the Minister finds an opportunity to meet the chairman and to discuss catering, will he pass on my praise for the courteous and caring way in which British Rail catering staff serve the public, often in difficult circumstances, when they have to solve problems that are not of their creation?

Although I do not generally talk about individuals, Alec Gibb and his crew served the 7 am Durham to London train exceptionally well for many years. Now that they have moved to another line, I am taking the opportunity to thank them, and it cannot be suggested that I am currying any favours.

Mr. Mitchell: I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman's praise for British Rail catering staff. I shall pass on his comments to the chairman. From my experience, in many cases praise is very well deserved.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware that, despite the admitted courtesy and helpfulness of the staff, the standard of catering on British Rail seems to be going steadily downhill? Is this not an area in which privatisation should be encouraged as quickly as possible?

Mr. Mitchell: I assure my hon. Friend that we have asked the chairman of British Rail to obtain more supply and support services from the private sector, including train and station catering.

Mr. Stephen Ross: The last time I was in north Wales the catering was supplied by private caterers who joined the train at Chester. While I agree that the catering has greatly improved, it would be a joy if travellers on British Rail, who are paying huge fares, could get into clean carriages from which all the rubbish, cups and saucers had been removed.

Mr. Mitchell: I travel regularly on British Rail, and I am pleased at the speed with which the staff come in with bags to remove rubbish when the trains arrive at terminus stations. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has had an experience that has not given satisfaction. Other people have praised the private catering services provided on the Welsh line, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to that. I shall pass that comment on to the chairman, as it may encourage British Rail to introduce more private operations.

Light Dues

3. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received following publication of the Arthur Anderson report on light dues.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a large number of comments from individuals and from representative bodies. I am most grateful to all concerned for the thought and attention that they have given to the proposals. I am considering the issues carefully and I shall make a further statement in due course.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the cost of collecting light dues from sea-going yachts will probably be greater than the revenue raised? Does he know of any EEC country that charges such dues and, if not, will Britain be the odd man out? How will my right hon. Friend overcome the difficulty of defining a sea-going yacht?

Mr. Ridley: The cost of administering and enforcing any charge on yachts will depend largely on what measures

the Government decide to take. I have not reached any conclusions on that. I appreciate the problem of the definition of a sea-going yacht, but, again, I have not reached any conclusion. I can tell my hon. Friend, however, that the Republic of Ireland and Greece both charge light dues on shipping.

Inter-city Services

5. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise the provision of fast non-stop services between the cities of Great Britain.

Mr. David Mitchell: The pattern of services on the inter-city rail network is a matter for the British Railways Board.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister agree that the level of services on Inter-city provided by British Rail is appallingly low? On the west coast main line, on which I have been travelling for the whole of the year, I cannot remember one occasion when everything was right; for example, the train was late, the engine failed, the train was overcrowded so that there was standing room only, or there was no restaurant service. Does the Minister accept that that is a matter which goes beyond the day-to-day control of normal Inter-city services provided by the management? What will the Minister do about it?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman's experiences have been much less satisfactory than my own. The matters that he raises are for the chairman of British Rail, to whom we have given objectives to provide an efficient railway service that is reliable, attractive and punctual.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend accept that the British public are increasingly fed up with the exceedingly nasty apple pies served on these trains? Will he do what he can to privatise the services and get rid of the current monopoly?

Mr. Mitchell: I have said already that we are inviting British Rail to obtain more of its services from the private sector. Twice in the past week when I have travelled by British Rail the buffet car has closed one hour before arrival at our destination, so I share the hon. Gentleman's sense of unease and am aware of the advantages to be obtained from private sector operations.

Mr. Flannery: I should like to reiterate the complaints made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) about the St. Pancras line. I am often asked by the Minster why I continually complain. It is because he does nothing about it. The reality is that although the individual train is faster, there are fewer of them, fewer carriages, they are regularly overcrowded, and from Sheffield the train often stops at Chesterfield, Alfreton, Nottingham, Leicester, Kettering, Luton and then London. That adds half an hour to the journey, which is added throughout the day. The trains are slower than they used to be when they ran hourly.

Mr. Mitchell: Those are entirely matters for the management of British Rail. It is the job of Ministers to set objectives for the board. It is for the board to carry them out. If the hon. Gentleman has complaints about the way in which the board is carrying them out, he should address them to the chairman.

Driving Tests

6. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to modify current driving test standards; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): There are no such plans at present.

Mr. Holt: Is my hon. Friend aware that anyone can take a set of driving lessons, pass the driving test without ever having been allowed to drive on a motorway, and thereafter get into the fastest car, go as fast as possible, tow a caravan or a horse box with a couple of horses in it and create mayhem, at night and in the dark? Is it not time that the Ministry took on board the need for training those who will travel on motorways and the need to make motorway driving an integral part of the driving test so that we can lower the carnage on our roads?

Mr. Spicer: The problem with allowing L-drivers on motorways in preparation for a test, as my hon. Friend suggests, is that it would increase the hazard to the other drivers already using the motorways, who are in the majority.

Mr. Higgins: Is my hon. Friend aware that some motoring schools appear to be giving the impression that they can get a driving test arranged at an earlier date than would normally be the case for a private individual applying for a test? Is that true either for the first allocation of a date for cancellations?

Mr. Spicer: I am not aware of the point mentioned by my right hon. Friend, but perhaps he will let me have the details afterwards. I am aware that the waiting lists have increased unacceptably. Our priority is therefore to employ additional examiners to reduce the waiting lists.

7. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many residents of Basildon took a driving test in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I regret that records of driving test applicants are not kept by their places of residence, and therefore that information is not available.

Mr. Amess: In view of the very large number of my constituents taking driving tests and the considerable distances that they have to travel to the nearest test centres, does my hon. Friend understand my constituents' desire to have their own driving test centre in Basildon, now the most dynamic town in the south of England?

Mr. Spicer: I understand that my hon. Friend has been assiduous in making that case on behalf of his constituents, but driving test centres are carefully selected to ensure that test routes around them are not too easy, and we feel that driving conditions in Basildon are not sufficiently difficult. As my hon. Friend knows, there are four centres within 13 miles of Basildon.

Motorways (Fog Warnings)

9. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will consider installing closed circuit television cover in fog prone sections of motorways, linked to more prominent warning signals.

Mr. Ridley: I have no plans to extend television surveillance to deal specifically with fog-prone locations.

Mr. Ross: Does the Secretary of State agree that there have been some tragic accidents in fog on our motorways in the past month or two, including one in the last couple of weeks? It is not time to experiment with more sophisticated closed circuit television systems, which I believe are available, or fog-sensing devices?

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that television is the answer because television cannot see fog in the dark for a start, and that seems to be a fundamental defect. I would even go so far as to say that the motorist is more likely to see the fog than are television cameras. However, we are installing experimental fog detectors. Some have been installed on the Mole valley section of the M25 to see whether they can detect fog in all conditions to alert the police, so that they can illuminate the speed restriction signs.

Mr. Roger King: Is my right hon. Friend prepared to look further at the installation of closed circuit television and advance warning signs, not just to combat fog but to control the increasingly dense traffic flows on the southern part of the M1, where the present signalling system is wholly inadequate?

Mr. Ridley: When high traffic flows result in regular congestion or queues, and where we have complex motorway interchanges, we instal closed circuit televison. That is the right use of it, not for fog.

Mr. Stott: In the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell), who tabled a question about speed limits, is the Secretary of State aware that one of the great problems on our motorways is people who drive at excessive speeds in fog? Is he aware, further, that on Saturday I was on the M1 between Leeds and Sheffield and that some drivers passed me exceeding 70 mph, without lights? Would it have been in order for me to take their numbers and report them to the police?

Mr. Ridley: I have never before been asked a technical and legal question as a Front Bench supplementary question to a question which has not been asked because the hon. Member who tabled it was not present. I agree strongly with the hon. Gentleman that the real problem on our motorways, and our roads in general, is that people drive too fast for the prevailing conditions. There is no subsitute for impressing on people the need for a higher standard of driving, which includes controlling their speed, not just to the limit, but to the conditions. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would be able to substantiate as evidence numbers which he took down while driving at 70 mph down a motorway last Saturday afternoon.

Mr. Maclean: Perhaps I could help my right hon. Friend. Does he agree that the answer to the problem lies not in new technology but in cracking down hard on the murderous maniacs who drive too fast in fog without proper warning lights? Will he encourage the police to prosecute on all occasions when they come across such dangerous lunacy on the motorways?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure my hon. Friend is aware that enforcement by the police of the speed limit and driving laws is entirely a matter for them. However, I agree strongly that we would have a better safety record and fewer crashes on our motorways and roads if people drove more carefully and considerately.

Severn Crossing

10. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the progress made in the feasibility study about the proposal to construct a second Severn crossing.

Mr. David Mitchell: The consultants are continuing their examination of the details of the various options for a second crossing in two corridors south of the existing crossing. They are determining optimum locations for a bridge, a driven tunnel and an immersed tube tunnel, and their links with the motorway network. They are also carrying out engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessments. They have made good progress, and expect to complete their studies by the target date of August 1986.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister say whether he has any plans to authorise the building of a second Severn crossing with private capital? If so, by how much would the tolls be likely to increase, and for how long would they be operated?

Mr. Mitchell: No decision has yet been taken to build a second crossing, so the second point does not arise. However, if we proceed with a second crossing, we shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend accept that that answer will cause some alarm in south Wales? There should be an undertaking to build a second crossing before the turn of the century. Why are the consultants not considering the Wimpey proposal for a barrage, with associated power generation?

Mr. Mitchell: The barrage is a separate matter. Any decision about when and whether to build an additional crossing of the Severn will be taken in the light of studies which are being made of traffic forecasts, and of the necessity to strengthen the existing crossing.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister aware that if what independent forecasters tell us about likely congestion is correct, the decision will have to be made shortly after the date of publication of the report in the autumn? May I take it that the report will be made available to the House when it is published?

Mr. Mitchell: That is a different question. Perhaps I may write to the hon. Gentleman about it.

Mrs. Clwyd: In view of the continuing tailbacks on the Severn bridge — sometimes of several miles — and the fact that industrialists in Wales have said that this is affecting the Welsh economy, will the Minister consider abolishing the tolls?

Mr. Mitchell: There are no plans at present to abolish the tolls on that estuarial crossing.

Motorways (Lighting)

11. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport, out of the allocation for the national road programme in the autumn statement, how much will be spent on lighting on motorways in 1986-87 and 1987-88, respectively.

Mr. Ridley: For 1986-87 the allocation of resources between the various elements of the national road programme has yet to be finalised. Details will be

published in the Supply Estimates. Future years' expenditure on lighting will be determined taking account of the available resources and competing priorities.

My Department's policy on the provision of lighting is currently under review. We are consulting on proposals which would require cost-benefit analysis and environmental assessment of each lighting scheme.

Mr Bruinvels: As joint chairman of the British parliamentary lighting group, I recognise that there is to be a review of motorway lighting, but does my right hon. Friend agree that having only 376 miles of motorway lit is not exactly good news, given that 1,300 miles are still unlit? Will he take note of the views of the Select Committee on Transport which said that lighting unlit stretches of our motorways would reduce night time accidents by 60 per cent.? Is that not the way forward?

Mr. Ridley: No one doubts my hon. Friend's credentials and his commitment to or extreme concern about motorway lighting. However, I am sure he will agree that we must have some form of cost benefit analysis to decide which stretches of road should be lit and which should not. There cannot just be a policy to light the whole of the motorway network. It must be done on a value for money basis, as is done in respect of other improvements to the road network in order to achieve road safety or to avoid congestion.

Mr. Bagier: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that from a road safety aspect alone the lighting of the complete motorway system is highly desirable and ought to be provided for?

Mr. Ridley: No, I do not agree, because there are many other ways in which we can spend money to improve road safety, including the straightening of dangerous bends and junctions. One must make a value for money judgment about the best way to spend the available money, and that does not always mean the provision of lighting.

Small Businesses

12. **Mr. Powley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what new opportunities his Department has created for the development of new small businesses.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Transport Act 1985 has opened up the market for local bus services. British Rail has opened its supply and support services to competition from the private sector, and new business opportunities will be available to taxi operators.

Mr. Powley: I thank my hon. Friend for his informative reply. Will his Department publish the opportunities for bus and taxi companies and where those opportunities will be available? On behalf of small businesses and myself, I thank the Department for the steps that have been taken to improve access on the A11 up to Norwich.

Mr. Mitchell: I assure my hon. Friend that a series of leaflets will be issued to explain the new Act and the opportunities that it provides. The Department's traffic area officers will advise on how to apply for an operator's licence and how to register a local service. There will be an opportunity up to February for anyone to register a new bus service, and from about April onwards there will be opportunities for tendering for revenue supported operations from county and district councils.

Local Authority Airports

13. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received for local authorities concerning his proposal that local authority airports should become Companies Act companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have had discussions with representatives of a number of local authority airports and with the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities and Aerodrome Owners Association. Both these bodies have also been invited to submit written comments.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that when approving future airport companies—for example, in Norwich—it is vital that they should be responsive to small businesses and business generally in the area and that they should be free from any undue political interference?

Mr. Spicer: I confirm that under our present proposals Norwich airport will become a public limited company. I also confirm what my hon. Friend said. Our objective in turning airports, such as Norwich, into public limited companies is that they should be insulated from political interference and, as far as possible, operate as commercial undertakings.

Mr. McCrindle: Is it correct that Manchester international airport would be prepared to change to a public limited company subject to the board of directors' continuing to consist entirely of Manchester city councillors? If so, will my hon. Friend confirm that that does not conform with the idea laid down by the Government?

Mr. Spicer: I confirm that Manchester city has suggested how it might turn the airport into a public limited company. I also confirm that we are dissatisfied with a number of aspects of those proposals; in particular, those which try further to link the city with the airport.

Mr. Anderson: That matter must be seen in the general context of the Government's ideological views on privatisation. Can the Minister tell us of other comparable countries where the major airports are in private hands?

Mr. Spicer: There is no question but that this is a pace-setting venture, which is one reason why so many other countries are full of admiration for what the Government are doing.

Mr. Favell: Has my hon. Friend read the comments made by his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster this weekend about Manchester city council? Can we rely upon my hon. Friend to ensure that the management of Manchester international airport, the region's most important asset, never falls into the hands of Manchester city council?

Mr. Spicer: The Government have no proposals to compel the privatisation of Manchester airport, but they are determined to set up a public limited company which will operate commercially and not be subject to political interference by the city.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that the proposal currently being considered by his Department is to set up a public limited company owned jointly by the Manchester city council and the passenger transport executive, not one

owned wholly by the city council? What representations have been received from airlines, airport users or passengers in Manchester complaining about the present position or the city council's proposals? Why is it necessary to deprive locally elected councillors, of any party, of a say in the future running of an airport into which public money has been ploughed over the years and which has been a credit to municipal enterprise?

Mr. Spicer: The Government's intention has been clearly set out. The local authorities have a choice as to whether they set up joint boards comprised of the districts or a passenger transport authority-based system. It is for the local authorities to decide. The Government say that that decision—which, in the case of Manchester, has been delayed—must be made quickly. If the decision is not made within the foreseeable future—that must mean by the end of this year—the Government will have to insist on a passenger transport authority-based system.

On the hon. Gentleman's general point, we are not convinced, and we suspect that some Labour-controlled authorities may not be convinced, that using taxpayers' and ratepayers' money to support and develop airports is the best way to spend that money. It is much better to allow private enterprise to do so, and a number of Socialist-controlled authorities believe that.

Local Transport (Grants)

14. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the passenger transport executives to discuss the current and prospective level of Government grant for local transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Rate support grant for the metropolitan counties and for the passenger transport authorities that will succeed them will depend on their grant-related expenditure assessments and on their actual expenditure. For the first three years, the new PTAs will be constrained by precept control under the Rates Act 1984, and I am currently considering the authorities' applications for redetermination of their expenditure levels. Other grants are available for public transport capital projects under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that there is considerable concern in Greater Manchester that both the quality and the quantity of bus services will deteriorate as a result of cuts in the grants available to passenger transport executives and the effect of the Transport Act 1985? What specific guarantees can he give that that will not happen? What guarantees can he also give that the light rapid transport system will be allowed to go into operation?

Mr. Mitchell: We are waiting to see and consider all aspects of the light rapid transport system to ascertain whether it represents an economical and sensible use of resources.

With regard to fears about the deterioration of bus services in Manchester, I should have thought that, after the substantial arguments during the passage of the Transport Bill, the people of Manchester would by now have realised that the fears constantly peddled by public representatives in the area have no validity whatever. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has provided the full amounts necessary to allow existing concessionary fares to continue. Advice on revenue support is based on expenditure falling into line with the Public Expenditure Survey Committee provision.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

PCW Syndicate

45. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Attorney-General, in the light of the findings of the disciplinary committee at Lloyd's in the Peter Cameron Webb syndicate case, what steps are being taken to prosecute those involved.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): A strong fraud investigation group is vigorously engaged in seeking the required evidence, but any criminal prosecution must be founded on evidence that is both available and admissible in criminal proceedings in this country. Serious delay has been imposed by the location of certain evidence in a foreign jurisdiction. I hope that that difficulty can be overcome.

Mr. Ross: Is the Solicitor-General aware that at least two of my constituents have lost, or are likely to lose, as much as £200,000 due to the activities of Mr. Peter Cameron Webb and his associates? If it is possible for Lloyd's disciplinary committee to adjudicate on those people and to impose substantial fines and penalties, why is it not possible for the hon. and learned Gentleman's Department and the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring the guilty people before the courts?

The Solicitor-General: I naturally sympathise with all who have lost as a result of the transactions with which the investigations are concerned, but in order to bring proceedings to a successful conclusion in the criminal jurisdiction of this country evidence must be available not only in a form that is admissible in those proceedings but from witnesses who are prepared to attend. That is the distinction.

Mr. Stanbrook: In view of its success in this and other cases, is my hon. and learned Friend satisfied that the fraud investigation group has sufficient funds to continue its good work in these respects?

The Solicitor-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his concern. When the group was set up, it was resourced on a basis sufficient for its expected work load. Those resources are now seriously stretched and are under review.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Whether the fraud investigation squad is big enough and has the right resources is an important question, but can the Solicitor-General assure the House that Lloyd's is co-operating with the investigation group?

The Solicitor-General: Lloyd's is governed by its own legislation in the form of byelaws. The Director of Public Prosecutions is in renewed discussion with Lloyd's as to ways in which Lloyd's can make available transcripts of its disciplinary proceedings without infringing its obligations under its own legislation. The fact that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act comes into force in its material particulars on 1 January next year may well be helpful.

Mr. Dykes: In view of the significant answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr.

Stanbrook), will my hon. and learned Friend now reassure the House, as is logical in the light of what he has said, that the staff of this vital department will be increased to deal adequately with the growing number of fraud cases?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend will know that the issue of resources does not rest exclusively with me. With his long experience in the House, he will appreciate where my hopes lie from the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook).

Mr. Gould: Was the Solicitor-General implying in his answer to the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) that the Lloyd's byelaws somehow impinge upon the obligation of Lloyd's to disclose information that might be relevant to the commission of a criminal offence? If so, does he accept that that is a powerful reinforcement of the argument that Lloyd's cannot be allowed to remain in that position for much longer?

The Solicitor-General: I do not think that the conclusion to the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question is justified by the premise. As I understand it, there are difficulties about the power of Lloyd's to make available a transcript in circumstances in which criminal proceedings are not on foot. The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Director of Public Prosecutions may wish to see transcripts as an aid to his investigation, but he cannot as yet say that proceedings are on foot.

Mr. McCrindle: Has my hon. and learned Friend heard the proposition that even if there is a marginal risk that a prosecution might not succeed, it is sometimes considered to be of sufficient importance to justify some risk being taken?

The Solicitor-General: The DPP's critics are extremely versatile. The Director is criticised when a prosecution ends in an acquittal, on the basis that the evidence could never have been sufficient. He is also criticised for not venturing prosecutions, even though there is a less than 50 per cent. chance of conviction. The guidelines laid down by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, a copy of which is deposited in the Library, make it clear that there should be a better than 50 per cent. chance. I believe that that is in the interests of justice.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Solicitor-General must be aware that 324 serious frauds were reported in the United Kingdom in 1983 and that only 37 led to prosecutions. Does he accept that the allocation of only 16 senior legal assistants to the new fraud investigation group in the Crown Prosecution Service to cover the entire United Kingdom is totally inadequate and will give the general public the impression that the only Act under which fraud will be prosecuted is the old pals' act?

The Solicitor-General: I think that the hon. Gentleman's joke deserved a better laugh than it received. There were 26 persons awaiting trial on indictment in November 1984 and there are 77 now. The principal assistant director drew attention to that in *The Times* last Saturday. That shows sufficiently the Director's determination to prosecute fraud whenever sufficient admissible evidence is available. It shows also that, with the resources presently available to him, he has been getting on with the job. As to whether he needs more resources, I have said to the House what I want to say.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

46. **Mr. Adley** asked the Attorney-General whether he has yet had any discussions with his counterpart in the Eire Government since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Solicitor-General: No, Sir.

Mr. Adley: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that the two Governments have expressed the intention to intensify action against terrorism, which will be, and is, widely welcomed by sane, normal people, certainly in England, Scotland and Wales? Will he take a message from the House, and from most of our constituents, that he and his counterpart in the Government of the Irish Republic have our warm good wishes for success in their stated objectives?

The Solicitor-General: I am deeply grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I believe that reassurance on the agreement between the two Governments will grow as its terms become more widely understood.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Is the Solicitor-General aware that his opposite number has publicly stated that the implications of the agreement go far beyond consultation? Does he agree with that?

The Solicitor-General: My answer is no to both parts of the right hon. Gentleman's supplementary question. The agreement is perfectly explicit. I believe that all concerned — I am certain that this applies to the Attorney-General for the Republic of Ireland — are capable of interpreting and construing both its meaning and effect.

Crown Prosecution Service

47. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement regarding the establishment of the new Crown Prosecution Service.

The Solicitor-General: Good progress has been made towards the establishment of the service in all areas, but especially in the six metropolitan counties and in the counties of Durham and Northumberland, where it will become operational on 1 April 1986. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made the necessary commencement order in respect of those areas last week, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has made the regulations under which the transfer of staff to the new service will be effected. Elsewhere, chief Crown prosecutors have been designated for 24 out of 25 areas, and they are actively planning the structure of the service in those areas.

Mr. Brown: The Solicitor-General will recall that at Question Time on 1 July 1985, the Attorney-General assured me that it was the Government's intention that it should be a

"properly remunerated service which will attract talented people and offer a good career structure."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 13.]

How can that assurance be reconciled with the staff transfer regulations tabled last Friday, which reduce the wage rate in the new service from what is currently paid? How can such Dickensian meanness be reconciled with the Prime Minister's statement that no resources will be spared in the fight against crime?

The Solicitor-General: I have always said to the House—and it has been the consistent view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General—that we must offer such terms and conditions as will attract, retain and motivate people of the necessary high quality. Equally, we must ensure that the taxpayer is not presented with a tax bill that is higher than necessary. We had some experience of that with previous reorganisations. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I was recently able to offer improved terms. We have reached the point at which those two objectives can be achieved.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the threat to the integrity of the dual profession system that is posed by the Crown Prosecution Service, which will inevitably try to press the frontiers of rights of audience further than has hitherto been acceptable? Will my hon. and learned Friend give an undertaking that the Government will resist these pressures?

The Solicitor-General: The Government's position has been expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in accepting the advice of the Benson Royal Commission that the professions should continue to have divided functions. That remains the position of the Government, and I see no danger of the sort to which my hon. and learned Friend referred. It is in the public interest, which is the only criterion that counts, that matters should remain as they are.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South Africa

48. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the South African Development Corporation conference in the light of the political situation in South Africa.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): We give our support to this organisation, especially to its work in improving regional economic links. We have already pledged £12 million towards such projects. I plan to attend the next SADCC meeting wih donors, which takes place in Zimbabwe in January.

Mr. Holland: We are delighted to hear that the Minister will be at the Zimbabwe meeting. Presumably he is aware that SADCC estimates costs of at least £1,000 million from the destabilisation in the front-line states caused by South Africa. Can he assure the House that there will be a significant net increase in the United Kingdom's contribution to SADCC over and above what he has said? Does he dissociate himself from the Prime Minister's remarks, before she went to Nassau, that the front-line states could not expect any increased aid in the event of biting sanctions taking effect?

Mr. Raison: I am considering the possibility of further assistance and whether I can announce anything of that sort at the SADCC meeting. However, there is no doubt that sanctions would bite heavily on many SADCC member countries, and one would have to think hard before coming to the view that that was a good thing.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Department or the Commonwealth have any contingency plans to deal with such an occurrence?

Mr. Raison: No, Sir.

Ethiopia (RAF Aid)

49. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the cost of the Royal Air Force's contribution in distributing emergency aid in Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement about its future role in such situations.

Mr. Raison: As I announced last week, the British airlift, which has made such a magnificent contribution to relief operations in Ethiopia since November 1984, will be discontinued in the latter part of December. I expect the cost to have been about £21 million by the time the operation ends. The services have also made a valuable contribution to the recent relief operations in Mexico and Columbia. I am sure that the Ministry of Defence will continue to do all it can in the future.

Mr. Chapman: I applaud the initiative taken by the Government. Has my right hon. Friend estimated the number of lives that the airlift has saved? Will he confirm that the airlift is being withdrawn because there are sufficient lorries available for the distribution of food, and that roads that were impassable are again capable of use?

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend has stated the reasons for withdrawing the airlift. I cannot give a realistic figure for the number of lives that have been saved, but about 31,000 tonnes of food aid have been airlifted over the past year, and the Royal Air Force has flown on average 10 hours every day since November 1984 — a remarkable performance.

Mr. Stephen Ross: I add my congratulations to the RAF on its magnificent achievement. In view of the terrible happenings in Colombia and Mexico, is there not a case for this relief work to be put on a more permanent basis, if only in reserve?

Mr. Raison: If the hon. Gentleman reflects, he might feel that that is wrong. The valuable part of our contribution in Latin America has been the fact that we have been able to draw on the forces in Belize to operate rapidly. We could not possibly have forces dotted across the world for such a purpose.

Mr. Bowen Wells: I add my congratulations to the RAF, which has set such a fine example to all people in assisting those in dire need and famine conditions. In future, does my right hon. Friend intend to use more charter aircraft, in particular, to help Sudanese famine victims, where we also contributed Hercules transport planes for use as a bridge from east to west Sudan?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his tribute to the RAF, which the House shares. Army air dispatchers have also played a valuable part in the airdrop operations in Ethiopia. It is true that we have used charter aircraft in the Sudan. It is our job to judge what is best and most suited to any emergency that may arise.

Mr. Fisher: Before the Minister made his decision to withdraw this excellent assistance, did he manage to have any discussions with the Ethiopian Government to assure himself that the most remote areas, which have received assistance by this route, will continue to get grain? Contrary to what the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) said, some areas on the higher plateaux cannot be reached by road.

Mr. Raison: I saw the head of the Ethiopian relief and rehabilitation commission, Major Dawit, and he told me that he had no compiaint about our decision. There are and always will be remote areas, but I am satisfied that our decision is right and humane.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

50. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government plan to make a further contribution to the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present United Kingdom contribution to the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and if he intends to increase this.

Mr. Raison: We have so far contributed £30·9 million to IFAD. Negotiations in respect of the next replenishment, to cover the years 1985 to 1987, are still not completed. If and when that replenishment is agreed, the Government plan to contribute to it the same percentage of the OECD share as we contributed to the first replenishment.

Mr. Baker: That answer is welcome to many of us. Does my right hon. Friend agree that Third world countries want help in developing agriculture? Will he try to ensure that, as a proportion of our total aid, our contribution to this fund is increased in future years?

Mr. Raison: I agree that the development of agriculture is a high priority throughout the Third world. IFAD does a good job, but I remind my hon. Friend that the more we put into multilateral agencies such as this, the less is available for our own bilateral programme, which also does a good job, and which, unlike IFAD, is overwhelmingly targeted on poor countries and on giving grants rather than loans.

Mr. Deakins: In view of the rapid population growth in many parts of Africa, should we not both multilaterally and bilaterally give much greater priority to resources for raising domestic food production? Should that not be a top priority in all our programmes?

Mr. Raison: Yes, I agree that the raising of domestic food production in these African countries is one of the principal targets of my Department and also of the European Community.

Famine (Prevention)

52. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans for the expansion of those scientific units of his Department whose work concerns the prevention of famine.

Mr. Raison: I have no present plans for their expansion.

Mr. Spearing: If, as the Minister has just said to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), increasing food production is one of the principal targets of Her Majesty's Government, why have they cut research services at the Tropical Development and Research Institute and the Land Resources Development Centre? Is he aware that the latter has had to turn down applications for work on preventing famine? Would not one tenth, or even one twentieth, of the sum properly spent on the RAF work in Ethiopia transform the work of these departments and restore the Government's cuts?

Mr. Raison: There have been cuts in our scientific units, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, but they are still capable of doing an extremely valuable job. They have never been able to take on all the work that they have been asked to do. Obviously there are limitations on their resources. However, I assure the House that we value them highly, and their work is a valuable complement to the emergency relief work that we do.

Disasters (Relief Aid)

54. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied that his Department is able to respond rapidly with relief aid to disasters.

Mr. Raison: Experience in Africa, Mexico, Colombia and elsewhere has shown that my Department, and in particular our disaster unit, is well able to respond rapidly and effectively.

Mr. Knowles: May we have an assurance that that also applies to the EC, because liaison is often necessary?

Mr. Raison: The EC does not have a disaster unit as such. On the other hand it has, with a good deal of prodding from ourselves, very much strengthened its ability to provide emergency relief over the past year.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) was not present when his question was called and we went on to the next question. The Opposition spokesman was then allowed to refer to that question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know, and I should not have allowed it.

Liverpool City Council

3.31 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with Liverpool city council or its advisers about the financial arrangements made by the city council for the remainder of the current financial year.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I have consistently refused to have any discussions with Liverpool city council. My officials have informed the city council and the commercial organisations concerned that deferred purchase arrangements undertaken by local authorities do not require Government approval and that such arrangements carry no Government guarantee.

Mr. Alton: Can the Secretary of State confirm that the payment of nearly £30 million in interest on the loan will, when added to Liverpool's existing debt of £700 million, not only mortgage Liverpool up to the hilt but give it the dubious distinction of becoming the district council with the biggest council debt in Britain? What assurances are being given by the council to Phillips and Drew about balancing the city council's books next year, especially in view of the comments of Mr. Tony Mulhearn, the president of the unlamented and late district Labour party, that the Militants in Liverpool intend to plunge the city into chaos again next year?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also confirm that that interest is at a higher rate than that offered by the Public Works Loan Board? What questions has he asked about the source of that funding, which comes via Swiss clearing banks, which are notoriously the providers of some of the dirtiest money in the world? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that as serious questions remain unanswered about rate support grant and housing investment programmes, he should now meet a delegation of leaders from all the parties in Liverpool?

Mr. Baker: I have no standing in the relationship between Liverpool city council and its financial advisers. The council agreed this year's budget only last Friday, let alone settling next year's budget, but again that is a matter for Liverpool city council. The people of Liverpool have been bought a breathing space at great future cost, which will start coming through in 1987-88. It is the old Socialist solution—borrow, borrow, borrow now; pay, pay, pay later.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people, not just in Liverpool, but throughout Merseyside, view with considerable suspicion the fudged agreement that Liverpool city council has been able to come up with and see it merely as a postponement of the inevitability of the bankruptcy of Liverpool?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right to be concerned. This is a postponement. The city council refused to treat seriously most of the Stonefrost report's recommendations. As I have already made clear, this is only postponing the day of reckoning for Liverpool.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is it not clear that the money that Liverpool city council has been forced to borrow from Swiss banks should have come from Government sources, and that the reason for the crisis in Liverpool is the Government's policy? Over a period of time the Government have deliberately refused to meet the city council to discuss the matter and have tried to bankrupt the city for political gain. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that if the Liberal party's proposals had been accepted last Friday Liverpool would have been back to square one and would have run out of money?—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] Hon. Members may say "Nonsense", but if they and the creeps in the Liberal party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will rephrase that remark.

Mr. Heffer: If the hon. Gentleman and the honourable creeps in the Liberal party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is better, but not good enough.

Mr. Heffer: If I am allowed to say "crawlers", Mr. Speaker, I shall say so. They are responsible for what has happened.

May I also draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to an interesting article in today's edition of *The Guardian*, by Geoff Andrews? It illustrates how Liverpool is at last beginning to deal with its housing problems. Would it not be better for the Government and other right hon. and hon. Members to concentrate on supporting Liverpool city council, instead of attacking it?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman seeks to lay blame other than where it should truly lie. He seeks to blame the Liberals, whether they are creeping or crawling. He seeks to blame the Government, although they were the subject of a campaign of direct blackmail. The councillors of the city of Liverpool must be responsible for putting their own house in order. They have conducted a sustained campaign of blackmail against the Government. No effort has been spared in this campaign to hit the employees, to crush the voluntary sector and to endanger the welfare of the people of Liverpool. Everything has to be sacrificed to promote the ambition and to flatter the vanity of a few councillors.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): Is not one of the outstanding features of this settlement the fact that the people of Liverpool will have to carry a future burden for present advantage? Will my right hon. Friend draw attention to other councils which are stacking up future difficulties for exactly the same reason?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is prescient, and he is correct to be worried about what I believe is implied in his question—the tactics that might be used by the city of Manchester. If councils get up to dubious financial tricks, they will solve nothing. They are not facing the responsibility of running their cities efficiently, fairly and properly. They cannot shuffle off that responsibility.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that Liverpool faces massively serious problems over and above the grotesque activities of the Militant Tendency? Is he aware that job losses in the area since his party came to power have been double the national average? As a budget settlement has now been reached, what new action do the Government intend to take to help Liverpool andthe surrounding area?

Mr. Baker: The rate support grant system recognises the inner city deprivation that faces Liverpool. Of all metropolitan districts, the city of Liverpool has the second

highest grant-related expenditure assessment. The Government recognise that problem. They have provided the city of Liverpool with £30 million over and above its grant entitlement for the Merseyside task force and for city projects, some of which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, have been undertaken in his constituency. In addition, I provide an extra £20 million a year for the docklands development corporation. For the area of Merseyside, which is broader than the city of Liverpool, Government agencies and Departments provide about £1 billion a year, of which £400 million is spent in the city of Liverpool.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his steadfastness in not becoming involved in the internal Labour party political squabble is much welcomed? Will he confirm that the only way—*[Interruption.]* in which the city of Liverpool will attract real wealth and jobs is by——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Rachmanite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not say that.

Mr. Winnick: It is true, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only way in which the city of Liverpool will attract real jobs, wealth and prosperity is if the city council runs its affairs on truly democratic and accountable lines?

Mr. Baker: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. If I had not stood fast in this matter but had shown that I was prepared to negotiate or give way, it would have been a very bad day for local government in our country. Every council would have known that it could use such revolutionary tactics, the purpose of which was to create chaos in Liverpool and suffering for its people.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): As the Minister referred to Manchester, may I remind him that Manchester runs a very successful municipal airport—probably the most successful in the country—which contributes to the rates of the city? How, therefore, can the Minister justify taking that airport away from the city of Manchester?

Mr. Baker: I think that that question goes a little wide, and it was dealt with in the abolition debate.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): Is my right hon. Friend aware that thousands of my constituents, who have seen billions of pounds of public money poured into Liverpool, will be relieved at the Government's robust approach to the issue?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. If the Government had decided in any way to give in to Liverpool, there would have been repercussive effects upon the whole of local government finance. Many councils made it clear that they did not want me in any way to accommodate Liverpool's demands, and many of those councils are under Labour control.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Is the Minister aware that it is not only Manchester that seems intent on following the Liverpool example? Are not a number of London boroughs now well down the Liverpool road? When they run out of money, will they, too, conclude one of these curious deals with the gnomes of Zurich? If so, will that not drive a coach and horses through the Government's much professed claim about controlling local government spending?

Mr. Baker: In the past, such deals have usually been entered into by local authorities for relatively small sums for bridging finance. As has been made clear today by several hon. Members, that is a very imperfect—and I think fundamentally wrong — approach to local government finance, because it postpones the day of reckoning and means that the costs will be very much higher when they begin to come through — which I believe will be within two years for Liverpool.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, even at the supposed height of the financial crisis, Liverpool city council was able to scratch together sufficient money to pay the bailiffs who were about to repossess Councillor Hatton's official car? Does my right hon. Friend not find that a strange priority for the city council?

Mr. Baker: I now find little strange in the decisions of Councillor Hatton, but I agree that that was one of the more bizarre events of the past few days.

I understand that Councillor Hatton was, at one time, intending to appear in a Christmas pantomime. He does not have to wait until Christmas—he has been running a pantomime for the past year, but has had to withdraw because even the front end of the horse objected.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Secretary of State aware that since 1979 this Government have given to the better-off almost £12,000 million through capital transfer tax, capital gains tax and other concessions? Is he further aware that the argument in Liverpool is about £25 million—a small sum compared with £12,000 million? Had the Government forked out that money earlier this year, rather than giving massive tax concessions to the better off in society, there would have been no problems in Liverpool and no deficit budget strategy. Indeed, the problems of the city would be en route for solution.

Mr. Baker: The question is not just one of £25 million. It was a deliberate and sustained attempt to undermine the whole of the local government finance system—*[Interruption.]*—and that system was approved by the House of Commons. It is not unreasonable to expect local authorities to implement and approve arrangements agreed by this House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman should get his priorities right.

Mr. Baker: I would have said that that was getting my priorities right.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): If there are maggots in the body politic of Liverpool, there is warble fly in the body politic of Leicester. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that those two groups of pests do not get together and sting the long-suffering ratepayer in Leicester?

Mr. Baker: My hon. and learned Friend's knowledge of the insect world is greater than mine, but I have no doubt that, not in all but in several councils in our towns and cities, very Hard Left Left-wing councillors are being adopted. I only hope that people will have seen what

[Mr. Baker]

happens when the militants get in control, as in Liverpool, and that they will not seek to drive their cities and towns down that road.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Now that the city council in Liverpool has balanced its budget, will the Secretary of State agree to meet the leader of the city council so that the future problems of the city, which are far from resolved, may be discussed? Will he, in particular, agree to review the historically low target for expenditure, which is the root cause of the city's financial problems, as was highlighted by the Stonefrost report?

Does the Secretary of State recall his announcement of 20 November on housing investment cuts—cuts for the sixth successive year—and does he recognise that such cuts can only make a very serious situation in the city of Liverpool even worse? Will he refrain from misleading the House and the country by suggesting that the Government are concentrating their resources on the inner cities, when, for example, since 1979 Liverpool has lost almost £400 million in rate support grant and gained just under £80 million in urban programme, which is a net loss to the city's income of £320 million? It is untrue to suggest, as the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting, that somehow the Government have been bringing resources to the inner cities, when consistently they have been taking them away.

In view of the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury — *[Interruption.]* We understand why Conservative Members do not like even the Church condemning what the Government are doing in the inner cities. In view of the archbishop's report—which is just the latest in a long line of damning indictments of the Government's inner city policy — will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the impact of the cuts on Britain's inner cities, and change policy?

Mr. Baker: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's point on housing is that one of the most distressing aspects of the whole Liverpool saga of the last year has been the way in which Liverpool city council has conducted a vendetta against the housing co-operative movement in Liverpool, a movement which we have strongly supported — *[Interruption]*—with resources. We shall be providing resources for the development in Eldon street.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I would meet the leader of Liverpool city council — [HON. MEMBERS: "Which leader?"] They have an elected leader, who, I believe, is rather busy on Mr. Hatton's closed circuit television. I have always said that I should be willing to meet a delegation of members from Liverpool city council when they behave reasonably and legally, which is the position that I have with all other councils in the land.

The hon. Member went on to ask about providing resources for Liverpool. Some of the grant has been lost as a result of Liverpool city council refusing to run its services efficiently. Indeed, its services are about 30 per cent. more inefficiently run than those of the average metropolitan district.

The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Bishop of Liverpool and the Archbishop of Liverpool wrote an article in *The Times* in which they deplored the confrontation, which has to a great extent been manufactured by the Militant leadership of the city council. The bishops pointed to Militant's intransigence and unwillingness to engage in serious dialogue. I am glad to say that that is a matter on which I find myself at one with the Church.

Housing (Church of England Report)

3.50 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the report of the Church of England commission on urban priority areas".

The report deals with the comprehensive and catastrophic failure of Government policies in our cities in housing, in matters of poverty, taxation and employment, and in other fields.

The whole nation should thank the established Church of England for its objective investigation into the problems of our inner cities, and not least for its condemnation of the divisive and manifestly unfair housing policies pursued in the past six years. This highly objective report was undermined——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman should learn that he cannot intervene on a motion of this kind.

I was about to say that the report underlines and supports two opinions expressed by royal princes, Prince Philip and Prince Charles, on the very matters that I have raised.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that we do not bring members of the Royal Family into our arguments in this place.

Mr. Hamilton: I understand that, Mr. Speaker. I think the House is well aware of the point to which I am referring.

No one can doubt that the problems referred to are specific and manifold. They are laid out in detail in *The Times* today, and effectively reply to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who attempted to intervene. The Government were given advance copies of the report as a matter of courtesy, and with typical arrogance, brutality and intolerance they decided to jump the gun and to savage and rubbish the report before its official appearance tomorrow. The Government's response to the report is as damaging and as offensive as their reponse to the Duke of Edinburgh's report on the same matter. The Government's response is to savage the messenger rather than the policies on which the commission commented.

That all the matters referred to in the report are urgent cannot be in dispute. On every day that passes the decay in our inner cities goes on remorselessly, and it is there for everybody to see, except those who refuse to see it—the Ministers concerned. The decline and decay are worrying to everyone in the country, excpet Ministers. The Government are flying in the face of reality and of all the evidence that is available to every hon. Member, whatever his or her constituency.

It is rather significant that *The Times* reports today that

"Government reaction"—

that is, to the report—

"now appears to be in marked contrast to the high level of co-operation the commission received from Government Departments, five of which submitted evidence."

That is sufficient condemnation of the Government in round terms.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that you will refuse my request, on the ground that the criticism of the Government is so comprehensive as to be encompassed in a future debate —an inquest into the failure of the Government in the past six years in all the matters to which I have referred. Nevertheless I ask you to enable us to debate the report as a matter of urgency, because it will not go away. There are bound to be some debates on it in the course of the next few months.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the report from the Church of England concerning the failure of the Government's inner city and housing policies."

In his concluding statement the hon. Gentleman said that he thought there would be many debates on the matter in the future. I have listened to what he has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Restrictive Trade Practices (Services) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Orders of the Day

Dockyard Services Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.56 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During business questions on Thursday I raised with the Leader of the House the question of the provision of a report that is available to members of the Select Committee on Defence if they choose to go to a room upstairs and read it. It is a restricted report, but it is also available to the contractors.

I shall quote from phase I of the Touche Ross report to put my point of order into context. It

"constitutes an interim stage in a process which will eventually result in a significantly——"

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the report being given as evidence to a Select Committee? The hon. Gentleman should not quote from a report that is before a Select Committee.

Mr. Douglas: I understand that the phase I report is available in the Library of the House. It is generally available and is not restricted.

Mr. Speaker: What then is the point of order?

Mr. Douglas: I am trying to put my request into context. I shall begin the quotation again. The report

"constitutes an interim stage in a process which will eventually result in a significantly longer and more detailed report. This full report, referred to herein as phase II, will attempt to provide prospective contractors with comprehensive background information to assist the preparation of bids for the operation of Rosyth/Devonport dockyards."

The phase II report, which is classified and is available to Members of the Select Committee, is also available to those who are making bids for the dockyard, on the basis that they need to know the nature of the assets for which they will be bidding. The House requires equivalent information before it can adequately ascertain the nature and purpose of the Bill the Second Reading of which the Minister is anxious to begin.

I appreciate that some of the information is likely to be classified, because I have read the document and know that it contains some biographical detail. The Minister is furrowing his forehead, but I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to examine the report before the Committee stage or, more appropriately, before we go any further with the Bill. I ask that the full content of the phase II report be made available to the House so that we can have the same information as is available to those in private sector industry, who may or who may not be friends of the Minister, and who are bidding for those vital public assets.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the point raised by the hon. Gentleman is a matter for me. If the report is before a Select Committee——

Mr. Douglas: It is not.

Mr. Speaker: If it is not, and if, as the hon. Gentleman said, other hon. Members can refer to it, I cannot see that there is any point of order for me. The report is available. I do not understand what the point of order is about.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is true that a small number of hon. Members can go and see the report, but the overwhelming mojority of hon. Members are not allowed to see it. One understands that there are circumstances in which that must be so, because some reports must be restricted, but what conceivable justification is there for denying to any hon. Member of the House information that will be circulated round the offices of some companies? If it is freely available in the offices of a company, it cannot be all that sensitive, and thus it should be available to hon. Members. Is it suggested that hon. Members are less trustworthy than clerks in the offices of a company?

Mr. Speaker: I am sympathetic to the point of arder, but I have to repeat that it is not a matter for me. It is up to the Government to make reports available.

4.2 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): I am not sure whether this is a point of order, Mr. Speaker, but it is common for certain information to be available to defence contractors, or potential defence contractors, which is not widely available to the House of Commons. Sometimes classified information is available to Select Committees, particularly the Select Committee on Defence, which is not available to the House as a whole. That is the explanation. I shall look at the point that has been raised and see what information can be made available to the House. I do not make a commitment, but I shall see what can be done.

Mr. Speaker: I call the Minister to move the Second Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Lamont: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I apologise to the House for the absence of the Secretary of State, who has to be abroad today at an important and long-standing NATO meeting. He has given his apologies to the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am sorry to interrupt at such an early stage, but the apology should be not only to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench but to the House. It is an extraordinary state of affairs. If it was known for a long time that there was an important engagement for the Secretary of State to attend, the debate could have been held on another day. Did the Minister's Department make a request to the Leader of the House for the date to be changed so that the Secretary of State could be here to present his Bill? Some of us remember the controversy over the Bill. For the right hon. Gentleman not to be here is a gross act of discourtesy to the House of Commons. We should like to hear the explanation.

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend has to be at a NATO defence planning meeting, which is an unavoidable commitment. There have been discussions through the usual channels about the timing of the debate. There were also discussions about extending the debate from the original half day to a whole day. That has contributed to the problem.

Hon. Members will recall that my right hon. Friend made his statement on 23 July on the future of the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth. He explained why the Government were convinced that the right way to proceed was for the Government to introduce private management into the royal dockyards, while the Government retained ownership of the fixed assets. The Government, in effect,

would be leasing the assets to commercial managers. Since that announcement, and despite further discussion, it remains the Government's view that, of the various options, private management under fixed-term contracts provides the greatest incentive to improving efficiency and reducing operating costs. The purpose of the Bill is to enable the Government to proceed with those plans.

Ever since the Government came to office in 1979 we have attached the highest importance to improving and making more adequate the defences of the United Kingdom. For that reason, defence spending is over 20 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979, of which the Government and their supporters are justifiably proud, but adequate defences are not ensured simply by increasing spending. That is not the only way in which to increase the security of the country. The Government, through their procurement policies, introducing new competition, and through their policies for improving the management of defence establishments, have been determined that within our large defence budget there should be increasing value for money. That means looking at the ways in which we have customarily conducted defence business, and also that in certain areas we must face the need for change.

Over the past 15 years there have been many studies of the organisation of the dockyards, for example, the Mallabar report and the Speed report. The Public Accounts Committee has produced several reports, the Select Committee on Defence has produced reports, and there have been others. There have been many different recommendations, but all have agreed on the nature of the problems facing the dockyards. Everyone has agreed that there is room for improvement and that changes are necessary. Even the trade unions have said that they consider that there is a need for improvement. Even the Plymouth chamber of commerce, which, I freely admit, has been opposed to the Government's proposals, has said that at worst Her Majesty's dockyard is wasteful and non-competitive. On both sides there has been recognition of the need for improvement.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Minister aware that that is not the case at all? Many people who agree with the Minister's philosophy about privatisation, and many who share the Government's views on defence, are opposed to the change in the status of the dockyards. They do not agree that it is worth while.

Mr. Lamont: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman was listening to what I was saying. I did not say that all the reports agreed with the Government's conclusions. I said that they had all analysed the problem and said that improvements were necessary in the operation of the dockyards. That is incontestable.

The Government believe that changes in three areas must be the basis of any new arrangements that are designed to bring about an improvement. First, the dockyards, as suppliers, must be separated from the fleet, as customers. Secondly, accounting procedures need to be introduced that will reflect normal commercial practice so that we know precisely the performance of the yards and the exact costs of meeting the fleet's requirements. Thirdly, local managers should be given more authority to manage. It is against those criteria that we have judged the different options.

We set out those options for change in an open government defence document in April this year. The options in that document range from full privatisation to a trading fund. We made it clear that our preferred option was the introduction of private commercial management. We made it clear that we were prepared to consider alternatives, but that those alternatives would have to be measured against the three criteria that I have described.

The publication of that open government document marked the beginning of a period of consultation, which lasted just under three months. Before that there had been reactions to Mr. Levene's report, which had been leaked, and discussions for many years on the basis of the reports to which I referred. All interested parties were able to express their views. The Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee published reports in time for us to be able to take them into account.

Although there was considerable criticism of the Government's proposals, the Government — as the Government are entitled to do — did not consider that any of the other options or any of the arguments put forward gave the same benefits in terms of the probability of improving efficiency, improving work practices and giving value for money. Once the Government had made it clear that they were determined to change the dockyards, many people and bodies then favoured change, although I doubt whether that willingness to change would have existed if the Government had not been determined to face the problem, which had been acknowledged in the past but which previous Governments had never faced.

I shall now refer to the provisions of the Bill and to the areas of anxiety to the House and the work force. The Bill is limited. The concept of introducing private management is that contractors will tender to complete work in progress and for a programme of refit work for a period of seven years. The Government intend to set up two companies to operate each of the two dockyards, on or before vesting day, which is intended to be in April 1987. The management and work force associated with the dockyards would be transferred to those two companies. On vesting date, the commercial managers, selected by competition, would take over the companies and transfer their top and supporting management to them. The Ministry of Defence would then place contracts for the repair and refitting of ships with those companies.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): As this is an enabling Bill, will the Minister tell the House what percentage of the total amount of dockyards' work will be subjected to tender? Will it be more, or less, than 50 per cent.?

Mr. Lamont: I shall deal with that in a moment. Perhaps I could develop my argument, but if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to interrupt me, I shall give way again.

Clause 1 governs the transfer of persons employed in the dockyards from Crown employers to a company formed under the Companies Acts, which would then become the employer.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lamont: I should like to proceed a little further.

Under clause 1, that company could be an employing or a management company. Those who have followed the matter in detail will know that we considered having two companies for each dockyard—an employing company and an operating company. That is consistent with the wording of the Bill, but the Government intend that there should be one company—an operating company—for

[Mr. Lamont]

each dockyard. Trade unions and potential contractors made representations to us about that, and the Government responded by changing their view.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister presents the case that the Government are opting for an operating company for each dockyard as if it were almost crystallised. For the benefit of the House, will he state the Government's thinking that led them to choose operating companies rather than employing companies with some corporate management structure?

Mr. Lamont: The structure is simpler. Potential contractors and some trade unions felt that it was simpler and would give them a greater sense of security. That is why the Government changed their mind.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Minister spoke of one operating company per dockyard, which means that the Government have excluded any possibility of splitting a dockyard into more than two or three separate parts with separate companies. Will he confirm that important point?

Mr. Lamont: It is certainly our intention that there should be one company for each dockyard. I have not considered the option of splitting the dockyards, and, as far as I am aware, that is not under consideration.

Before I develop in more detail precisely how the Government intend to proceed, I shall deal briefly with the other clauses.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lamont: I have given way many times.

Mr. Rees: I only want to ask a short question. Clause 1(1) refers to

"the qualified dockyard service employees,"

who, in my day, were subject to both sections 1 and 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. They receive information about vessels, which is of importance to the Soviets and others, as the Americans are showing us. There is nothing in the Bill about the transference of those employees and whether they will remain subject to and have to sign a bit of paper under the Official Secrets Act, section 1—the spying clause—and section 2. If the matter is dealt with later in the Bill, I have asked my question at the wrong time, but does the Act apply?

Mr. Lamont: That is not specified in the legislation, but obviously it is an important point. The same procedures as would normally apply to private defence contractors will apply. I do not foresee any great difficulties about that.

Clause 2 provides that all land at present in the dockyards will, even after vesting day, and regardless of any rights which the contractor might otherwise have, be treated as Crown land for the purposes of the continued rights and powers of the Ministry of Defence police to operate in the dockyard. Clause 2 also ensures that a contractor does not acquire security of tenure if intentionally or otherwise he obtains the tenancy of dockyard land.

Clause 3 provides for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to incur expenses in setting up and operating Companies Act companies to provide dockyard services, and, for example, at the end of a fixed-term contract, or in time of tension or war, to assume the liabilities of the company.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): As my hon. Friend moved rapidly from clause 2 to clause 3, he told us of the powers that the Ministry of Defence police would have. Will the Devon and Cornwall constabulary have duties in respect to Devonport, for which it must make financial provision, but which it does not at present have in respect of the royal dockyard?

Mr. Lamont: I do not think that that will be the case, because the military police will carry on in the same way. I shall certainly investigate my hon. Friend's point, and if I can give him any further information, I shall certainly do so.

Clause 1 allows the Secretary of State to transfer the ownership of each of the companies that he sets up to a third party, the contractor, who then operates the dockyards on his account. Clearly the selection of the third party concerns the House, and I shall describe the approach that the Government will adopt.

No commitment will be entered into until the Bill has received Royal Assent. *[Interruption.]* This is big of me, is it not? There have been accusations that the Government were about to do that. Subject to satisfactory progress on the legislation, we shall in the spring issue an invitation to tender for the operation of each of the two dockyards. The tender will cover a period of seven years and will identify a core programme of work for each dockyard. That programme will be sufficient to make each dockyard viable, and, at the beginning, will certainly be equal to the present load of the two dockyards. It will be equivalent to some 70 per cent. of the refit programme.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Will my hon. Friend make it clear that the Government have an open mind about the period of time involved? Is he aware that many of his hon. Friends feel that seven years is too short, and that 10 years would be more realistic, with a review after five years? Seven years is a tight period, considering the huge challenge that the management will face.

Mr. Lamont: The Government originally thought of a five-year period, which we have already extended to seven years. I should have thought that a seven-year period was sufficient to judge the performance of a contractor. We want the contractor to be subject to competition pressure, to have an incentive, and to wonder whether his contract will be renewed. That is one of the main purposes of the Bill. I shall consider my hon. Friend's point, but seven years is a fairly long period.

For the early years of the contract the core will be defined fairly precisely. For the later years it will inevitably be indicative of the work that we expect to be offered to each dockyard. I am sure hon. Members will appreciate that a ship refitting programme of the scope and complexity of that of the Royal Navy inevitably changes and that there is no way in which we can guarantee, in 1986, that a particular amount of work will be needed on a particular ship in 1993. However, the broad shape and volume of the core programme can be laid down in the tender documents. The remainder of the naval programme will also be defined in the tender, but only for information at this stage, as it will be available for consultation between whichever United Kingdom companies wish to bid.

In responding, companies will be expected to put forward detailed proposals in two areas. First, there will be management proposals. The companies will have to submit in detail what their management proposals are, what the qualifications will be of those they intend to appoint to run the dockyards, and what their precise proposals are for reducing costs and increasing efficiency. We shall look at the financial standing of the companies, and we shall need to be satisfied that they are capable of doing the job.

Secondly, part of the tender exercise will be to examine the extent to which the bidder is prepared to put himself at risk. We shall therefore be looking at the pricing proposals. Our intention is that work entering the dockyards should increasingly be negotiated on a fixed price basis rather than on a cost plus basis. We expect that after 18 months or two years about 75 per cent. of the work in the dockyards will be done on that basis. Obviously it will take time to achieve that, and we shall want to look at the pricing proposals for the early period as well. Therefore, bidders' proposals will be evaluated for their commitment and management and price competitiveness.

We intend that the successful bidders should be identified in the autumn of 1986, and at the end of the year there would then be a short period of parallel running with the current management to ensure a smooth transition in April 1987 to full commercial management. At that time, my right hon. Friend would transfer to the contractor the ownership of the company in which the dockyard work force and management had been placed.

Initial contracts for a period of seven years will allow the new management plenty of time to build the two dockyards into a fully commercial pattern of operation and a further substantial period of full commercial activity. After the contract has run for the seven years, we shall look at the achievements of the two commercial companies that have been running the dockyards to see whether we wish to hold a further competition to find new managers for a subsequent contract. In this way, we shall maximise the level of competition.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Is the Minister suggesting that there will be a period of 18 months at the beginning, followed by a period of seven years, or is he saying that after 18 months there will be a period of five and a half years, when a decision will be taken?

Mr. Lamont: The contract will run for seven years. I was saying that it will be some time before there can be a fixed price basis for 75 per cent. of the work that we expect. The whole thing, from beginning to end, will run for seven years. The 18 months to two years is merely the transitional period during which we build up to the proportion of fixed price contracts that we want to achieve.

We believe that this approach will provide competition in three different ways. There will be competition between the commercial managers for the initial contract; there will be the continuing competition between the two dockyards and the other ship repair companies for the unallocated programme; and there will be continuous competitive pressure for the next contract—the pressure on existing operators to show that their performance is good enough so that they can win the contract in the future.

We believe that this approach can produce worthwhile savings. Indeed, we owe it to the taxpayer to ensure that the dockyards are operated in the most efficient way possible. There is no conflict between efficiency and military requirements. Indeed, it is very much in the interests of the Royal Navy that our dockyards should be operated in the most efficient way.

None of the proposals that have been put forward as alternatives in our view offer either this level of competition or the prospect of savings and improved efficiency. A trading fund, which some Opposition Members recommended, would not meet the criteria of competition, and would be able to price itself into profit in a way in which the private sector cannot. At the other extreme, full privatisation would simply mean moving from a state monopoly power to a different set of owners and a private sector monopoly.

As my right hon. Friend made clear when he announced his decision in July, he would be prepared to consider the possibility of running the dockyards as a Government-owned public limited company if the discussions with established companies do not produce an attractive basis for operating our own commercial management proposals. The Bill provides for the Government to operate the dockyards in that way if that proves necessary. However, I am glad to report that there is considerable industrial interest in tendering for the management contract.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Given that the Minister is not ruling out the possibility of a publicly owned company running the dockyards, why does the Bill say that it is designed to transfer persons engaged in dockyard services to the private sector? In Committee, does the Minister intend to rule out the possibility of, for example, debating a public corporation and a trading fund as part of the improvement of dockyard services?

Mr. Lamont: I shall be happy to debate anything that the hon. Gentleman may wish to raise, provided it is in order. As I have made clear, the Bill provides for a Government-owned plc as an interim stage. I was merely saying that if, for any reason, a sufficient number of companies did not want to tender for the contract, or if we did not think that those who tendered were suitable, a Government-owned plc was something on which we could fall back. However, it is the Government's intention to proceed to full contractualisation.

When my right hon. Friend announced the Government's decision, he stated his intention to seek competitive tenders from British companies to manage the dockyards, and he referred to those that had already show an interest. Since then there has been considerable contact between the Department and companies with an interest. Hon. Members may be aware of announcements by the Balfour Beatty/Weir Group and by Babcock International/Thorn EMI to form groups to prepare bids for the operation of Rosyth. Trafalgar House/Plessey/A and P Appledore formed a similar grouping last year to consider a bid for Devenport. Other companies, whose interest has been made public, include British Aerospace, Northern Engineering Industries, GEC, Taylor Woodrow, Tyne Ship Repair and Press Offshore. Representatives from the interested companies have made visits to both dockyards and have been supplied with information so that they can provide responses to an invitation to tender.

Clauses 1(4) to (6) deal with the consequences for personnel who are transferred from the Crown to a company. We understand how unsettling any change, particularly one as significant as this, is for the work force.

[Mr. Lamont]

We are prepared to have further discussions with representatives of the work force so that at the very least they can hear, understand and inform their members of the correct implications for the work force. Misinformation, intentional or otherwise, is in no one's long-term interests, and we have tried extremely hard to explain to the work force precisely what is involved in these proposals.

I come now to the terms and conditions of employment. They are obviously of considerable interest, but I feel that people have nothing to fear from them. Civil servants employed in the royal dockyards on vesting day who transfer to the company set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will cease to be civil servants, but will transfer on broadly the same terms and conditions of employment as they enjoy at present. That is secured by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, to which clause 1(4) refers. These regulations will ensure that most terms and conditions transfer unchanged to the new employer. There will, therefore, be no change, for example, in take-home pay, leave entitlement or retirement policy as a result of the transfer.

Mr. Gordon Brown: What about pensions?

Mr. Lamont: I am coming to pensions. Trade unions' current rights to negotiate on behalf of their members will transfer unchanged. In future they will be able to negotiate a better deal and, if there is improved performance, wages and rewards to mirror that improved performance. Under clause 1(6), staff transferring to the new company will not, of course, be entitled to redundancy compensation, because they are not being made redundant; they are transferring to a new employer. I emphasise that Civil Service levels of compensation will transfer in the same way as any other term or condition of service.

I shall deal now with the important subject of pensions, which I mentioned earlier. These are specifically excluded from the 1981 legislation to which I referred. Employees in the dockyards are at present members of the principal Civil Service pension scheme. After vesting day, when they cease to be civil servants and cannot remain in the scheme, a new pension scheme will be established. We propose to set up such a scheme with benefits similar to those for the Civil Service. We took similar steps for staff who transferred from the Civil Service into the Royal Ordnance plc. We intend that there should be no worsening of pension provisions as a result of the transfer of employment. The benefits to be provided by the new scheme will mirror as closely as possible those of the principal Civil Service pension scheme. I hope that that will meet many of the unnecessary anxieties that have been expressed.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the years that someone has accrued in the Civil Service will count towards his pension entitlement or redundancy pay when he reaches pensionable age or is made redundant?

Mr. Lamont: Yes, I confirm that. They will count in the same way. Proposals on future pension arrangements will be subject to full consultation with the employees and the trade unions. Separate pension arrangements will be made for those recruited into the dockyard operating companies after vesting day. That will be a matter for the management of the operating companies, in consultation with the trade unions.

During the consultation period, and since, many of the most vociferous of the Government's critics on this matter have, in a wholly alarmist and deliberate fashion, emphasised the potential job losses that they forecast as the result of the introduction of commercial management. My right hon. Friend made it clear that in April 1987 there would be a requirement to reduce the numbers employed in both dockyards—at Devonport from just over 13,000 to just over 11,000, and at Rosyth from 6,300 to about 5,900, over two years. Those savings are essential if we are to improve efficiency at both dockyards to allow them to compete effectively and, if possible, win extra work. The Government hope that the introduction of private management will make it possible for the dockyards to compete also for non-military work. Savings of the order that I have described will in any case be essential. They are necessary whatever future management system is chosen for the dockyards. They have nothing to do with the introduction of private management. Such measures are necessary anyway.

From commercial management, we expect to see further improvements in efficiency through changes in working practices, more flexible management and reductions in overheads. The consequences of those improvements will be that fewer men will be needed to carry out the core programme of work, but, as I have said, that relates only to the core. An efficient dockyard will be competitive. A competitive dockyard should be able to gain additional work, and additional work should generate employment. Commercial management is not a risk. It offers a considerable opportunity for the dockyards.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister has said that the principal reason for the measure is savings, although he has not quantified those savings. He will be aware that the Bill's financial effects claim that although the changes

"in the financial relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the dockyards"

—are significant, they—

"are unlikely to have a major effect on central Government expenditure."

Why are we going through all these significant changes if the effect is to be so minimal?

Mr. Lamont: The figures have been well debated by the Select Committee on Defence and the Public Accounts Committee. I say this by way of illustration. The Government have always said that the savings after recovery of initial costs could be about £29 million to £33 million, which is about 7·5 per cent. of dockyard turnover. Inevitably, those figures are merely estimates. They are dependent upon whatever assumptions are made. The real test is whether the House and hon. Members believe that private sector management will be more efficient and better at obtaining new work and will be able to alter working practices. We cannot quantify those matters, but we remain convinced that private management can bring about the improvements which report after report have said are necessary. I cannot believe that savings of £33 million, or 7·5 per cent. of turnover, are insignificant in terms of Government expenditure. One document stated that the amount was insignificant in terms of the totality of Government expenditure, but I think that it is worth while

in terms of dockyard expenditure. Surely the Government must operate the dockyards and see that their structure is such that they operate in the most efficient way.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Does the Minister accept that his figures of £29 million to £33 million must be set against £60 million of transitional costs necessary to set up the dockyard franchise scheme, and up to £200 million to set up the private pension scheme? If, as those figures show, the Minister is unlikely to save money in the 1980s and well into the 1990s, why is he proceeding with the scheme?

Mr. Lamont: I said that that figure was after the recovery of the initial costs.

Mr. Brown: Give me an answer.

Mr. Lamont: That is the answer. It is the figure after recovery of the initial costs. We cannot say precisely what the savings will be. They depend upon the productivity that the new management obtains. Any figures given are an illustration. We believe strongly that private management is much more likely to generate efficiency and savings than is the case where the customer and the contractor are within the machinery of government.

I shall deal with employment at Devonport, where anxiety is plainly felt about the immediate consequences of the job reductions anounced last April. The Ministry of Defence is working closely with the local authorities to encourage local enterprise. We have joined Plymouth council in setting up the Devonport development unit. One of its first activities has been to promote opportunities for defence subcontract work at an exhibition attended by firms from the south-west. More than 150 firms contacted the Ministry of Defence, with the result that a number of firms have been invited to tender for local purchase orders, and some have been successful. In addition, we are reviewing holdings of land in the area to see what land can be made available for industrial development.

The consequences for local employment are much less severe at Rosyth, as the work load of the dockyard is increasing. The Government's commitment to Rosyth is clear from the massive investment that they are making in the dockyard to carry out Trident refits. I would take the Opposition's concern about unemployment at Rosyth far more seriously if they were not firmly committed to abandoning our only independent deterrent. If I were a worker at Rosyth dockyard, contemplating the future, I would be much more worried — *[Interruption.]* The Opposition clearly do not like the point that I am about to make. I should be more worried about the Labour party's defence policy being implemented than about the possibility of commercial management being introduced. The Opposition know that that is true and that it is the view of many of the workers at Rosyth.

Throughout the Government's consideration of the future of the dockyards we have been guided by the need to do nothing which would endanger national security. That concern has been uppermost in the Government's mind in both the nuclear and conventional spheres. The decision to introduce commercial management into the dockyards was endorsed by the Navy Board. Ministers do not sit on the Navy Board. The decision that was taken was the preferred option not just of Ministers but of the Royal Navy. The Navy Board believes that national security will not be put at risk by the proposals.

Successive Administrations have proposed changes in the dockyards, but attempts to introduce change have come to nothing. Suddenly the Opposition are again endorsing proposals which they did not carry out when they were in government — proposals which have not worked in the past. Now is the time to make decisions about the matter. Devonport and Rosyth have served the Royal Navy and the country loyally for many generations and their long-term future is assured under the Government's proposals. The Government remain convinced that the introduction of commercial management, with the assets of the dockyards remaining firmly in Government hands, will provide a real spur to efficiency and savings which competition and renewable contracts will bring. The dockyards badly need those things. They will ensure that the operational requirements of the fleet are met, and will continue to be met, and that the strategic interests of the country are safeguarded. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.43 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Minister and his colleagues have not argued the case for commercial or agency management of the dockyards. They have made various assertions about how much better such management would be, but no case has been put forward to prove that the dockyards would be more efficient in terms of the service that they give and will continue to give to the Royal Navy. The Minister's figures for savings are not illustrative but illusory and have no meaning whatsoever.

I echo the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). I accept that Ministers have to go abroad and attend important NATO meetings, but — and I intend no disrespect to the Minister of State — the Secretary of State should have opened the debate. It may not have been necessary to have the debate today. It could have been put on at a different time. The Bill has only four clauses, and I do not suppose that it will last more than six months in Committee at this rate. Matters could have been arranged to enable the Secretary of State to be here to argue the case in respect of a substantial change that will affect the Royal Navy and thousands of dockyard workers in Devonport and Rosyth.

The Minister made it clear that tonight we shall be voting on an enabling Bill for commercial and agency management of the dockyards. We shall not be voting for some kind of Government-owned company. That is the fall-back position in case the Secretary of State cannot find any contractors. We shall be voting for commercial management. I hope that Conservative Members who have anxieties about the matter will realise that that is what they will be voting for and that that is what they will have to debate in Committee.

The Bill, especially the proposals behind it, is one of the most ill-prepared, poorly researched and irresponsible Bills which even the present Government have introduced over the last six years. The franchise or agency system —call it what one will—may be all right for fast food or other private establishments, but it is not suitable for complex organisations such as the royal dockyards.

The main duty of the dockyards is to maintain the ships of the Royal Navy to the highest state of efficiency and readiness. The Opposition believe that the proposals will do harm to the Navy and damage the livelihood of the thousands of dockyard employees who have served the

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

Navy and the nation with skill and dedication in war and peace. They will be shabbily treated if the Bill becomes law. The Bill will also damage the communities of Plymouth and Rosyth which are so dependent on the royal dockyards for their existence and economic future.

The main motivation behind the Bill is the Government's ideological belief and commitment. The motivation is not first and foremost the well-being of the Royal Navy. In one respect the Government's belief and commitment will be fulfilled if the Bill is passed, because the Secretary of State will be able to show the Prime Minister what a good boy he has been by removing by monthly reductions almost 20,000 civil servants off the books of the Ministry of Defence. That, of course, will have no effect in the real world as they will still have to be paid out of resources provided by the taxpayer.

The Secretary of State wanted to go much further—to remove the dockyards lock, stock and barrel. He wanted to remove the labour, capital, assets, land and everything else. He asked Mr. Peter Levene to look into the matter, but even Mr. Levene in his report, which I can only describe as cavalier and hasty, balked at the enormous problems which would have been caused by selling off the whole of the royal dockyards. As a result, the Secretary of State has produced a botched-up scheme in which the capital and assets are apparently to remain in Crown ownership, but their use is to be provided for and given to some private contractor and, as usual, the workers will be sold out. Most of the work in the first few years—the Minister has not answered this point—will be within the monopoly of a private contractor. There will be a tender for some of the core work, but I challenge the Minister to say what percentage of all the dockyard work in the first few years will be subject to tender and what percentage will be determined by negotiation between the Navy and the private monopoly contractor. The Navy would be in an extremely difficult position to negotiate contracts with a contractor holding a pistol to its head.

A remarkable feature of the Bill is that hardly anyone outside the Ministry of Defence has a good word to say about it. The Minister mentioned the Navy Board, but I get the impression that much of the support within the Ministry of Defence, and certainly much of it in the higher ranks of the Navy, has a touch of the press gang about it.

Agency management is not a new idea concocted by Peter Levene. As the Minister well knows, it was considered and rejected in 1970 by a committee chaired by Sir John Mallabar. In paragraph 103 of part II of Cmnd. 4713, reference is made to two possibilities for agency management. I shall refer only to the first, that

"the Government could retain ownership and turn the enterprise over to commercial management".

That is exactly what is now proposed. Paragraph 104 states:

"We feel we must dismiss the first of these two almost out of hand. The agency factory arrangement has, we know, been used fairly extensively in times of war emergency but those of us who have had direct experience of its working are satisfied that this is the way to get the worst of both the commercial and the Government Department worlds. We would certainly not recommend it for the dockyards."

That is a clear statement by people who had experience of operating agency management, although that experience was confined to factories.

A dockyard is much more difficult to run than a factory. It is far more complex than almost any armaments factory which could be run by agency management. Members of the Mallabar committee who had direct experience of the system clearly stated that it was not the best system either for dockyards or for factories. Mr. Levene, who doubtless has much experience of arms bazaars and arms selling, has very little experience of dockyard management. No one in the Ministry of Defence has the experience of the Mallabar committee in relation to agency arrangements, yet the Government apparently intend to go ahead with their scheme in the face of all the direct evidence provided for the Mallabar committee.

In July 1985, the Select Committee on Defence, in its fourth report, had little good to say about the Government's plan. Without being patronising, I believe that the House owes a debt of gratitude to the members of that Committee for the clarity of analysis and the non-partisan way in which they approached this very difficult subject. It is clear that they were not convinced by the evidence provided by the Government. The report concludes that the Ministry of Defence has not begun to tackle the potential difficulties and that the Government have failed to show that commercial management outweighs the advantages of a trading fund.

The Ministry of Defence was given a further opportunity to provide more evidence, but again it failed to do so and the Select Committee, in its further observations published on 27 November, pointed out that, despite all the objective evidence and all the evidence provided to the Mallabar committee and to the Select Committee, the Government were apparently determined to go ahead with an ill-considered scheme which will damage the vital interests of the nation and of national security.

The Select Committee was absolutely right to say that the Government had not considered the consequences of the scheme that they had outlined. There was evidence of that fairly recently when the Government produced a document to the trade unions—it was not a secret or confidential document—stating that 19 working groups were to be set up to look into the consequences of a decision which had been taken mainly on commercial grounds. The subjects involved show the extent of the problems and complications that will arise but which the Government did not consider before deciding on their proposed course of action. Working group No. 3 will consider

"the manner in which Naval Base estate and facilities will be made available to the commercial operators"

and also nuclear safety. Working group No. 4 will be concerned with

"the overall organisation of the Naval Bases".

Working group No. 7 will deal with occupational health and safety. Working group No. 10 will be concerned with naval manpower. Working group No. 16 will deal with security. I should have thought that the Government would consider the consequences of those matters before deciding whether this was the best way to run the royal dockyards.

Not only has there been no support for the Government scheme from any of the impartial evidence at home, but there is no evidence from abroad to support it. On 17 April the Secretary of State tried to give a misleading impression to the House—I do not say that it was deliberate, but it was certainly misleading — when he said that his

proposals were based on American experience. That is wholly wrong. The United States dockyards, which are far more complex even than ours because the United States navy is so much larger, are not operated on an agency or commercial basis. They are operated according to a commercial trading fund of the kind that we should like in the future for the dockyards of this country. We can find no evidence that any other navy in the Western Alliance and certainly in Western Europe would consider taking the course that the Government now propose. The French certainly would not dream of it. Nevertheless, despite the internal and external evidence, the Government apparently still intend to go ahead.

The Government recently published a booklet entitled "The Future of the Dockyards". No doubt the people of Rosyth and Devonport will find that an ironic title. In that document the Government set out the two main objectives of the scheme as

"enhancing the fighting effectiveness of the Fleet and preserving vital strategic interests"

and

"securing maximum value for money".

None of us objects to any of those aims, but we do not believe—the Minister has not argued the case at all—that the changes will enhance the capability, fighting effectiveness or readiness of the fleet or that they will save any money whatever.

With regard to the enhancement of the effectiveness of the fleet, no one has said in evidence to the Select Committee or in the House that the changes will make the fleet more effective or more ready to meet difficulties and problems in times of emergency. Is the Minister suggesting that the way in which the dockyards operated in the past was to the detriment of the fleet and that the effectiveness of the fleet was impaired as a result? Only a few years ago, management and employees proved themselves in the ultimate test in time of war. Is the Minister really saying that if Balfour Beatty or Trafalgar House had been operating the dockyards they would have performed better in the Falklands war? Three years later, there is to be an enormous upheaval when there is no evidence whatever that the dockyards have ever failed in their primary duty of ensuring the readiness and effectiveness of the fleet.

The question of foreign ownership is very important in terms of the need to safeguard strategic interests. The Minister may have answered some of the questions, but I hope that he will make three points absolutely clear. First —he may already have hinted at this—will he state categorically that only British-controlled companies will be allowed to tender? I accept that it is not always easy to define control in this area, but will he assure the House that only companies controlled by British residents will be allowed to tender? That is a fairly easy question to answer, and I expect the Minister to say yes.

The Minister has said that, first, an operating company will be formed. Presumably the shares of that company will be owned by Trafalgar House or some other parent company that is not solely engaged in dockyard activities. What plans do the Government have to ensure that the operating company and, subsequently, the parent company do not fall within the control of foreign ownership? We know what happened to the golden share; we know what happened to British Telecom; and we think we know what will happen to the royal ordnance factories. Will the same proposals apply to Trafalgar House? If 15 per cent. of the shares of Trafalgar House are bought by foreign shareholders, will the contracts between the Ministry of Defence and the subsidiary of Trafalgar House be terminated? The Minister has not mentioned that. It is not in the Bill. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that foreign ownership of the operating company will not be allowed.

We have been told that 30 per cent. of the dockyard work will be put out to tender. Will the Minister make it clear that the tender will not be allowed to go to any foreign yards—that only British yards will be allowed to tender for that 30 per cent.?

We do not believe that the proposals will enhance the effectiveness of the Navy or save money. The evidence to the Select Committee shows that it was the hope of saving money that led the Navy Board reluctantly to acquiesce in the proposals. In paragraph 408, Rear Admiral George makes that point quite clearly:

"I think we are in an area of speculation."

That is absolutely clear. He continued:

"It is largely the pressure on the defence budget which has led the Admiralty Board to consider matters of saving money in that area of support."

The acquiescence of the Navy was obtained because it believed that money could be saved, not because the plans would enhance the effectiveness of the support services or the effectiveness and readiness of the fleet.

It has been said that between £24 million and £26 million will be saved. The figures have been put out with a precision that makes us suspicious. The Minister has said that, whatever illustrative figures are used, he does not know how much money will be saved or, indeed, whether any money will be saved. The 24th report of the Public Accounts Committee made this point clearly when it stated:

"On the basis of information supplied to us, we have misgivings about the thoroughness and accuracy of the Ministry's costings."

Later, it was said, in effect, that the calculations provided no valid basis to judge whether any materially increased efficiency attached to the Government's preferred option. The Select Committee made exactly the same point. Even if these figures are correct—and I do not think they are —why go through this upheaval to save about £24 million when the turnover of the dockyards is between £400 million and £500 million a year? It does not seem worth it in terms of morale and the effect it will have on the Navy and employees. We do not believe that the plans will save money or that they will enhance the operation of the fleet.

The Minister has said that the tender—an area of considerable difficulty and obfuscation—will be for the core work. I challenge him to say that the tender will be based upon figures for over 50 per cent. of the work carried out in the dockyards. Some people have said that the tender will relate to 5 per cent., 7 per cent. or perhaps 10 per cent. of the work for only the first few years and that once the tenderer has the contract on the basis of 10 per cent., he will be given extra work—up to 70 per cent. of the total core work. The Minister should tell us how he defines core work. He did not define the work to which he alluded when he spoke about the percentage of work that would be tendered for by private contractors.

We are concerned about more than the core work that is carried out in the dockyards. Dockyards also carry out what is called emergent or unprogrammed work—in other words, work that is found when a frigate is opened

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

repairs or refitting. An example is the work that ensued when builders came to my house to carry out a conversion and discovered dry rot. How are the prices to be arranged? How can the tender apply to work that nobody knows is needed? Will a frigate be left standing while negotiations continue between the Navy and a private monopoly supplier?

These considerations are especially important when nuclear submarines are involved. I am told that there are great difficulties when nuclear submarines are refitted or repaired. Apparently it can take months to get all the authorities to deal with the problems that arise with nuclear reactors and nuclear submarines. Will this work be determined by negotiation between a private supplier, who has a complete monopoly, and the Navy, which, in effect, will have a pistol held to its head to accept the price quoted by the supplier without any recourse because it needs the frigate or submarine to be refitted or repaired?

Does the Minister say that it is possible to arrive at a price for emergency work before the work is done? The Levene report made this issue quite clear. Paragraph 3 of this famous leaked report states:

"I also found that the lack of the normal market forces meant that the dockyard undertook a wide range of what in commercial terms are almost certainly uneconomic activities."

That is right, for the dockyards do, in commercial terms, undertake uneconomic activities. The object of the Bill is to ensure that these activities are carried out on a commercial basis by private contractors. It will cost the Navy more if those activities are carried out on a commercial basis. What percentage of the dockyard work will be subject to competition and what percentage will be determined by negotiation between the monopoly supplier and the Navy, which will be a capital consumer?

The Mallabar report recommended that a trading fund should be set up for the dockyards. We know that the United States navy operates through a trading fund. The old Expenditure Committee of 1975 also recommended a trading fund for the dockyards. The report prepared by the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), when he was the Navy Minister, recommended a trading fund for the dockyards. The Select Committee on Defence, although it has not exactly said so, favours the concept. The right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) shakes his head. The evidence available favours a trading fund over what the Government have suggested.

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): The Select Committee was careful not to make any recommendations. If the right hon. Gentleman reads the report again, he will find that that is so. With respect, he is not entitled to say that the report favours a certain course.

Mr. Davies: I did not say "recommendation". I accept entirely what the Chairman of the Select Committee, the right hon. Gentleman, has said, but I am entitled to submit my interpretation of the two reports. It seems that, in the light of the evidence, the Select Committee favours a trading fund, not commercial management. The trade unions favour a trading fund, as do most external reports.

Mr. Sayeed: The right hon. Gentleman has prayed in aid the Mallabar report. Perhaps he will tell us why the then Labour Government did not implement its proposals.

Mr. Davies: I have no idea; and I have no idea why the Conservative Government of 1974 did not either. The hon. Gentleman will recall that a Conservative Government were elected in 1974. That Administration could have put into operation the recommendations of the Mallabar report. The hon. Gentleman has not made a very sensible point.

The Minister was scathing about trading funds and suggested that they are terrible things, but it is possible to obtain commercial accounting and management by means of a trading fund. The Minister will recall the debates that took place last year in Committee on the privatisation of the royal ordnance factories. The ROFs have operated for some time on the principle of a trading fund and have made large profits. The profits were so large that the Secretary of State decided that he could sell off large chunks of them on the stock market and obtain a great deal of money for them. I shall be interested to see whether they are as successful when they come under private ownership as they were when they operated as a trading fund.

The Royal Mint has been operated as a trading fund for a number of years. In 1971 the Government introduced the Atomic Energy Authority Bill, which now enshrines in statute the concept of a trading fund to run the authority. There is no reason why commercial management and the freeing of constraints on management should not be undertaken by means of a trading fund Bill or by setting up a trading fund. If some changes are needed to the Government Trading Funds Act 1973, let us make them.

As I have said, it is possible to run the dockyards in a manner that frees them of commercial constraints and in the interests of the Royal Navy, not those of private shareholders. It is possible to achieve all the changes that we want to see by means of a Government trading fund.

The Opposition believe that the Minister of State should take away the Bill. He knows in his heart that it makes no sense. Indeed, he knows that the Bill is nuts. He knows that it is wrong and that it will not work. He knows also that it is not in the best interests of the Royal Navy or of the people who, at the end of the day, the Government will need to operate the dockyards in times of war and peace. That is why the Minister should take away the Bill. Instead, he should establish a trading fund. We could then introduce the necessary changes.

5.14 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I hope that I shall not be considered parochial if I do not direct my immediate attention to Rosyth. I am sure that there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who will be glad to take a more detailed interest in that yard. I suspect that what I say about the dockyard nearest to my constituency will apply also to Rosyth.

As one of the three hon. Members representing Plymouth, I have a deep and local interest in the Bill. I do not pretend that the worries of my constituents and of the other citizens of Plymouth are not foremost in my thinking. It is right and proper that a constituency Member should have those worries closest to the heart.

I appreciate that we are considering a major defence establishment which has the vital task of servicing Royal Navy ships and carrying out repairs and refits. There is, of course, a major national interest in that activity. Therefore, I have to take into account both a local and a national interest. I hope and believe that there need be no conflict between the two. However, I must tell the

Minister that I have serious reservations about the course on which the Government are embarked, which has been confirmed this afternoon.

I accept, along with other individuals, organisations and Select Committees, the need for some change in the organisation of the dockyards. In saying that, I am paying no disrespect to the work force, which can only be as good as those who lead it and the system under which it has to operate. Given those circumstances, the work force has done a good job in the past and will, I am sure, continue so to perform in future.

I accept also that the present system leaves much to be desired. Some of the shortcomings go back even further, perhaps, than the Mallabar report. It is instructive that the Mallabar committee was set in motion by a Labour Government. When the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) inquires why the Conservatives did not implement the changes that it recommended in 1974, I must remind him that that Conservative Government were in no position to do any such thing. He will recall that the Conservatives lost both elections in 1974. I for one have good reason to recall the October 1974 general election with the utmost vividness. However, that is water under the bridge. I believe that there is a case for change and that what really matters is the format of the change.

I have been disturbed by the short period of consultation to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred briefly. It seems that virtually a year was wasted—in any event, it was not spent profitably—between the leaking of the Levene report and the announcement which was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in April of this year. That could have been a year spent usefully at greater leisure, whereas in the event we had exceedingly rushed consultation and great difficulties for all concerned. I am not in the least surprised that many of my constituents, dockyard workers and others, were led to the conclusion that the consultation was a mere pretence, a mere mockery, and that a firm decision had already been made. I share that view somewhat, even though my own Government were thus engaged.

Now that the Bill is before us, we shall have a further opportunity to consider in detail what is on offer. However, there is a difficulty in the format of the Bill as it is enabling legislation and has been drafted with a broad brush. Accordingly, it allows for several different possibilities. It is not too much to say that many of the key decisions will be taken independent of the course of the measure. These decisions will have a major bearing on what finally happens about the organisation of the royal dockyards.

I am glad that the Minister has put it on the record that conditions of service, especially pension rights and redundancy payments, will not be affected adversely by any change. When people are worried and disturbed about their future, as many are in Plymouth, it is easy for them to be worried unnecessarily. I hope that my hon. Friend's remarks will be widely disseminated and, if necessary, repeated again and again so that at least those involved will have no worries about the basics of their employment.

Perhaps it is not sufficiently understood outside the west country how large a place the dockyard occupies within the economy of Plymouth. The dockyard is by far the largest employer in the area, as well as the oldest. It has a history that spans several hundred years. Any changes in the organisation of the dockyard will send ripples through the 12,000 or 13,000 members of the work force and have repercussions beyond that will affect all those who work in the yard, or who hope to work there. The same can be said for their families. It should be understood that Plymouth is undergoing a traumatic experience, which is not limited to the immediate confines of the city. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) smiling his acceptance of that. This matter is of the utmost importance for Plymouth and the surrounding area. Nothing else has caused so much anguish and excitement during the past month since the changes were announced, leaked or otherwise brought to public attention.

I pay tribute to the changes already in hand at the dockyard under the leadership of the managing director. I have the highest regard for Mr. David Johnson, the present managing director, who is giving an excellent lead to the work force at a time of the greatest difficulty and worry. Progress is being made in dealing with the worries that have been expressed about absenteeism, the excessive overtime worked and slippage in refit and repair work. There have been notable improvements. It is right that tribute should be paid to Mr. Johnson and to the work force for their co-operation during these difficult times.

I wish to discuss the formula of the Bill. I am somewhat dismayed that the Government are so set upon the commercial option—the preferred option as it is called in the consultation document. I have stated publicly, and I state now, that, although changes outside the Civil Service are necessary, I dislike the commercial option. I infinitely prefer the more proven method of forming a public limited company. We could then be more certain that those running the company had at heart the interests not only of the dockyard but of the local work force and local economy.

One drawback of the option favoured by the Government is that which the Minister puts forward as an advantage—the possible change in contractors because of the limited period, originally of five years but now extended to seven years. My hon. Friend must understand that for those who live and work there, that is only a short time. So there is always an element of uncertainty. Most human beings, and I include myself among that majority, dislike uncertainty. It is unsettling, nerve-wracking and worrying. There is bound to be uncertainty because of the competitive edge syndrome with which the Government are flirting.

If the Government cannot change to the plc fallback position, which is my preferred option, I hope that they will take up the option mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) and go for the 10-year period rather than seven years. At the outset, that would provide employees with a little more sense of permanence and set their minds at rest more than the seven-year period would. That is a second-best option, but I am realistic enough to appreciate that, in all probability, the Bill will go through. It allows the Government to take either option. If the Government go ahead with the commercial option, I ask that a longer period be seriously considered.

I pray in aid the fact that the plc is a far better method of achieving what the Government and I want: a dockyard operating at maximum efficiency with proper safeguards for those who work and do a good job there. I do not understand why we must choose an unproven formula when a more obvious option is available to us. I accept the need to go beyond the trading fund, which the right hon.

[Miss Janet Fookes]

Member for Llanelli does not wish to do, but I fail to understand why we cannot have a proven formula rather than an untried one.

Mr. Douglas: I am intrigued by the hon. Lady's argument. Where in the world does the proven formula of a Government wholly-owned plc operate for the refit and maintenance of naval vessels?

Miss Fookes: I did not suggest applying the formula to the repair of vessels. I meant it as a legal entity which was well known and understood. I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman misunderstood me.

When the consultation period was announced, the city of Plymouth, which has an obvious interest in employment prospects and the prosperity of the local economy, was moved to employ the famous firm of accountants Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company, which operates internationally, to undertake a rapid inquiry into the options available. It had to be rapid because of the time scale of the consultation. The report, which was made in record time, is a worthwhile document. I am sorry that the Government have not given it the serious consideration that it deserves. Page 66 of the report sets out briefly the firm's views on each of the main options. On the trading option, the report states:

"Easy option to implement with prospects of some early efficiency gains, but longer term benefits and contribution to local economy could be severely limited by constraints on management freedom."

On the public corporation or Government-owned company it states:

"Option providing the best prospects for progressive improvement in efficiency with diversification and contribution to the local economy, providing adequate management freedom can be arranged."

On the commercial or agency management approach—the Government's preferred option—the report states:

"An experimental approach which would be difficult and costly to implement and administer, and which offers uncertain prospects for the local economy."

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's opening remarks and I shall listen attentively to his concluding remarks, but nothing in his statements so far comforts me when I read the conclusion of Peat Marwick, which is a commercial firm of the utmost repute and standing. I ask that the Government reconsider their chosen option. Nothing in the Bill prevents them from doing so because the Bill provides that they can choose either option. That makes it more difficult for me as I prefer one option. But both are in the Bill, and I can be guided only by the Government's declaration of intent.

I hope that during the remaining stages of our consideration of the Bill we shall have additional information about precisely the contract that the Government have in mind and more details about those firms that are, or may be, seriously interested. There is a belief in Plymouth that the number of serious contenders is decreasing rapidly. If that is the case, considerable doubt is thrown on the commercial option chosen by the Government. I await that with interest, but in the meantime I must decide how to vote tonight. I am not satisfied with the case made by the Government for their preferred option, although I accept the need for change. In those circumstances, unless the Minister gives the House some new information tonight, I cannot consider supporting the Bill.

5.30 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Many of those who voted for the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) will hope that her views on the Bill will lead her into the Division Lobby to vote against it. That would be a more accurate reflection of the feeling in Plymouth of let-down and, indeed, of anger over this legislation.

It is extraordinary that the Secretary of State for Defence is not here today. We understand that he has commitments with NATO, but since the business of the House is the responsibility of the Leader of the House, it should have been perfectly possible for him to arrange the debate for a day when the Secretary of State did not need to attend a NATO meeting. Since the legislation owes its inception and design almost solely to the Secretary of State, it is even more insulting that he is not here to justify it.

The Bill has attracted an extraordinary amount of hostility from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I have been in the House for nearly 20 years, and I cannot remember a Bill that was so extensively mauled and savaged by two all-party Select Committees. The all-party Select Committee on Defence has twice raised grave doubts about whether the legislation will safeguard the fighting efficiency of the Royal Navy. The Public Accounts Committee, which is commonly regarded as the most authoritative and independent of the Select Committees, has not only called in question the scheme, but has mentioned the probability that its implementation will cost the naval budget substantially more during the next four to five years than would one of the other options.

The SDP believes that the best option—the one that should have been implemented a long time ago—is the trading fund run by the Civil Service. Many workers and trade unionists in the dockyards have long wanted the separation of their accountancy and financial operations, because they have been all too conscious of the difficulty of comparing their work, which they believe to be efficient and cost-effective, with outside industry. They have always had to carry the vast overheads of the naval bases. Therefore, there is no sizeable opposition to the idea that we should have a separate trading fund and then judge the dockyards' efficiency on its merits.

The Bill is not privatisation; it is piratisation. The Government have decided to privatise a national asset that has served the country well for centuries. That is the Government's philosophy. Have they used such a scheme in any previous privatisations? The answer is emphatically no. Did British Telecom, will British Gas, or did any of the privatisations involve the control of assets by the Government, but the separation of those assets from the work forces and managements?

Does any hon. Member who operates a commercial company genuinely believe that he could separate the investment and assets from the management and work force of his company? No industrialist, apart from Mr. Levene, has publicly advocated that course.

The independent firm of accountants, Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company, castigated the scheme and demonstrated that it was not an effective way of running a commercial organisation. Since the idea was floated, I have talked to a vast number of industrialists. They have all reached the conclusions that were reached in the Mallabar report. They dismissed the scheme, because they have run companies and know that it cannot be done.

The fatal flaw of the legislation is the belief that we can separate the assets from the management and the work force. What is so tragic about the Government's decision is that one of the problems in the dockyards in the 1960s was the neglect of their assets. When I was a Minister dealing with the dockyards, the then Labour Government made certain from 1969 onwards—it continued under successive Governments through the 1970s and 1980s—that there was a massive injection of resources into the dockyards to give them the capital assets that they needed. Of course, the Secretary of State cannot privatise the entire dockyards, because no one could find enough money to buy their vast capital assets.

The managers of the new company that will be set up under the Government's preferred option will be given seven-year contracts which must, by their nature, be from time to time broken. If contracts are continued in perpetuity, the purpose of the Bill as set out by the Minister will be thwarted. If there must be competition, it must be shown to be effective competition. That means that the company which employs those men as well as manages the dockyards will, at least after the fifth year, operate under the question mark of whether its contract will be renewed. If it is not renewed, a new company will be asked to take on the existing work force. However, there can be no guarantee that it will take on that work force, unless the Ministry of Defence tells us that such a guarantee will be part of the contract. One reason why the Government cannot give a guarantee that the work force will be re-employed is that the tenders will be based on a work load to be allocated.

That is where this privatisation is uniquely different from previous privatisations. When someone was transferred from British Telecom into the new privatised company, he had a reasonable expectation that if he worked well and efficiently he would spend the rest of his days until retirement in that company. That is not the case now. No such continuity of employment can be offered. The contracts of employees can be terminated at the end of the management contract. That is an extraordinary method of rewarding people who have served the country for many decades. During the Falklands war, Ministers and all hon. Members paid tribute to the work of those employees.

The Bill will mean that the Government can strip off the dockyards' assets and control them, but there will be no integrated operation. The workers will be given no guarantee of continuity of employment and hanging over them at all times will be the question of the future work load. That will affect not only those employed in the dockyard, but the city or town in whose economy the dockyard is a crucial element. Problems will radiate into the travel-to-work areas surrounding Plymouth in Cornwall and Devon. The problems at Rosyth will be similar, although on a slightly smaller scale.

The Government must ask themselves for how much longer they can justify introducing such legislation simply because they have an in-built majority. At what stage in a democracy is it possible to restrain people from taking industrial action? At what stage can hon. Members demonstrate to people who are anxious and depressed about their future employment that they can trust the democratic process?

The consultation period was laughably short. We argued with our constituents and told them to trust the process. We held a mass meeting in Plymouth—on an all-party basis—we rallied both Plymouth city council and the Devon county council who commissioned the Peat Marwick Mitchell report, we tried to keep the campaign on an all-party basis as far as possible and then we put in evidence to the Select Committees. Those Select Committees, on an all-party basis, criticised the Government. At what stage is it, in a genuine and true democracy, that a Secretary of State listens? I hope that the Secretary of State will read *Hansard*—it should not be asking too much of him. If he does, perhaps he will ponder the possibility that there has been an error.

The Secretary of State might then ask himself why anybody should take on this management contract. The people who may tender for the contract will tender for one reason only—they have substantial defence interests and for other reasons and other contracts wish to keep in with the procurement executive, and in particular with Mr. Levene. I have talked to some of the people involved, and they show no enthusiasm for the contract, for one major reason. They say that it will be hard enough to manage the dockyard, but to do it against a work force that feels that it has been bludgeoned into this and is resentful at the process, and which has already absorbed 2,000 redundancies, will be impossible. We should remember that this arrangement takes place only after Devonport has lost those 2,000 jobs by fiat from the Secretary of State. This is a pretty unsatisfactory management contract for anybody to take on.

In addition, as a reserve position, the Secretary of State has said that if nobody turns up to bid for a contract, because the terms on offer are so bad, he will consider running the dockyards, for an interim period, as a Government-owned plc, which is the preferred option of the hon. Member for Drake. On what basis does she prefer it—as a standby to tide over the Government until the election is over and a new contract comes in? That is not an option.

There is one different option for the Secretary of State, which is to say to the unions and the labour force in Rosyth and Devonport, "You do not like what I have introduced. This is the legislation that I want, but I am prepared to talk to see whether we can come to some new arrangement." The Secretary of State has ample reason for doing this, because it is recommended in the second report of the Select Committee on Defence. The reports ends:

> "We urge the Government to approach the debates on the Dockyards Services Bill with an open mind and a readiness to draw fully upon the opinions expressed from all quarters, in the best interests of the fighting efficiency of the Fleet and of the defence and security of the nation."

If the Navy Board, which was once the Admiralty Board, with which some of us were proud to be associated, cannot realise that it is embarking on a serious course in terms of endangering the efficiency of the Navy, it is time that at least the Minister did.

The Minister of State has been saddled with a thankless task. The Secretary of State drags him back from a foreign trip to deal with the matter and then walks away. In his previous incarnation the Minister showed himself to be not without any understanding about trade unions, unemployment and the fears of the work force. I challenge him: Why does he not talk to the trade unions and ask what they can agree together? I point out to the hon. Member for Drake that agreement on an interim measure with the trade unions could not be achieved. They will want to ensure, and have

[Dr. David Owen]

a right to ask, that whatever comes out is permanent. There must be new permanent arrangements, even if they are not what I want—a trading fund within the Civil Service.

There are grounds for arguing for a Government-owned commercial company. The Government are obsessed with cutting Civil Service numbers, and will undoubtedly be able to take the dockyards out of the Civil Service through this method. However, the dockyards must be an integrated unit, a single unified company, which owns assets, manages the company and employs the work force, and in which the Ministry of Defence is the predominant and sole owner. If the Government wish to introduce worker shares, I should not be against that, but the Ministry of Defence must be the controlling interest in a company that operates commercially.

There would be some advantage for the unions in such a scheme. I have been involved in some of the negotiations in the industrial Civil Service, and I know of the difficulty in getting the Civil Service machine to recognise the dockyards as being an industry and to grant them a proper productivity deal. I know that the work force would be apprehensive about leaving the Civil Service, particularly white-collar civil servants who have previously been able to transfer to other parts of the Civil Service. They might be able to negotiate some transfer arrangements. It is not impossible for there to be far greater agreement than even the Minister of State might envisage, provided that the arrangement is permanent, honoured by both sides of the House, with no yo-yoing around from private to public ownership, a company owned by the Ministry of Defence, outside the Civil Service, run as an integrated operation, and permanent.

Miss Fookes: I do not wish to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman in the middle of his discourse, but I wish to make it clear that I am not interested in an interim arrangement either. When I suggested a plc as a possible formula, it was on a permanent, not an interim, basis.

Dr. Owen: That only goes to show that the hon. Lady should join us in voting against the Bill. On any interpretation of the Bill, as the Minister said, it will implement commercial management. Nothing has been said to give any sign that the Government are prepared to change the Bill so that it deals not with commercial management, but with the Government retaining control over a critical strategic asset of great importance to the Navy and the country. That is all that we ask.

I would regret it if the dockyard work force moved out of the Civil Service. This is a sad way to pay back the honourable record of service that we have all had from the dockyards' labour force. However, it is indefensible to continue with this mish-mash of commercial management, during which no guarantee can be given of a successful enterprise.

The history of this episode is important, so I shall remind the Minister of it because he may not have been briefed on it by his civil servants. After the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) had been kicked out, the Government tried to ditch his report. If any of this had been promised in the 1983 election, the make-up of Parliament would have been different and the hon. Member for Drake might not have been here. Throughout the 1983 general election campaign there was no glimmer of this plan. The election was fought on the basis of the Speed report.

After that report, the people in the dockyards were told that they must be prepared to see their work and efficiency checked against that of private industry. The unions did not like it, but they accepted it. They accepted a plan whereby a submarine and a frigate would go out to private contract, and a similar frigate and submarine would be refitted in Devonport, which was chosen because the ships were comparable. The exercise was set up as a fair and reasonable way to compare costs.

No sooner had the exercise been started than there was a leak from the Levene report. What integrity was involved in that arrangement? The trade unions were asked, in fair competition, to see whether they could compete with private yards. They accepted the challenge and were prepared to carry out the exercise, but suddenly the rug was pulled from underneath them and they were then faced with the Levene proposals. The exercise has still gone ahead, and I think that the Minister will find out what has happened in the past.

It is incredibly difficult to make a fair comparison between even two submarines that have been chosen for fair comparison. One submarine may be opened up to find that there is rust and that the electrics have gone, while the other may be perfectly all right, even though they are about the same age. Exactly the same may apply to a frigate. When its insides are opened up and problems are revealed, the private contractor will have to go back to the Ministry of Defence and say that its tender will have to be completely changed.

The dockyards are to the Navy what a garage is to those of us who have cars. We expect a garage to be ready when our car breaks down and to have the capacity to deal instantly with our problems. It is not possible to programme the cars all the way through, nor is it possible to programme all the naval ships. We tie up vast capital assets in the naval ships and it is in our, the Navy's and NATO's interests that those ships are turned around quickly when something goes wrong. In order to operate such a refitting dockyard, there must be the capacity to respond in emergencies, a certain degree of spare capacity and, above all, the good will of the work force. The work force must understand that it is in a high security business, dealing with classified documentation, serving the nation and the Navy, and it must be proud of doing so.

To smash all that for want of a readiness to get round a table is a tragedy. That is what the Bill will do. There will be no attempt to reach a solid agreement with some of the most reasonable men and women trade unionists in Britain. They are not mindless militants, but are some of the best people in Britain, and it is a tragedy that they should be treated in this way. Has the matter ever been discussed with them? No. Those hon. Members who are wondering which way to vote should remember that the proposals have never been discussed in any serious way with trade unionists. They have been presented to them as a fait accompli at each stage. The trade unionists have their preferred option. Some may not agree with me about a trading fund and would prefer other things, but they are in the business of negotiating. They are predominantly trade unionists. If the employer—the Secretary of State—asked them to see whether some agreement could be reached, he might well be surprised.

The Government have a massive majority. We all know that the Bill can be pushed through without a single amendment. There is no doubt about that, because in order for an amendment to succeed a Conservative Member must be ready to vote with the Labour and Social Democratic Members of the Committee. We are in the business of trying to sort something out of this frightful mess. Believe me, that is what it is. One has only to listen to the right hon. Gentleman speaking of the 19 working parties to know that, and many of those 19 working parties have already formed sub-committees. The whole thing is a complete farce. Has anyone considered the way in which the naval dockyards intermesh with the naval base and Government Departments?

I urge the Minister to do what the all-party Select Committee on Defence has urged him to do—to think objectively about this again. There is no better form of doing that than to discuss it around the table with some of the men and women who will have to implement the mess. He would be surprised how much good will would come from such consultation. Out of it we might be able to produce a structure for the dockyard that would last.

Most of us are terrified that we shall have doctrinal, ideological semi-privatisation for the two dockyards, both of which are immensley important. I have talked mainly about Plymouth, but the Rosyth dockyard, with the refitting of Polaris, could hardly be more important to Britain's security and future. We are terrified that the Government will give up the opportunity of getting something that could be endorsed, even with grudging acceptance here and there, by most people who work in the dockyards, and by most political parties, and that we would have a structure that would last into the next century. All that is in prospect at the moment is a bitterly contested political argument about the dockyards which will go on right up to and through the general election and will almost certainly be changed after the general election, all for the lack of a readiness to do what people in Britain ought to do—to try to reach an agreement, and, in particular, to involve people who work within the dockyard.

It is in that spirit that I urge the Minister to think again. It is in the spirit that this is a thoroughly bad piece of legislation which will do grave damage to the Royal Navy, to the fighting efficiency of the fleet and the long-standing commitment of people in the dockyards and to the Navy that we in the Social Democratic and Liberal parties will vote against the Bill tonight.

5.54 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): It is essential in any debate dealing with proposals to alter fundamentally the management of the royal dockyards to keep constantly in our minds two inter-related considerations which factually are not in dispute. They are simply that we are talking about Britain's defence obligations and our national security in particular, and, within that context, how best the dockyards can service the Royal Navy. That, after all, is the principal function and purpose of the dockyards.

There would be a general consensus that the performance of the royal dockyards has not been as good as one would have wished. However, that is not entirely due to the failings of the management or work force. The constraints placed on our existing system have contributed to the unsatisfactory situation. Consequently, in recent years, as many hon. Members have said, there have been a series of investigations and reports, the most recent of which are the Mallabar, Speed and Levene reports.

As someone who has lived all his life within the Plymouth area and who has therefore been related to many of the work force in the dockyard, what interests me is that if, during the course of the past 15 years, two reports have recommended the introduction of a trading fund concept and rejected the concept of commercial or agency management, why, within the course of the past two years, has there been a fundamental change of outlook?

There is general acceptance that there are three specific areas in which changes are essential if the dockyards are to operate with greater efficiency. First, as has already been mentioned, the dockyards as suppliers should be clearly separated from the Royal Navy as the customer. We are all aware of the inherent problems that arise from that unsatisfactory position. Secondly, most hon. Members would agree that local managers should have greater authority and freedom to manage. Thirdly, most people would take the view that accounting procedures reflecting normal commercial practice should be introduced so that performance within the royal dockyards can be properly assessed.

Let me recall the sequence of events in order to put my observations into context. In April my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence published his consultative document. In it were the three options. They were, first, full-scale privatisation; secondly, the introduction of the trading fund concept; and, thirdly—the preferred option—the imposition of some system of commercial management. I argued at the time for the establishment of a trading fund with the work force either inside or outside the Civil Service. In practice, the latter structure would have been possible.

It is relevant to emphasise, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), that immediately after the publication of the consultative document a local steering group was formed. It consisted of local authority members, both at county and district level, representatives of the trade unions and a number of other interested parties and organisations, including the four local Members of Parliament who are most involved. A report was commissioned by the accountants, Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company. In his summary Mr. Roger Harris of Peat Marwick said that he felt that the Government had not given due justice to the potential merit of adopting a public sector, non-Civil Service option. He was also critical in his report of the Government's preferred option.

I have always hoped, and have expressed this view locally in public, that some solution might emerge that would unite the existing management and the local work force. I have expressed the hope that, based on these twin props, a consensus would be evolved which would go some way towards satisfying the three criteria that were laid down by the Secretary of State in his consultative document but which would retain the dockyard work force entity of management and employees as we know it.

I make no apology for mentioning specifically Devonport. I have already referred to the fact that I have lived in the vicinity all my life. It is worth spelling out, as this is fundamental to the Government's proposals, that Plymouth, south-east Cornwall, south-west Devon and the Royal Navy dockyard are closely integrated and

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

interdependent. Performance at Devonport under its present management improved significantly during the past two years. The efforts of all concerned during the Falklands dispute have, rightly, been universally acknowledged. In addition, comparisons with the private sector relating to the refitting of ships and submarines are favourable to the dockyard in terms of quality and timing. However, the Government have ignored all the advice and criticism. They have also ignored the majority of the recommendations that they received in response to their consultative document, including those from the Select Committeee on Defence and the Public Accounts Committee. Both of those Select Committees questioned the projected financial savings, on the basis of insufficient evidence. The Select Committee on Defence also outlined the various difficulties inherent in any commercial management option.

These criticisms—the problems that will be created through the introduction of this form of commercial management and doubt about the savings that it is claimed will be made—have not yet been satisfactorily answered during the debate, in exchanges in this House on previous occasions, or in the response of the Ministry of Defence to the Select Committee's initial report. I understand that the Select Committee on Defence is now worried about the enhanced uncertainty factor. This point is relevant, bearing in mind what I said at the beginning of my speech —that this debate is about the future system that should be adopted for servicing the Royal Navy which plays such an important part in the defence of this country.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State outlined the changes to the Government's proposals after the publication of the consultative document. Operating companies are to be established which will enter into contracts with contractors for a period of seven years. At the end of the seven-year period there will again be uncertainty. I want to put to my hon. Friend the Minister of State a question that increasingly is being asked. He was not over-optimistic when he referred to the number of potential contractors who may be in the pipeline for the Devonport contract. One of the bases upon which he presents his argument for a fundamental change in the administration of the royal dockyards is that a more competitive edge will be introduced which will result in the dockyards being more cost-effective and providing a better quality of service. If, however, no contractor comes forward, or if the terms are unacceptable to either side because of the uncertainty, we are entitled to ask what will happen.

The Bill contains what I interpret as a fall-back clause if unforeseen circumstances should arise. I do not regard the reference to a Government-owned company as a permanent option. It is an interim measure. If we were obliged to introduce it, it would lead to greater uncertainty over an extended period. All of those who are concerned about the defence of this country, the future of Devonport dockyard and the impact of these measures upon the local economy are entitled to a response from the Government.

The separation of the management and work force will destroy the entity of the dockyards. I have already referred to the fact that there has been an increase in uncertainty. Those who are employed in the dockyards will feel less certain about their future. This in turn will lead to a reduction in the ability of the work force. In other words, their worries will be manifested in the work that they do.

Almost 13,500 people are employed at Devonport dockyard. We know that during the next 18 months to two years that number will be reduced by about 2,000. Devonport is one of the five largest single-site operations in the United Kingdom. It should not be forgotten that, in addition to the 13,500 employees in the dockyard, at an adjacent site almost 5,000 additional people are always employed by the Royal Navy base. Therefore, the total Devonport presence is almost 19,000.

I am worried about the economic and social implications of the Bill for Plymouth and south-east Cornwall. I have deliberately refrained from concentrating on local aspects, important though they undoubtedly are. However, I wish briefly to remind the House that the area of south-east Cornwall that I represent already has 18 per cent. unemployment, it already has assisted area status and average earnings are 18 per cent. below the national average. Therefore, the House will understand why I and the great majority of my constituents could do without any further traumatic experiences in the near future.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Which way will the hon. Gentleman vote?

Mr. Hicks: When the hon. Gentleman has been here a little longer, he will not make such inane comments.

I return to my central theme, which is the defence and security of this country. In particular, we are considering the servicing of the Royal Navy, and that is an important ingredient. We are being asked to agree to what I have previously described in the House as a speculative, non-proven system. There is no comparable economic model anywhere in the world. The arguments deployed by the Secretary of State and his Ministers in support of the proposal are unsubstantiated. There is a total absence of clear, tangible evidence——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: And the total absence of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hicks: My hon. Friend is right.

In the absence of any known arrangements that could win the confidence of the work force and provide the required managerial expertise, I am not prepared, at this stage, to risk the defence of our nation for dubious financial savings. I shall vote accordingly.

6.13 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I and my colleagues serving on the Select Committee on Defence have laboured long, but not too wearily, with the contents of the Bill. I do not want to weary the House with the chronology of the background to the Bill. Those points have been made well by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). Suffice it to say —and in the absence of the Chairman of the Select Committee at this point — that there was a brief interchange between the Chairman and my right hon. Friend about the Committee's conclusions.

There is often some dispute about the conclusions that a Select Committee may reach, especially when it has a preponderance of Government Members. However, I challenge anyone who heard the evidence given to the

Select Committee on Defence—as I did—to do other than conclude that the evidence was overwhelmingly against the Government's preferred option.

On the first occasion that it considered the matter, the Select Committee made it abundantly clear that the Government had failed to prove their case. On the second occasion, perhaps wrongly, I exchanged views with Vice Admiral Tippet, who, quite rightly, corrected me. I wrongly suggested—sometimes I get it wrong:

"The evidence that you gave not only to this Committee but to the Public Accounts Committee, Admiral Tippet, enabled the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to say on the Floor of the House that it was the worst evidence he had ever received."

I was corrected by Vice Admiral Sir Anthony Tippet, who said, "The weakest, I think." It was the weakest evidence the PAC had ever received on statistics, finance and the cost-effectiveness of the Government's proposals.

I cannot do other than reach the conclusion that the Government are proposing this measure for reasons other than a saving to the public purse. I believe that the Secretary of State—and I regret his absence—thinks that he is a manager, that he can embark upon a Tory-sponsored managerial revolution, that he is a good boy and is gaining Brownie points with the Prime Minister. One way to gain his points was, of course, by his proposals for the ROFs, and another is this proposal for the dockyards.

The right hon. Gentleman looked around and found an adviser, Mr. Peter Levene. We know something about Mr. Levene's background. He went into the dockyards for a few days and produced a tardy, four or five-page document. He told the Secretary of State that, having examined the position, he thought it would be a great idea to have some form of commercial management, splitting the assets of the dockyards from the labour force.

I come now to the kernel of my argument. This is almost the first time in contemporary industrial history that we have made wage slaves of a labour force. I ask the Minister, who has some experience of shipyard working, whether this is not the first time that we are transferring, not capital assets, but a labour force into a contracting company, whose only asset will be that labour force—the employees and the project management group.

I know that the Minister is relatively new to this area, but he has civil servants ready to assist him. I ask him to name another occasion in contemporary industrial history where that has happened. We are returning to what, in Scottish terms, I call the thirled miners. In the 18th century, miners in Scotland had to wear a chain around their necks, which went along with a job in the pit. If they are subservient enough—I do not believe that they will be—the workers will wear checks round their necks to enable them to be transferred from one company to another. It is a ridiculous state of affairs in modern industry to treat the work force, the most vital asset—an asset that does not appear in any company's balance sheet—in this way.

When describing the background, the Minister said that the Secretary of State had embarked on a consultative process. The Select Committee described the way in which that was done as inept. Indeed, it was not a consultative process at all. Almost in the middle of the process documents streamed out of the Ministry of Defence explaining the position. There were 25 documents, and by now there may be more. In the middle of that so-called consultative process, the Government told the workers in the dockyards, in effect, "Make up your minds, but in the meantime we are issuing a number of reports to explain the position." The Government made a farce of the consultative process. It was not consultation at all, because the Secretary of State had a closed mind on his preferred option and intended to take the step, come hell or high water.

Let us not forget that a Select Committee of the House was in the process of deliberating. It was obliged to rush—I use the word loosely—its report to try to forestall the closing date for the consultative period. Little time remained, following the issue of the report, before the commencement of the summer recess and then the proroguing of the House, in which to examine the recommendations. Little time was available for hon. Members to examine the position before the Second Reading. Even so, having examined the matter again, we reached the view—I accept that it was not conclusive—that the Government had still not proved their case.

These are early days in the process of Select Committees. Committees of this House do not have the powers that are possessed by their counterparts in Congress. If we are to build up the reputation of our Select Committees, we must accept that they have the important function of examining evidence and presenting views to the House so that hon. Members can decide issues for themselves. We shall be doing our Select Committee system a great disservice if the Government, who have a majority on them, treat the views of Select Committees in a cavalier fashion.

What kind of Navy are we likely to have in the late 1980s and 1990s? Clearly it will be a mixed Navy of surface and sub-surface vessels. Though I may hold different views from others about the degree of mix that should exist, it is clear that, despite the difficulties of financing Trident, we shall have a Navy with a substantial surface component, along with a sub-surface component.

A prime area of the sub-surface component will be the Polaris fleet and the SSNs. We had a hint from the Minister today about how the new contracting companies would come in and learn, in operational terms, how to refit and maintain the fleet. Such expertise on the part of the contracting companies will gradually have to develop.

Perhaps I should earlier have declared my interest, in that I am a long way from direct contact with the shipbuilding industry. As a member of what was the AUE, now the AUEW, I am a long way from being a Clydeside fitter. That is why I ask the Minister, who has considerable industrial experience, if he can point to a better project management set-up anywhere in industry than prevails in the present refit and maintenance organisation of the Polaris fleet. It is the finest project management that I know.

I have examined the list of companies that are touting for Rosyth and Devonport, and there are many more touting for the former than for the latter, though I shall deal with that later. Where in the contracting companies is there commensurate expertise as exists in the dockyards today? The Minister gave the game away, because he said that to enable the contracting firms to overcome the learning curve they would have to come into the dockyards and operate in parallel with the existing managements for 18 months. What a cheek——

Mr. Norman Lamont *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Douglas: I shall willingly give way to the Minister if I have misrepresented him.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I did not say that they would operate in parallel for 18 months. I shall go over this point when I reply to the debate. The 18-month period was the time, I said, before we would work up to the proportion of fixed price work that we intend should be the ultimate. That is greatly different from what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

Mr. Douglas: Perhaps I put an unfair gloss on the Minister's remarks. The Minister is saying that the contract will be on a fixed price basis, but that initially it will not be for all of the 70 per cent. of the refit and maintenance of the fleet that now goes to the dockyards. There will, therefore, be a learning curve, however loosely one might describe it as such, and in that period the contracting companies will have to rely on the weight of expertise that now exists in the dockyards.

I repeat my question: where in any of the 11 contracting companies, which I shall not embarrass by naming, is there a corporate management equivalent to, let alone in excess of, that which exists in the dockyards now, particularly in the refit and maintenance of the Polaris fleet? I am sure of my ground, because that is the most prized corporate management in refit and maintenance work in ship repairing in the United Kingdom, and probably in the world.

What markets are we considering? About 80 per cent. of the ship repairing market in the United Kingdom is in the dockyards, and that work is now being touted for by the contracting companies. I agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport that some companies will probably tout for the yards so as to curry favour with the Ministery of Defence, and particularly with the new chief of defence procurement. The real prize will be that loading of Rosyth and Devonport in relation to nuclear refits. Those are extremely complicated refits, the expertise for which now resides in the dockyards.

The Secretary of State has a strategy that bemuses the House and relates to his view as a manager. I apologise for using the name of the Secretary of State when he is not here, but let us suppose that, as a good manager, he put his views with regard to the contracting arrangement to the labour force or to a Select Committee and was told that his case was not proven and was extremely dubious on managerial grounds. Surely a good manager would want to cry "Halt", to think again and to reach some other accommodation, but the Secretary of State has not done that.

The Secretary of State has not proved his case. Only Mr. John Garnett of the Industrial Society supported the Secretary of State's case before the Select Committee, and it was pretty poor evidence. Does the Secretary of State justify his case in terms of servicing the fleet? Perhaps in the past the arrangements have been too cosy, but no one can point to that arrangement as being to the detriment of the fighting efficiency of the fleet. If the end is not profitability but the fighting efficiency of the fleet, there is no justification whatever for the Government's case.

What will contracting companies do in bidding for fixed price contracts? Will they bid for them at the lower end of the fixed price? Certainly not. They will bid at prices that will reflect the difficulties of the refit process and their view of profitability. There is the concept of fixed price contacts plus the problem of emergent work. It has been suggested that there will be a considerable gain in expertise and in the accurate pricing and costing of refits, particularly in emergent work. At present, the Navy is good at pricing 60 per cent. of a particular refit, because 40 per cent. of the price may be related to emergent work, but we have not grappled with the fact that contracting companies, in dealing with fixed price contracts, will price at the higher end of the scale. Even if they did the opposite, one can imagine what the situation would be after they got the work in the yard.

There might be a frigate at Rosyth or Devonport. Two thirds of the way through the refit the contractor might say that there was much more emergent work than had been anticipated in the budget. Would the Navy have to wait until the matter had been argued across the table? Would the Secretary of State come to the House and say, "I am sorry, but we cannot have the strategic nuclear deterrent now because we are negotiating with Taylor Woodrow"? Is that what is suggested? Alternatively, are we capable of devising contractual arrangements that are so firm and so fixed that no such situation can emerge?

The proposal in the Bill is a leap in the dark, not only in relation to the labour force — I have stressed the importance of that—but in relation to the reliability of the fleet as a whole. I repeat that perhaps in the past there has been too cosy a relationship—that is debatable—but it has never been to the detriment of the fighting efficiency of the fleet.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman is saying that perhaps there has been too cosy a relationship. I deduced from that that he feels that the operations may not have been as efficient as they might have been. If so, what has been done has been too expensive and too extravagant. There is a limit to the amount of money that can be spent in any area of the Government provision, including defence. If there has been too much expenditure in the area that we are debating, could not that money have been spent in other areas, to improve the efficiency of the Navy and the services in other ways?

Mr. Douglas: When there is an excess of £400 million, there is bound to be room for improvement in efficiency. Nowhere in their evidence to the Select Committee did the trade unions deny the possibility of achieving greater efficiency. Indeed, the trade unions were only too anxious to achieve greater efficiency, and argued the case for a trading fund, which would give the Government the accountancy constraints and innovations that perhaps are desirable to achieve some of the aims that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) might desire.

I do not wholly support the idea of a trading fund. As the Select Committee pointed out, the savings as between the Government preferred option and the trading fund option are minuscule, and we have had no detailed estimates of those savings from accountants. The right hon. Member for Devonport and the trade unions suggested that there was a case for a detailed analysis of the trading fund option, as did the Select Committee on Defence.

The Government's view is that it is essential to transfer 19,000 people from Civil Service employment into some sort of contracting or operating company. There we have a distinction without a difference. When the right hon. Member for Devonport was speaking, the Minister of State, in an intervention, said that there would be no

possibility of having two or more companies within the one dockyard. I hope that I have not paraphrased him wrongly.

The Bill enables the Government to do almost anything with the dockyards. Let no one in any part of the House be under any illusion. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) is not here. Is an operating company, as a sort of halfway house, suggested to persuade some reluctant Conservative Back Benchers to support the Bill, so that everything in the garden will be lovely?

The Secretary of State, as the sole shareholder, will hold that share in the public interest. The only difference is that the employees will cease to be civil servants. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State will be at arm's length from his Ministry and will be able, at will, to bring contractors into the yards to do his bidding. I suggest to my trade union colleagues that it will be very difficult for the lads in the yard to oppose it. It will be highly destructive and will put their future in jeopardy, as the Select Committee suggested. Therefore, it is not a convenient halfway house, although it might persuade some reluctant Conservative Back Benchers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), other Fife Members and myself respect the contribution that Rosyth dockyard has made to local employment, particularly the employment of apprentices. There is no indication whatever that any of the contractors would give to apprentices the training and background that the dockyards have given them. Other dockyards might have done something in social terms, such as more training than was needed, but that is a vital and important contribution to the labour force, not only in the east of Scotland, but in Scotland as a whole.

The Secretary of State, for doctrinaire reasons, has become unpatriotic. The Conservative party is usually depicted as the party safeguarding the defence of the nation. We have had some strictures from the Minister over the Trident force, and I shall be happy to deal with them on another occasion. *[Interruption.]* The Minister should not tempt me. I shall deal with them on another occasion. The Secretary of State has placed the fighting efficiency of the fleet in jeopardy. He has undermined the morale of the most vital asset — the labour force. I understand why the Secretary of State is not here—he should be ashamed of himself for introducing the Bill. I ask my hon. Friends, and anybody with sense on the Government Benches, to vote against the proposals.

6.41 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I share the concern of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) because Rosyth is a vital part of the Scottish economy. The people who work there have shown loyalty to the country and to the Royal Navy for a long time.

Against that background, one may wonder why we are debating the subject. If loyalty were the only ingredient that mattered, we should not be having the debate. There is more to it than that. As the decades have passed, certainly since the second world war, the costs of maintaining modern equipment, particularly modern submarines, have escalated to the point where the defence budget in that area, and in others, is now under considerable stress. If we had unlimited resources and were able to keep voting extra funds, there would be no problem.

I find the argument for the protection of jobs in the defence industry rather interesting coming from the Opposition Benches. Every time we have a debate on defence, the Opposition want to cut expenditure. It makes one wonder how they will achieve those marvellous cuts and still maintain the work force and the efficiency that has been sustained at an acceptably cost-effective level for some time.

It is equally true that in the past 15 to 20 years there have been enormous pressures. There have been many different inquiries and reviews into the cost of maintaining our royal dockyards. They came about not simply because people felt that we should conduct reviews but because it was glaringly obvious that more changes were required in the way in which we manage our dockyards.

Mr. O'Neill: Had the hon. Gentleman been present at the beginning of the Minister's speech, he would have heard him say, with the greatest diffidence, that there was no guarantee of any substantial impact on the defence budget from the proposals in the Bill. Somewhere around 5 per cent. was as much as he could offer, and that was with a £400 million turnover in the dockyards.

Mr. Walker: That was an interesting intervention. It is typical of what one would expect from that source. We are indulging in the exercise——

Mr. Gordon Brown: "Indulging" is the right word.

Mr. Walker: It is an appropriate word.

We are indulging in the exercise because the forward projections show—the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West put his finger on it—that if the costs of emerging technology and in other areas continue to escalate as they have in the past, the defence budget will be unable to sustain the servicing that is essential if we are to maintain a viable fleet. The defence budget is the budget that the Opposition are always proposing to trim and cut. I agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West that it is important—in fact, vital—that we maintain a fleet that is capable of conducting the exercises that we demand of it.

In the past, the Navy has had to face this problem on more than one occasion. The defence policies of Governments, particularly Labour Governments, have imposed on it a task that it could not adequately undertake because it was inadequately equipped.

Listening to the Opposition, I find it fascinating that the Labour party's defence policy is non-nuclear. Anyone who has been to Rosyth knows that the special expertise that has been built up and developed there over a long period is in nuclear-powered submarines and submarines equipped to fire nuclear missiles—Polaris submarines. I do not know how the Opposition can guarantee jobs at Rosyth, where the workers have a great skill. I believe that it is a great skill, and like other skills it is of use only if it is adequately and effectively managed. How can those people continue to look forward to job security when the Opposition's defence policy will phase out the jobs?

The major difference between the Opposition's defence policy and the Government's is that the Government's is based on guaranteeing the jobs at Rosyth. Trident guarantees many jobs, and no one should underestimate the value of re-equipping the Polaris fleet and the length of time that that will guarantee jobs at Rosyth. As long as the Trident submarine is in service, there will be a demand

[Mr. Walker]

for it to be serviced at Rosyth. Linked to that are the jobs at Coulport. They also depend on the continuance of our independent nuclear deterrent.

The Labour party wants to get rid of nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom. Labour Members are happy to discuss the details of jobs, emerging technology and what they describe as top secret work and equipment, but they will not argue about the specifics. What will the people of Rosyth do in the future if a non-nuclear defence policy is introduced? There is no question but that the savings that the Opposition claim will be made embrace the people at Rosyth who work on the Polaris refitting programme. The SSNs are also serviced at Rosyth. What will happen to them under a non-nuclear programme? Obviously, they will not be carrying nuclear warheads. They will not be equipped with depth charges that are nuclear detonated. They will have conventional equipment. The Royal Navy will be trying to sink deep-running submarines without the equipment to do it. That is what we are hearing from the Opposition. It is up to them to tell us how they can guarantee the jobs. No one can guarantee the jobs if we phase out the equipment that has to be serviced.

I now come to the SDP's defence policy.

Mr. Douglas: Deal with the Bill.

Mr. Walker: I am dealing with the Bill.

Mr. Douglas: Tell us about it.

Mr. Walker: We are dealing with the reasons for the management structure under the expected expenses and anticipating the expenses only because we have the equipment at Rosyth, which has to be serviced. Unless we have the equipment, we shall not need Rosyth dockyard, and no changes in the management structure will be required.

I have never been able to work out how the Social Democractic and Liberal parties manage to live together. The SDP's policy is for keeping Polaris until it becomes ancient and decrepit. Under the SDP's programme, Polaris submarines will continue to be serviced at Rosyth. According to that party's calculations, it seems that the submarines will require more frequent servicing. Perhaps that is one of the short-term advantages of that policy. SDP Members want to sustain and maintain an aging fleet of submarines. Anyone who knows anything about the aging submarine will know that it requires more frequent attention to its hull and structure. Under the SDP's policy, therefore, there might be a need to make some changes in the management in the short term at least, but in the long term, if the Polaris fleet is to be phased out when it is impossible to sustain and operate it, the jobs will disappear at Rosyth.

The Liberals' policy is akin to that of the Labour party, and makes this debate on how to manage the dockyards academic. If their policy were introduced, the dockyard force would not be required on such a scale, and the management changes would not be required.

We maintain the work force at a certain level so that we can sustain our fleet at sea, and that level is based on calculations of the number of submarines, whether Polaris, Trident or SSNs, projected for present operations and future purchase. It is against that background that we must examine Rosyth. Much of the waffle from Opposition Members both inside and outside the Chamber has been brought about by the fact that they find themselves under threat because the work force at Rosyth, like those in many other places, has trade unions that support the Labour party. It is an interesting thought that the people who support the Labour party may be putting their own jobs at risk because, unless there are submarines to service in future, there will be no jobs.

We have to consider the management of the dockyards because the management controls the way in which work is done and is usually responsible for its cost. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West said that perhaps it was too cosy an arrangement. That was a lovely way of saying that they were all old boys working together, who did not control or manage as they could or should have done. If I am wrong about what the hon. Gentleman said, perhaps he will tell me. I should like to know what "too cosy an arrangement" is.

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Gentleman should make his own speech.

Mr. Walker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was suggesting that, because of the way in which the dockyards were managed, the Navy, the customer, was unable to get out of the dockyards what it required.

That being so, one has to ask why the Government have gone for the option that they have chosen. I had some doubts about whether it was the best of the options. The proposals put forward by the trade unions in the trading fund option were interesting. In other circumstances, we might have considered it preferable. We are concerned about the costs over the next 10 to 15 years.

In the House we often hear from Opposition Members about the cost of Trident and what it will do to the defence budget. There is no question that, while Trident is being introduced and while we are maintaining our Polaris fleet and SSNs, we must have the most effective, cost-effective system. It could be said that the trading fund would have given that to a great extent, but the question that we have to ask ourselves is whether that would have removed the "too cosy an arrangement" that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West talked about. We should be leaving the control and management in the hands of the present people. The trading fund gave more clearly-defined areas of responsibility and costs, which must be of tremendous value.

No one can deny that the Government's proposals are different. I have no doubt that it will be argued that they are novel and untried. That cannot be disputed, but the same can be said about entering into any new area of management or technology. When we first had nuclear-powered submarines, they were novel and untried. There was a learning curve when those submarines were first brought into service, both in their operation and servicing.

Mr. Marlow: The Government have embarked on a large programme of privatisation. My hon. Friend will be aware that recently British Telecom was privatised, or given back to the people, and in that way a new structure was established. That was a new and untried structure, and it included the Office of Telecommunications. Despite what the Opposition said all along, it has been very successful, and the new and untried structure that the Government put forward is now massively liked by the people and much appreciated. This is another such example.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend is right. He is moving into an area to which I was about to refer. With novel and untried things, there is bound to be criticism. We must expect a feeling of uncertainty and insecurity, particularly in the work force. It would be remarkable if the workers did not now feel insecure. Of course, they do, and not unnaturally so because they believe much of the current scaremongering.

Let us consider the evidence in industries which have been privatised. The nearest example is British Aerospace, which was privatised by the Government despite all the fears, qualms and stories from Opposition Members about the ghastly things that would occur. They kept talking about top secret work and wondered how secrecy would be maintained if British Aerospace was privatised. They asked how that could be done in a privatised company. Anyone who has made any attempt to study those matters knows that private British companies have always been involved in defence procurement for top security work. Some of them have developed new equipment, often ahead of the demands of the services. The prime example was the Spitfire, which was developed privately and became the front-line service fighter of the Royal Air Force.

Even today British Aerospace is not showing any of the dreadful signs and symptoms of trouble which Opposition Members predicted during our debates on its privatisation. Experience shows that the trade unions at British Aerospace are some of the most effective and efficient in the country. Indeed, they are an example to many of us. They come to the House and lobby on behalf of their company for orders and greater efficiency. They demand that their company is the most efficient and profitable. They are quite different from people who lobby simply to maintain numbers of jobs. They are both different and progressive.

I welcome the many visits from the trade unions of British Aerospace. They tell us what the Government should be doing. The European fighter aircraft is a good example of how the trade unions developed an attitude early on. They decided that the project should be not French based but based on the experimental aircraft which British Aerospace was constructing. Privatisation, at least in the form introduced into British Aerospace, has undoubtedly been successful. It works, and the work force responds to it.

I now turn to the complaints about top secret work. Opposition spokesmen often say, "The Government propose to put Britain's ultimate deterrent"—the nuclear deterrent force, including the Polaris submarine force, which is later to be replaced by Trident—"into the hands of private contractors." Indeed, that would be foolish if it were to put the nation's security at risk, but what evidence is there of greater risks if one privatises areas of top security, instead of retaining them all in the public sector?

Most high technology areas are already in the private sector, and certainly all avionics are. Who can deny that British avionics are the best in the world? It is a great tragedy that we do not tell people more often how we have maintained top security and kept out both enemy agents and agents of industrial espionage interested to find out how our top security avionics work, are manufactured, constructed, maintained and serviced. Most of our avionics companies—for example, Ferranti, GEC, and Marconi—are world leaders. The British head-up display and the laser gun sight are way ahead of the equipment of anyone else. No one has yet suggested that, because they are in private hands or they are returned to the manufacturing factories for servicing, they are a security risk.

In the days when the Vulcan bomber was our deterrent force, the Vulcans were serviced partly by the Royal Air Force at maintenance units, and partly by the manufacturer. There was no risk. Where, then, do Opposition Members find evidence that placing the servicing of our nuclear submarines in the hands of private contractors will put the nation's security at risk?

Mr. Gordon Brown: If the hon. Gentleman is so sure that there is no problem with top secret and classified information, and with the policing of the Official Secrets Act 1911, why is a Ministry of Defence committee sitting on the issue at present, as part of the 19 working parties which are considering how to manage the scheme? Is it not a tribute to the sad state of the Scottish Conservative party that the first Back-Bench Member to speak in favour of the proposal is the newly elected—incidentally, by English votes—Scottish chairman of the Conservative party? When will he fight for jobs in Scotland, particularly as Rosyth, with 8,000 jobs, is the largest industrial establishment at risk under the Government's policies?

Mr. Walker: I might have expected some such nonsense from that source. If the hon. Gentleman had made any attempt to study the facts, he would know that I am the second Conservative chairman to be elected under the system of which he complains. I objected when I was the losing candidate, but nothing was done about it. Within 30 minutes of my election, I went to see the chairman of the 1922 Committee and asked to have the rules changed.

I am not worried about the background. Indeed, I care as deeply about the jobs at Rosyth as the hon. Gentleman does. If he had bothered to do any homework, he would know that there is a naval workshop in my constituency. I am anxious that we maintain these operations in Scotland, and the best way to do it is to ensure that the customer—the Royal Navy—has the funds to purchase the equipment of the future. That is why I support Trident. It does more for job security at Rosyth than almost any other single project. For the hon. Gentleman to shake his head and to tell the Rosyth work force that the cancellation of the Trident programme will not put their jobs at risk is to live in a world of make believe.

All the experience shows that when programmes are cancelled, servicing jobs are put at risk. That always happens. The hon. Gentleman suggests that he cares about jobs, but I want to protect jobs and ensure that high technology remains in Scotland. I do not want the jobs and experience to disappear, which will happen if a future Labour Government cancel programmes. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Gartcosh?"] Gartcosh is not about emerging technology or the future, but about the present. I am talking about the future. We should consider carefully how to maximise our opportunities.

I agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West that the Rosyth work force has skills and talents that we should not put in jeopardy, and if I believed that any provision in the Bill would put at risk the future of the dockyards, there is no way that I would support it. The finest way to secure jobs at Rosyth is to ensure that we have a programme for the future that supplies the work

[Mr. Walker]

force with the sort of equipment that it is good at servicing — nuclear-powered submarines which carry nuclear missiles.

I cannot follow the logic in the argument that somehow one can cancel programmes but still provide work, and that is where I differ from the Opposition. We must reassure the work force that it is not being misled. As a Government, we have a responsibility to carry the work force with us when we introduce measures such as this. It is not enough simply to deliver grand speeches in the House of Commons or make statements on television. It is essential to go into the dockyards and explain clearly what the proposals mean and how they will be operated once they come into force.

If we are to take workers along with us, particularly in periods of great uncertainty, it is essential that any areas of doubt are examined together. It is also important, when introducing a programme of franchising out the management, to ensure that those who take over operate under conditions that preserve the skills, talents and morale to which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West referred. I apologise if the hon. Gentleman thinks that I am damaging his case, but as we are both concerned about jobs it is inevitable that we should touch on the same topics, including morale, and one of the surest ways of destroying morale is not to explain clearly what one is proposing.

Mr. Randall: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) felt that the consultations were not satisfactory and that the dockyard workers felt that the consultations were a mere pretence?

Mr. Walker: I cannot accept that. I cannot accept a situation in which consultations are a farce. We must go through a process of consultation on all the areas of uncertainty, and they must not be a farce. I accept that for whatever reason some individuals will want to object, but if evidence is available of the need to improve the consultative process, it should be produced. Now is the time for that to be done. After all, this is only the Second Reading stage. Now and in Committee are the best times to press any Government to consider changes if we think that their legislation contains areas of uncertainty.

It has been said that the 2,000 job losses at Devonport and 400 at Rosyth are incorrect. Fife regional council has suggested that there will be greater redundancies, but the onus is on it to present us with the facts that substantiate that claim.

I have a high regard for the work done at Rosyth, although it is true that in some instances the servicing of submarines has been late and that the Royal Navy has been unhappy. On occasions, naval officers in my constituency have complained that they have had to put right problems that should not have arisen.

If the same number of frigates and submarines are available for servicing, does that mean that Fife regional council envisages the same work load being done by 2,000 fewer people? That is not sensible. If that is not what the council means, it can only be suggesting that somehow Rosyth will have a diminishing work load.

If that is so, we must be clear about what it means. I understand that in future the royal dockyards will be required to satisfy the Navy that it is getting good value for money in terms of the work that is done. There is to be no change in the number of ships, and certainly not in the number of submarines, that will require servicing. Indeed, an increased number of submarines will require servicing, because there will be more hunter-killer submarines, not fewer. Given Rosyth's special expertise, I would have thought that it could look forward to more work.

If the Navy has more ships for servicing and Rosyth is the obvious place at which to carry it out, from where will the redundancies come? Will they be achieved by increased efficiency? I doubt that very much, because no one will convince me that the present Rosyth work force is overmanned to the tune of 2,000. That is nonsense, and anyone making such a statement will be laughed all around Fife, because it is just not true.

We are talking about improvements in management that will produce better and more cost-effective work. That is not the same as reducing numbers. If the ships are serviced more speedily, if the job is done more effectively and if there are more submarines to service, a far better cost ratio per unit will be achieved.

Frankly, I think that Fife regional council picked the figure of 2,000 out of the sky. I am still waiting for the council to substantiate how those 2,000 redundancies will occur. If it is saying that in future a Labour Government will run Rosyth, I can certainly envisage 2,000 redundancies because, without a Polaris or Trident programme, there will be fewer important ships to service.

To my mind, the council's claim is not about the way the dockyards are managed but about how the Royal Navy will in future be able to give the dockyards the same number of ships for servicing as it has done in the past.

I am concerned about the jobs at Rosyth and the effect that they have on the Scottish economy. Given the situation that will prevail in the next 10 to 15 years, it is vital that we have in place the new training that will be required and the new practices that will be necessary to service future equipment. If we are to have the willingness and attitudes that are vital for the dockyards to be cost-effective, the new management must be monitored at each stage so that we know that it is producing what the Bill envisages.

I know that some of my hon. Friends are not too happy about this measure. If we are not satisfied that the proposed way of managing the Royal dockyards is the best way, my hon. Friends have a duty to spell out their doubts clearly in Committee on each clause and each amendment, and each argument must be answered in detail. I assume that the Bill will go through unamended. Unless my hon. Friends' reservations about the proposals have been satisfied, there is a danger that we shall put into operation a package of proposals that will not carry the convictions of hon. Members in whose constituencies the dockyard workers live. My hon. Friends have a special responsibility. We must think seriously about trying to win the hearts and minds of those who are deeply worried about what will happen as a result of the Bill.

7.21pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I thought for one moment during the speech of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) that the Government had been able to disinter a supporter, but in his last few remarks that support became frayed. He finished by

delivering as menacing a threat to the Government as he is ever likely to deliver. I can see the Government trembling.

I should like to return to the point that I made at the beginning of the debate about the Secretary of State's absence. I say that with no disrespect to the Minister who introduced the Bill. The Secretary of State's absence is not a small matter. It would have been open to the Minister to insist that he should have been here and to insist to the Leader of the House that arrangements should have been made for the Bill to be introduced when the Secretary of State was not absent from the country on other duties. The doctrine in these matters is that a Minister's first responsibility is to the House of Commons. It does not appear that that responsibility has been discharged by the Secretary of State. I have had no answer to the question whether the Government attempted to change the timing of this debate so that the Secretary of State could be here.

This is a controversial Bill. If it were a trivial, tuppenny-ha'penny Bill, the Ministry of Defence might be able to say that it could be left to Ministers other than the Secretary of State. It is plain from what has been said that hon. Members on both sides of the House are aware that the Bill involves a major principle. It involves the future, the status, the work and the prospects of many of our citizens—people who have given great service to the nation. Their livelihoods are at stake, as the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) underlined. In such circumstances, for the Secretary of State for Defence to say that he will not trouble to come here or make arrangements to be here is an insult to the dockyard workers, the industry and the House of Commons. It also injures the way in which we seek to do our business.

No hon. Member who has listened to the debate could doubt how powerful are the objections from both sides of the House to what the Government propose. The hon. Member for Drake made that clear, but it was not just her speech. Many other speeches have been made which have mentioned the same point. Every speech, except that of the hon. Member for Tayside, North, has been extremely damaging. Every speech has had to finish with a plea to the Government. Even the hon. Gentleman, their one supporter, ended with a plea. He said that we should look at the matter afresh and have real consultations with the people who do the work.

If the Secretary of State had been here, we should have been able to press such matters upon him. The Minister has a disability. He cannot change the Bill at this stage. He has no power to respond to the debate. He cannot say that he will consider the case that has been put by hon. Members on both sides of the House. In view of what was said when the earlier statement was made, the Secretary of State's absence is an insult to the House of Commons. He will do himself a grave disservice. It is arrogant of the Secretary of State to say, "Let the House of Commons get on with its business. I shall not worry about it."

Every parliamentary opportunity has been taken to try to impress upon the Government the fears and anxieties felt by different sections of the House. That is what Select Committees are for. That is what the Public Accounts Committee is for. The Chamber has the power, the right, the authority and the duty to survey what those Committees say, but they are set up to advise us—and all the advice that has come from those Committees is opposed to what the Government propose. Never before, I suppose, in parliamentary history have there been so many Committees recommending that a Government should not do what this Government propose.

The Bill is a kind of constitutional outrage. If we were not discussing something even more serious—what the Government are doing to workers throughout the country and in the dockyards—there would be many reasons for objecting to the Bill because of the form in which it is presented. Even the excellent Library, which produces reference sheets, was dumb-founded by the Bill. In its introduction, the Library said:

"The interpretation of this Bill presents one important problem. It is basically enabling legislation, not just in the sense that it enables orders to be made at a later date but also because it enables companies to be established and a particular scheme to be operated."

The Library describes its difficulties in suggesting to Members how they should consider the Bill. The Library's note finishes:

"In the case of the Dockyards one has to remember that all assurances about conditions of staff service need to be in the Bill itself for them to have any legal validity at this stage."

In other words, the Government have produced one of the vaguest enabling Bills ever presented to the House. They could do almost anything under the Bill and claim that they were acting within the proper confines of the Bill. All they have to do is to introduce orders late at night. They are giving themselves the power in the future, late at night, to do any of the things to which all the Committees have objected whenever they have been able to examine the matter in detail.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has said, the Committees have spent many hours examining the proposals. By this enabling Bill, the Government are giving themselves the power to ram through at the last moment any solution that they want. They have merely to call upon their majority in the House to do that. For them to proceed with such a matter in such a way can only cause grave damage to the House of Commons.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) asked what we were to do when every kind of parliamentary resort had been used to bring pressure on the Government and the Government would not listen. The Government would be doing a great injury to the House if they used their majority in that way. They cannot complain about the representations made to them by the dockyard workers and the various Committees, but there has been no real consultation between the Government and these people, as the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake has said. The hon. Lady knows the situation better than the Minister, for she has been interested in this matter from the very beginning. The hon. Member for Tayside, North, almost on bended knee, pleaded for consultation in future. The Government knew that they were doing something that was bound to cause deep offence in many quarters, but they did not bother to have any decent consultation, just as they have not bothered to listen carefully to any representations from the various Committees.

When the Secretary of State deigned to come to the House and make the original announcement about the Bill, one of his chief methods of proceeding was to sneer at hon. Members on both sides of the House who raised matters that affected their constituents. The Secretary of State turned on them, saying that they were just talking about constituency interests, as though that was in some way demeaning. He then went on to try to blame the Labour

[Mr. Michael Foot]

party for the situation. He said that because the Labour Government had not introduced reforms and changes at an earlier stage, this Government were now forced to make those changes. Time and again the Secretary of State has said that the Labour party ran away from such propositions. I should be happy to discuss the Labour party's record in relation to the dockyards, because it is a fine one. It is hopeless for the Government or anybody else to blame the Labour party for the state of the royal dockyards.

The royal dockyards played a pre-eminent part in the Falklands war. No Minister would dare to criticise what the dockyard workers did during the Falklands war. I vividly remember going to Devonport dockyard at that time of crisis and seeing how efficiently, indeed super-efficiently, the people there were conducting their affairs. Everyone paid the greatest tributes to the royal dockyards and the part that they played during the Falklands war. The Secretary of State, when he last deigned to speak to us on the matter, implied that the royal dockyards were being mismanaged because of the Labour party's neglect. The royal dockyards, which performed so brilliantly at the time of the Falklands war, were operating under a system of neglect for which the Secretary of State says the previous Labour Government were responsible.

It is not true that there has been shameful inefficiency in the dockyards. Nobody has said that no changes are needed. Of course, there are things that could be changed. The unions in the dockyards have always been prepared to accept that. The test of the royal dockyards is what they do at moments of great crisis, such as the Falklands war. At that moment the royal dockyards proved themselves to be super-efficient. For a dockyard to be super-efficient, it must have resources available which it may not need to use all the time. That is one of the problems.

Mr. Sayeed: No one disputes the innate patriotism of the dockyard workers, and they worked super-hard because of that patriotism. At the time of the Falklands war they did jobs in 18 weeks which were scheduled for two years, but that very scheduling shows that in peace time they were not working as efficiently as they could, so a different form of management is required to increase peace-time efficiency.

Mr. Foot: I shall answer that point by giving the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and the Government a history lesson. This matter has been considered before by people who have spent their whole lives in the dockyards. The trade unions and management have had to deal with the problem of pressure on the yards at special times. In war time or at times of near war and special moments of crisis, the resources must be available to do things that cannot be done on a common form basis. If that special responsibility were removed and the dockyards were run on a normal commercial basis, another Falklands crisis might occur and no royal dockyard would be able to meet the special responsibility.

The Labour party found the correct solution to that problem, and the same solution would work today. After the first world war, the numbers working in the dockyards were not maintained. People were sacked and made redundant. They were sacked quicker then than now. In 1919 almost 1,000 workers were sacked on one day, and they had to be out within a week. That is how dockyard workers were repaid for what they had done in the 1914-18 war. The workers were extremely bitter about that. That was one of the main reasons for the foundation of the Labour party in Devonport, and I am sure that the same is true of Portsmouth and Chatham. After 1918 Governments were reckless in human terms. They did not care about sustaining on a long-term basis the service that the dockyards could provide for the nation.

In 1945, after the second world war, a Labour Government had the responsibility of caring for the dockyards. The Labour party learnt from previous mistakes and would not sack dockyard workers. The Labour Government would not return to those former barbarous methods, partly because they recognised what the dockyard workers and the Navy had done in the war, but also because they did not believe that that was a sane and sensible way to run anything.

After 1945 the Labour Government managed the dockyards differently. All the clever ideas that the Minister talked about—for example, that the dockyards should find other kinds of work, which he claimed were his brilliant schemes—were merely what the Labour Government did after 1945. The Labour Government introduced repayment work. Some of the admirals at the time were not passionately fond of that, but we went ahead and managed to maintain the dockyard labour force at a good level throughout that period. We enabled the dockyards to refit other types of ship and merchant vessels and so maintain the strength of the labour force. We did not say that it was necessary to maintain the labour force at that level for all time, but if the royal dockyards have to perform the essential task of maintaining the British Navy the labour force must be maintained over a long period. It must have security, and the workers must see a future for their children, their families and their communities.

There may have been a need for further changes in the past decade. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that huge sums were invested in the dockyards to enable them to do their job properly. The Opposition do not believe that that solution is perfect or that no further changes are needed but nothing could be so crass as the Government's present proposals. The Government are wrecking all that has been built up in the dockyards over this period by turning on the dockyard workers after praising them for their hard work during the Falklands campaign. The Government have forgotten how quickly the dockyard workers dealt with all their problems. I believe that Devonport royal dockyard is the most efficient naval dockyard in the world due to the way in which it has been managed and the spirit of its workers. In saying that, I do not mean to denigrate Rosyth. Rosyth, Chatham and Portsmouth also have fine records.

Under the proposed new scheme there will be great competition between Devonport and Rosyth. I am not sure how that competition will be resolved. I do not know what will happen if the new Devonport dockyard company goes, or seems likely to go, bankrupt. Will the Government let that happen or will they step in? Will it be a fake type of competition? The whole idea is monstrous. The Government should never have embarked upon it. Even after embarking on it, they should have listened to what was said in so many quarters.

The Government say that this has nothing to do with the Royal Navy—that it is just a question of commercial management. That, too, shows how little they understand.

If they had gone to Devonport and Rosyth, or even to Portsmouth before they started closing it, and talked to people who had spent their lives there — dockyard workers, admiral superintendents or whatever — they would have heard a very different story.

The roots of this matter lie deep in British history. I know that it is an insult to mention history to the Government. Both history and consultation are dirty words in their dictionary. The great naval triumphs of Britain were first the triumphs of the dockyards — nationalised dockyards, although I do not wish to rub that in too much. If the Minister ever takes time to read some history, or if any member of the Government has the first beginnings of any knowledge of our history, he will discover the truth of the matter. As Trevelyan puts it,

"Henry VIII had founded the Royal Navy. Under Edward VI and Mary it had been permitted to decay. Under Elizabeth it was revived . . . Then, in a fortunate hour"—

1578, 10 years before the Armada—

"Elizabeth put John Hawkins in charge of the building and upkeep of her ships. During the decade before the coming of open war, which the Queen had so long and so wisely postponed, Hawkins did as great a work in the dockyards as Drake on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts."

The same has happened twice in our own century. The Falklands could be regarded as a third example. On none of those occasions has anyone dared to say that the people in the royal dockyards have not served this country properly, yet the present Government care so little about all that that they will not even consult those people properly about their own future.

All this is just part of the Government's doctrine that nothing counts but the balance sheet. Governments who proceed on that basis eventually find that they cannot even run the balance sheet properly. Having begun by saying that everything must be subordinate to the balance sheet, the Government have landed us in bigger deficits than we have ever known in a whole range of areas.

An article by Raphael Samuel in *The Guardian* today, albeit on a different subject, touches on the Government's attitude to these matters. He says:

"If there is one thing which may yet sink this government . . . it is the way it has personally devalued us and poisoned the very idea of public service. Under the harsh glare of cost-benefit analysis, and in the shadow of micro-chip technology, it appears that the entire working population of this country — teachers, miners, engineers, even Health Service workers"—

we must now add dockyard workers—

"are all, in some final sense, actually or potentially redundant, a drag on the nation rather than its precious human capital, as 'uneconomic' as the villages which Mr. MacGregor is consigning to oblivion."

With this Bill the Government are poisoning a public service which has brought nothing but help and honour to this country. Whatever the Minister says, the best thing that he can do is to report to the absent Secretary of State for Defence, who did not have the nerve or the courtesy to come here today, that the whole House is outraged by his proposals and will fight them every inch of the way. Moreover, it will be no use carrying them through because, when Labour returns to government, we shall restore the royal dockyards to their proper place of esteem and operation.

7.44 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): In considering the future operations of the royal dockyards, five options are available. The first option is to do nothing. That is the option that the Labour Government took after the Mallabar report in 1970. No doubt they found it politically expedient to refuse to do their duty and address a problem that had existed for 300 years. The present Government do not duck their responsibilities. It is the duty of the Government to deal with difficult situations, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is absolutely right to bring in a Bill which seeks to deal with the deep-seated problems of the royal dockyards.

The second option is to do next to nothing. This is the option adopted by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) in suggesting that we set up a trading fund. Such a proposal would mean considerable upheaval, but very little gain. The work force would remain in the Civil Service, the consequent rigidities would continue and there would not be sound commercial management, because that would be impossible within such a system. The barriers to investment and the other financial constraints would not diminish and the inherent delays of the Civil Service would mean a lack of flexibility in pay, in the size and mix of the work force and in the terms and conditions under which it works. There would be no chance of profit sharing, which the Government's proposal offers, and nearly all the current problems of the dockyards would be perpetuated. The trading fund option would thus be no more than a cosmetic change.

The third option is full-scale privatisation. Personally, I am strongly against that. To allow control of a prime strategic defence asset to pass into private hands would be utterly wrong. It would confer on those private individuals considerable bargaining powers and there would be no certainty that those powers could not be exercised to the detriment of the nation. I believe that the whole House would reject that option.

Of the two remaining options, one is the private limited company option supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes). The Government would be the sole shareholder in the company. We have some experience of Government-owned companies of this kind — Austin Rover, British Airways and Rolls-Royce — but in the case of the dockyards, unlike what happened in those cases, the Government could not sell the shares, because that would lead to full-scale privatisation, which we all reject.

There are demerits in the plc suggestion. The first relates to capital expenditure. I believe that initially, at any rate, the enterprise would have to be Government funded, because finances could not be sufficiently self-generated. We would have to determine the basis of the borrowing powers of the plc. Would they be guaranteed by the Government? If the moneys came from outside, what interest rate would be charged? The plc does not offer the same inducement to make the necessary efficiencies in the dockyards. Nevertheless, it is a possibility and there may be a chance of having a hybrid arrangement, with Rosyth under commercial management, and Devonport as a plc. Hybridity is permitted within the terms of the Bill and the plc option would always be available as a fall-back.

If the dockyards were commercialised, the majority of the fixed assets would remain in the Government's hands, but the operation of the yards would be undertaken by private contractors. The right hon. Member for Devonport decried this idea, as though it had never happened anywhere. Although I accept that there are no parallels between hotels and dockyards, it should be said that there are many systems of franchise, and not all for fast foods. Many major hotels are run on that basis. It is possible to

[Mr. Jonathan Sayeed]

have the fixed assets owned by one company and for another company to operate those assets. That is commercially effective. There may be no exact parallels to the franchising of dockyard management, but the right hon. Member for Devonport showed a considerable lack of understanding of how franchising works by rubbishing the concept.

The majority of the fixed assets would remain in the state's hands if there were commercial management. That is the Government's preferred option, and it is the only option in the short term that will encourage the considerable shake-up that is necessary in the dockyards, in both attitudes and demarcation. For that reason, it is my preferred option.

To make this option, or indeed the plc option, work effectively, there are certain provisions which need to be set out in the Bill, or at least in the commercial contracts. The initial — and I stress the word initial — contract period should be increased from seven to 10 years. This will include two to three years to reorganise and rationalise the operation of the dockyards and it would be fair to give the management company thereafter a seven-year run to prove how effective it is. There should be a five-year or seven-year review of operation in the initial period and the company would be put on warning if it was inefficient. After the initial 10-year period, subsequent contracts should be for seven years. It is important that the contract should be in excess of the life of a Government, of whatever party.

The second point is that the Government must take powers to act unilaterally to take back to themselves the operation of the dockyard if at any time they believe that the strategic interests of the country are being imperilled by the managing company. That right should be set out in the Bill. This should occur without a long review process. At a later date, compensation for the removal of the franchise could be agreed mutually or through an independent assessor. It is important that the Government should be able to act unilaterally if they feel that the defence of the nation is in peril.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): This is an interesting thesis. Does it not imply that, as strategic interests can be so important at times, the management which the hon. Gentleman is suggesting should take over the dockyards may not be up to the standards required? If that is so, why is the hon. Gentleman suggesting such an option?

Mr. Sayeed: I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands me. I am not suggesting that it will happen. I am suggesting that, in a belt-and-braces and string-round-the-waist Bill, we should ensure that, in such an event, we have an effective and immediate remedy.

Mr. Soley: Is the hon. Gentleman accepting the Government's thesis that the present management is not good enough?

Mr. Sayeed: I am suggesting that the whole make-up of the dockyards—I agree with what my hon. Friend the Minister said—ensures that they cannot be as efficient as we would like, or as the Navy would like. I am not saying that the chosen management companies will be inefficient. I expect them to be chosen on the basis of their efficiency. However, we still need to ensure that, if the worst came to the worst, the Government could take back into their hands the management of the dockyards, and that the Bill, or at the very least the management contract, permits this.

I hope that the Government will encourage companies to write into their bids a scheme for encouraging profit sharing. This would encourage workers in the dockyards to play a much fuller and more involved part than mere salaried employees.

The refitting of SSNs is carried out at Devonport, though in future this will take place at Rosyth as well. The refitting of Trident SSBNs will be undertaken only at Rosyth. I accept, with certain reservations, that the Government are keeping their finger on the pulse of defence procurement and expenditure and are increasingly effective, but I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that competition is the best tool for controlling costs.

There is no inherent merit in transferring a public monopoly into a private monopoly, and I urge my hon. Friend to consider the suggestion that the parties which own the shipbuilding yards should not be the same as those who own the commercial companies that manage the royal dockyards. In that way, those who build the ships could, if equipped, compete with the royal dockyards for refitting contracts. Therefore, Vickers may well equip itself to compete with Rosyth in bidding for refitting work on SSBN Trident submarines.

Again to encourage competition I would expect my hon. Friend to ensure that the commercial management company that runs Rosyth is not the same as the commercial management company that runs Devonport because Devonport and Rosyth should be able to compete with each other. In this manner the two royal dockyards and the yards that build the ships will not only be able to compete for contracts to refit the simpler types of vessels — Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, offshore patrol vessels and the like—but will be able to compete for the refitting of complex type 22 and type 23 frigates, SSNs and even possibly SSBNs.

I regret that there has been only a short time for consultation, but I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not always been assisted by the trade union leaders in the dockyards. For example, they have not been prepared to distribute the booklets which have been made available. I have read some of the pamphlets which have been issued, which have suggested that pension and redundancy arrangements will be other than what they are actually to be, but the Government should have allowed a longer period for consultation. On the other hand, the Government have had the courage to address a real problem. It is a problem which everyone has acknowledged, but which only the Government have been prepared to face.

The Government have suggested that their proposed option is the one that is preferred by the Navy Board professionals who need the ships, and who operate them. The Bill is at least short enough and flexible enough to permit a variety of options to be considered. It is an important step in the right direction, and I commend it to the House.

8.3 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I have no direct constituency interest in this enabling Bill, but I beg the indulgence of the House for a few minutes. I am probably unique in the House at this moment because

I am an ex-dockyard apprentice. I served my apprenticeship for five years at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport, and joined the electricians' union at that time, which was in 1953. I am extremely proud of the training which I received. The apprenticeships that used to exist were of an extremely high quality. That can still be said of some apprenticeship schemes. The skill level of many of those who work in the dockyards is extremely high.

I am worried about this enabling Bill. We seem to be embarking on a course that will take the dockyards into some commercial management. Presumably, the motive behind that is to cut costs. It is important to remember that we are dealing with the Royal Navy. We are talking about a force which has to be in top-line condition all the time. I am fearful of some of the analogies which have been drawn today. For example, it is not possible to compare the dockyards with areas in which I have worked such as the motor industry, the steel industry, information technology or banking. Direct comparisons of that sort cannot be made.

Modern ships — whether they be surface vessels, submarines or carriers—are extremely complicated and immensely complex. It is necessary to have a skilled work force to ensure that refits, for example, are carried out expeditiously and efficiently when required. It is important to recognise also that in the event of conflict, such as the Falklands war, our work force can respond expeditiously. I fear that the Government's proposal is one that could cause a depletion of the work force. The skills that now exist in the dockyards could be lost because of the uncertainty about the terms and conditions of employment.

Under the proposed arrangements highlighted in the Bill, an employee will join one of the private companies that receive contracts. When a company has completed its contract, the individual employed on a dockyard project will be finished. That is not the way to keep together a work force which must be of an appropriately skilled level to ensure that our Navy is in tip-top fighting condition. We are talking about ensuring that one of our key services is kept in that condition.

I am worried about some of the remarks during the debate about management reorganisation in the event of a conflict. We all know only too clearly from the Falklands that the time scale is short when we are faced with a conflict. I am sure that we all remember the short time that we had to get the task force steaming south. I have no doubt that there was early intelligence, but by the time decisions had been made, we were left with only a short interval before the task force had to leave for the south. It would not be possible to reorganise management in such a short time.

One of the great strengths of dockyard employees and the management structure is that they are pretty good at sorting out complex problems quickly. When I served at Devonport, we used to hear stories and tell stories about how we could lick the Americans. When the American fleet was tied against the sea wall, our fleet was out exercising and performing various tasks that the other NATO navies were unable to do. That is of great credit to dockyard employees and the management. We must remember that wars are won by those behind the scenes as well as by those at the front line. Of paramount importance are those who ensure that our Navy is properly equipped and that our vessels are serviced to the highest possible level. Without that support, our front-line troops are seriously impaired.

I know that the people of Devonport have been loyal. I cannot speak for Rosyth because I have not had experience of it. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) will be speaking about Rosyth. The loyalty of those at Devonport has been genuine, and I do not say that in a debating sense. They have the ability to respond.

We must be careful about the readiness of the Royal Navy. It seems that we are engaged in a cost-cutting exercise, and we must not compare the Navy directly with, for example, ordinary manufacturing industry. It is clear that the Navy is a different kettle of fish.

We can test the Government's proposed reorganisation only in the event of a war. I, like many others, would be dismayed to find that in the event of a war the Royal Navy was unable to get to sea to perform in the way in which it should because of the reorganisation of the dockyards following the passing of the Bill.

This is an unfortunate measure. It is an enabling Bill and we do not really understand what it means. I share the opinion of many hon. Members that it has serious shortcomings. It seems that it will not save us very much expenditure and that any savings will be accompanied by many uncertainties. I hope that we are not penny-pinching at the expense of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Royal Navy.

8.10 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): My colleagues who have followed the proceedings of the Select Committee on Defence will know that I believe wholeheartedly in privatisation. I place it second only to the defence of the realm.

The Select Committee on Defence went to considerable trouble and considered the Bill in great detail. After examination of the various proposals, the Committee concluded that it was not a good idea for the Bill to proceed in its present form. The Select Committee was chaired by a Conservative Member and, of course, had a Government majority. The loyalty of the members of the Select Committee was with the Government in general outlook, but they believed that matters were not being considered from the right angle. They believed that the attitude of the trade unions had changed considerably during the past few years and that the Government's premise for promoting the Bill seemed to be based on what happened many years ago. The Government are determined to make the trade unions understand the facts of life about what works and what does not work. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) mentioned that he joined the electricians' union, which I am glad to see is in the forefront of realism in commercial affairs because it takes a realistic line on what does and does not pay.

We must carefully consider the proposals. The Public Accounts Committee estimated that the savings likely to result would be restricted to 1 per cent. If that was the estimate before the trade unions saw the light, the margin must now be smaller. If so, are the Government considering the matter properly and effectively? I am not sure that they are.

We must consider the matter in further detail. The Select Committee concluded:

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

"We agree that the objective of infusing the Royal dockyards with entrepreneurial dynamism and a spirit of competition is a laudable one. The question is how best to achieve this end. The main benefit arising from the 'preferred option' would appear to be the transfer of 19,000 employees from the Civil Service establishment and from the constraints of Civil Service management."

If that is the main objective — I understand the Government's wish to pursue their manpower targets—it is not a sufficient reason to put at risk the defence of this country.

There are many good reasons why some aspects of the defence industry should be privatised, wherever possible, but it does not follow that this is such a case. If the Government are convinced that an experiment in privatisation would work—I am one of those who doubt that—they should pursue the possibility of privatising some yards. There is no earthly reason why all the yards should be privatised at the same time. Geographically, the yards are far apart and there is a good reason for dealing with them separately. That would not achieve the 19,000 transfer objective, but the defence of the country is more important than reaching a manpower target. The Committee concluded:

"We urge the Government to approach the debates on the Dockyard Services Bill with an open mind and a readiness to draw fully upon the opinions expressed from all quarters, in the best interests of the fighting efficiency of the Fleet and of the defence and security of the nation."

That is precisely what every hon. Member should be working for. I urge the Minister to justify how the Bill will meet those criteria.

8.15 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): We are debating a proposal that destroys three centuries of dockyard service to the nation, threatens the readiness of our Navy for the task of peace and war and puts at risk the seagoing efficiency and the fighting effectiveness of 50 surface vessels and a score of submarines. The proposal has grave consequences for the future of jobs and conditions of service of a loyal work force of about 20,000 civil servants so recently and universally praised for their dedication in the Falklands campaign. When we debate these matters, the least that the House has a right to expect is not only the attendance of the Secretary of State for Defence and less filibustering from hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), but proper information, adequate consultation and a detailed justification, which was missing from the Minister's speech.

At best, we have had not a defence of the future arrangements for the royal dockyards but an attack on the present arrangements in the dockyards. There has been no argument in favour of the proposed management change. Instead, we have had the assertion that there should be a change in the management. The assumption that underlies every policy of this Government is that the public sector is wrong by definition and that the private sector is right because it is the private sector.

I remind the hon. Members for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and for Tayside, North, who are no longer present, that we are discussing a privatisation proposal that has been rejected by every Committee, including the Mallabar, Speed and Hudson committees, that has reviewed the future of dockyard arrangements since the war. The proposal has found no favour in any country that is faced with the responsibility of refitting, repairing and maintaining the most sophisticated naval vessels and submarines. Since its disclosure 18 months ago, the proposal has been opposed by every organisation and individual, almost without exception, that has examined it. As the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) reminded the House, since its publication, the proposal has evoked the unparalleled and unprecedented rejection of two senior Committees of the House and the outright universal opposition of the highly skilled work forces at Rosyth and Devonport. But this privatisation proposal is presented to the House almost unchanged since the original sketchy six-page prospectus was produced by Mr. Peter Levene.

The House must ask, and Conservative Members would also question if they were here, whether Britain will be better defended, more secure, safer and more efficiently defended if some of the most lethal weapons known to man are refitted by an untried operator working under untested arrangements with a work force of uncertain size over which there is as yet an unspecified amount of public control.

There is no clause or subsection in the Bill to prevent the work forces of Rosyth and Devonport from being run down to a core without any capability or capacity in an emergency. Nor is there anything in the Bill to prevent the franchises for Rosyth and Devonport from falling into the hands of a foreign cartel. There is nothing in the Bill to protect the Navy against the hazards of City and stock exchange finance, or even the coincidence of inernational crises and emergencies with awkward periods of contract changeover or inexperienced operators beginning their contracts. That is why one of the Minister's civil servants said to the Select Committee that the preferred option is the high-risk option for the Navy.

What conceivable benefits could justify the uncertainties and disruption of this privatisation measure? For six years, we have been told by the Government that the merit of privatisation is that it offers us a people's capitalism through individual share ownership and economy through competition. Yet if nothing in the Bill will achieve those objectives, if nothing in the Bill will permit mass capitalism by share ownership because no shares will be sold and only the franchise for the dockyards is on offer, if nothing in the Bill will extend real competition because with one Navy, only two dockyards and two companies in control the Ministry of Defence will inevitably be a captive buyer from private monopoly suppliers, and if nothing in the Bill will reduce the public sector borrowing requirement because all new investment in the dockyards will be the responsibility of the Government and not the private operator who takes over, we must conclude that the Bill represents privatisation for privatisation's sake, based on an unsupported assertion that the private sector is right only because it is the private sector.

The main purpose of the exercise — the only conceivable justification that the Minister could put forward for this colossal gamble with our Navy and our defences—is to cut costs and save cash. The original Levene report said that the purpose of the scheme was to save money. In the open government document issued a few months ago, entitled "The Future of the Royal Dockyard", the stated aim was the cutting of costs. In the Gracious Speech, the privatisation experiment was described clearly as being designed to secure

"value for money in spending on defence."

Vice Admiral Tippet told the Select Committee on Defence that there would be "substantial savings" as a result of the changes.

What does "value for money" mean? What are "financial economies"? What are "substantial savings" in practice when, according to the financial statement in the Bill, the changes,

"are unlikely to have a major effect on central Government expenditure"?

I remind Conservative Members of the point that I put to the Minister this afternoon. Even under the Government's most dubious reckonings, the minimum saving will be only £18 million, and the expected saving is only between £29 million and £33 million a year. When set against the alternative of a trading fund, which has been costed by the Government, those savings are reduced further to a minimum of only £10 million or, at best, between £21 million and £23 million. When set against the implementation costs of the scheme in redundancy payments, transitional costs and consultancy fees—we are told that implementation will cost about £60 million—the savings will be reduced by at least another £6 million a year, taken on a 10-year basis, and the savings then decrease to a minimum of £4 million, or £15 million at best. Since, in addition, up to £200 million will be paid to set up a private pension scheme, the conclusion that we must reach is that there will be no savings in 1987, no savings in 1988, no savings for the rest of the decade and that there are unlikely to be savings in the 1990s, if the scheme is properly costed, given all the additional initial expenses that are involved. There will probably be no savings even as we move into the first years of the 21st century.

It is hardly surprising that the Public Accounts Committee, concerned more with financial reality than with economic theory, was neither impressed nor convinced by the financial information produced by the Government. The PAC concluded that the evidence from the Ministry of Defence was

"among the worst we have received during this Parliament. The calculations given provided us with no valid bases on which to judge whether any increase in efficiency would result from the Government's preferred option."

The Minister gave us new figures and new percentages on the core programme, including the costs that would be met by competition, the costs that would be met by fixed-price contracts and those that would be met by cost-plus arrangements. He appeared to say that fixed-price contracts would operate, but not for the first two years, not for 25 per cent. of the work in the next five years, not presumably for emergent work which could not easily be covered under the arrangements, and certainly not for unprogrammed work, which could not be covered under the present arrangements, and certainly not for unprogrammed work, which could not be covered under the present arrangements. Is it any wonder that when Touche Ross, the consultant to the Ministry of Defence, examined the proper financing of dockyards put into the private sector, it concluded that if it estimated what the dockyards would cost to run on a market basis, it had better include a 10 per cent. mark-up on existing prices for the profit margins that would be required by a commercial contractor? I presume that the document produced by Touche Ross is supported by the Ministry of Defence dockyard planning team, in whose name it it published.

The Government's argument is that throughout the exercise there will be substantial savings and no risk. The truth is that there will be no savings and substantial risks.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) mentioned the Admiralty Board, which seems to be the only respectable supporter that the Minister can claim for his scheme. My right hon. Friend cited Rear Admiral George's evidence to the Select Committee on Defence, when he said:

"It is largely the pressures on the defence budget which have led the Admiralty Board to consider matters of saving money."

The Board went even further in its evidence and said that it could see the benefit to the Navy in terms of the release of resources which should be capable of being used for front-line activities within the Navy. The board supported the proposals because the Minister told it that the scheme would produce savings. I understand that the Admiralty Board is not composed of simple sailors who might be expected to succumb to the wiles of a City operator, even one dressed for the occasion in a combat jacket. But the board has been taken in by the glossy financial prospectus passed round by the more dubious variety of secondary banks and, having been thoroughly misled by the Minister, now discovers that its puzzled assent to the scheme is about the only evidence that the Minister can cite in his favour.

If the Government cannot tell us where the scheme will produce savings, should they not tell us about the risks that it involves? In a matter so grave as national security, the House has a right to demand and to expect proper safeguards. But where are those safeguards in the Bill? Where are the safeguards to ensure the maintenance of a strategic minimum capacity? Where are the safeguards that we shall maintain an emergency capability in the dockyards at times of international crises? There is nothing in the Bill about that. Where in the Bill are the safeguards on nuclear safety, when the responsibility for radiological protection will be with the contractor who takes over the dockyard and the responsibility for the removal and transportation of nuclear waste and radioactive substances will be with the Ministry of Defence?

Where are the safeguards in the Bill to prevent our submarines from being refitted fender to fender with Russian trawlers? That is unknown in the public sector, but is clearly known in the private sector, because only a few months ago the submarine HMS Otter was photographed undergoing a refit on the Humber side by side with a Russian trawler. If there is a bar on countries that are unacceptable for strategic reasons for giving their naval refit work to the newly privatised dockyards, the dockyard planning team and Touche Ross seem to be unaware of it. Why did Touche Ross, presumably on the information given by the dockyard planning team, say in the report simply that the Communist world was "virtually certain" never to wish to negotiate the use of the dockyards? It says not that they will be banned from using the dockyards, but that they are almost certain never to wish to use them. In other words, the reason that there will not be Russian trawlers in the dockyards is not the Government's unwillingness for ideological reasons, but the unwillingness of the Soviet or Communist bloc to use the dockyards.

Why are countries that are wholly unacceptable to us, such as Chile, South Africa and Argentina, cited in the document as only "unlikely" to be wanting work done within the dockyards? Why is it said that, even though

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

they are unlikely to want major refits in the dockyards, they may require specialist refit work to be done? Is it not amazing that the dockyards planning team has put its name to a document that says that it is possible that specialist refit work will be done on behalf of Argentina, a country with which we have no diplomatic relations, or South Africa, which has been condemned in the House and elsewhere?

Will Britain be better defended if the other countries listed require naval refit work to be done in the newly privatised dockyards, or if Chilean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indonesian or Algerian frigates or submarines are refitted side by side with our independent nuclear deterrent at Rosyth? The Minister may say that this is not possible and that the Government will not allow it to happen, but there is nothing in the Bill to prevent such an extraordinary situation emerging and nothing in the advice that Ministers have given to the dockyards planning team to prevent it happening.

There is another even more important point that Ministers seem to have overlooked. Where are the safeguards about continued British ownership of companies awarded the franchise, which may even be trusted with the responsibility of refitting the Polaris nuclear deterrent? There are no safeguards in the legislation about foreign control of the companies that will allegedly run the royal dockyards. We cannot anticipate safeguards even in the contracts or the articles of association, for even with the proposed golden share there can be no safeguards that are finally binding on the operating company.

While a golden share may prevent Rosyth plc or Devonport plc falling into the hands of foreign shareholders, it can do nothing to prevent the company which holds the franchise — the major operating company awarded the franchise by the Government, the Balfour Beatties, the Weir groups, or the Thorn EMIs— from falling into foreign hands. Assurances from Ministers about what may happen are not enough if they are not prepared to stipulate in the legislation that the contract will be removed from any dockyard company at either Rosyth or Devonport if a certain number of shares in that company fall into foreign hands.

This is what Tory patriotism now means. In their effort, because of their enthusiasm for privatisation, to transfer the dockyards from public control to private control, Ministers are prepared to contemplate the final transfer of the dockyards from British control to foreign control. That is the end effect of the Bill's proposals, if they are not changed.

Let us consider some of the other assurances missing both from the Bill and what the Minister said today. Where are the assurances sought by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) about the continuation of apprentice training for the dockyards? What possible initiative will there be for a private company working on a seven-year contract to maintain the levels of apprentice training at the dockyards that have been vital for the maintenance and development of the local economies? Where are the assurances of proper public audits of what happens in the dockyards under private control? Where are the assurances about the proper line of separation between a dockyard under private control and the naval bases under public control? As long ago as 1971, the Mallabar committee identified this as a major problem in examining any agency management scheme.

Where are the assurances about the role of dockyards under private control in the serious matters of nuclear safety and war planning? Some 18 months after Mr. Levene produced his original document, a year after the Minister said that he would be prepared to go ahead, nine months after the Admiralty Board was duped into saying that no risk was involved because it thought that there would be savings, and six months after the Government approved the privatisation and said that they would introduce legislation, none of the problems has been solved. Some 18 months after Mr. Levene reported, there are now 19 committees in the Ministry of Defence examing the fundamental issues about which we warned 18 months ago, the resolution of which is at the heart of the viability of the scheme and at the heart of whether the nation can, for security reasons, afford to go ahead.

When the Ministry of Defence committees report, the only answer that they can give is that we must simply hope and pray that international crises and emergencies such as the Falklands do not coincide with awkward periods when one contractor is being replaced by another. We must hope and pray that the crises that may arise do not coincide with an untried and inexperienced operator starting on a new contract. We must hope that the crises do not coincide with there being a competitor at the end of the term of his contract, just waiting to get out and with no reason to put his resources into doing the job.

We must also hope that the dockyards will not be held to ransom by a private monopoly supplier refitting the nuclear deterrent or any other frigates or submarines. We must hope and pray that the dockyards can quickly adjust if the City sneezes, a company goes under, a dockyard consortium collapses and at short notice we must regain public control.

Let us remind ourselves what might have happened if the enthusiasm of the Secretary of State had excited the Cabinet as early as 1979 and if the Cabinet had convinced itself of the merits of a dockyard franchise. What would have been the consequences for the Navy's unpredictable requirements in 1982 if we had been engulfed in the first changeover and if a new operator was learning by his mistakes, at our expense? What would have happened if the operator was incapable of rising to the occasion, if hundreds of men had been sacked and there was no capability to deal with emergency refits that had to be done to get the Falklands fleet to sea, or if the Navy was simply held to ransom by prices being demanded by the private supplier for unprogrammed work? What would have happened if, because of the new commercial disciplines applied to the dockyards, managers and men refused to work night and day as they did during the Falklands crisis to get the fleet to sea? Might the Navy, just because of the vagaries of the Stock Exchange, have found itself conducting the Falklands war over the debris of the bankruptcy of Rosyth plc or Devonport plc?

There are no watertight safeguards written into the Bill about the protection of our strategic defence or about our ability to respond in a crisis. There are no safeguards and guarantees because there can be none when the purpose of the exercise is to subject the dockyards, our last line of naval repair and maintenance, to the risks, uncertainties and vagaries of the market economy.

I accept that the Navy recognises that this is a problem. When it was asked in the Select Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West what guarantees there were about the refitting of our strategic nuclear deterrent in the case of emergency, the whole argument about commercial management was exploded. The Navy spokesman told us at that Committee that we were not to worry. We were told:

"There is no reason why the existing management at that level should change."

Having decided that the existing management should be revolutionised by privatisation, the Navy now seeks to reassure us that the principal safeguard for the Navy is that the management will not change. That is a guarantee that the Navy spokesman could not give, because they are in no position to give any guarantee about the management that would be involved in the nuclear deterrent or any other project under a privatised operation. If the real safeguard for getting our frigates, submarines, destroyers and Polaris out to sea is that management will not change, what is the argument for a change in management?

During this debate, the dockyards have been subjected to some criticism, especially that levelled at them by the hon. Member for Tayside, North. When Conservative Members criticise the dockyards for their productivity they should remember that the productivity of the Devonport dockyard has, according to Navy spokesmen, increased by 17 per cent. over recent months, and that productivity at Rosyth dockyard has increased by 15 per cent. over recent months, and done so while the dockyards have remained in the public sector.

When Conservative Members seek to criticise the dockyards for their inefficiency, they would do better to look at the comparisons between the public and private sector. The hon. Member for Tayside, North seemed to forget that only a few weeks ago, in one small minor refit, Rosyth dockyard had to pick up the pieces after 28 defects were identified following the refitting of a frigate in the private sector.

When Conservative Members consider the comparison between the public and private sectors they should remember that every report since the war, while critical and asking for improvements in dockyard management, has asserted clearly that the dockyards have no rival in the private sector for cost, efficiency and ability to deliver on time.

The Government are putting forward the proposals only because they believe that the private sector is better as an act of dogma. They should remember that Rear Admiral Leach, formerly head of the fleet, not only praised the dockyard work force for what they did in the Falklands campaign but asked Ministers, in a letter in the *Financial Times* a few months ago, how, after all the effort that had been put into the dockyards, they could justify their being kicked in the teeth.

What has changed in the dockyards since the Speed report, the Hudson report and the Mallabar report concluded that agency management was unacceptable? What has changed since the Mallabar report concluded that agency management was the way to get the worst of both the commercial and Government Department worlds?

What has changed since the Speed report concluded that the disadvantages of agency management were that the management would have little incentive to make itself more efficient, while the usual justification for an agent was that he had the resources and skills of the parent firm to fall back on, something which would not exist when the dockyards were privatised? What has changed since that report said specifically that the contracts put out for agency management could

"not lead to competition and genuine incentive"

but would lead to

"confusion over who was responsible for what"?

What has changed since that report said that there would be no guarantee that

"An agent would provide the capacity to meet urgent and unprogrammed work to maintain the operational capability of the fleet,"

or that the Secretary of State would retain his flexibility to move work between the royal dockyards?

What has changed since the Mallabar report, the Speed report and the various other reports? Is it the role of the dockyards that has changed? Is it the Navy's demands that have changed? Is it the sophistication of the refitting exercises that has changed? Or is it simply that the Government Front Bench has changed, given the obsessive desire of its members to pursue privatisation at any cost and to prove that anything can be privatised, including the royal dockyards?

The Secretary of State has put forward a scheme whose very basis criticises a loyal, efficient and dedicated work force. It is a work force that was not only praised for what happened in the Falklands campaign and which has not only increased productivity over the past 18 months by the figures that I have mentioned. It is a work force that has said clearly that it is prepared to consider proposals for change as long as the Minister removes the threat hanging over the dockyards under the Levene proposals. That is not a work force that is inflexible and resistant to any change, but one that is rightly resistant to the unilateral imposition of change by a Minister who is unprepared to consult, unwilling to listen and has not even bothered to have meetings with the unions in any detail over the proposals that he puts forward.

On the other side we have a Secretary of State for Defence who is not really a Secretary of State for Defence but simply a Secretary of State for the defence of the private sector. He prides himself on his patriotism but he is ready at any time to subordinate the interests of national defence to those of commercial gain. Dogma rather than evidence tells him that the dockyards have only one outstanding feature which is their principal shortcoming and that is that they are not run by the private sector. He has convinced himself that the dockyards can be put right only by applying the dogma of privatisation. Somehow he believes that what is good for Plessey, Babcock and Thorn EMI is automatically good for the British Navy, when he knows perfectly well that the first loyalty of the cartels and consortia who will take charge will be not to the fleet but to their companies' balance sheets.

There are more than 8,000 public servants at Rosyth and more than 12,000 at Devonport who have been forced by the Government's misguided policies to the front line of a privatisation war that they did not seek. They understand that the national interest is more than the sum of the private parts of the economy. Their loyalty, dedication, years of service and sense of the public interest is well known and well understood here and in Britain. Throughout the past 18 months the Minister has sought to justify the privatisation scheme by promising the Navy Board and the country that he would achieve savings. Now that that argument clearly cannot hold up after the

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

evidence to the Select Committee on Defence and the Committee of Public Accounts, what possible justification can the Minister give us for proceeding?

Labour Members will continue to oppose what is a reckless gamble with the nation's defences and the country's jobs. We shall have the unanimous support of the work forces at Rosyth and Devonport. We believe that during the period of consultation we have gained the support of people who have hitherto been adherents of the Conservative party. We can see tonight that those Conservative Members who have bothered to study the implications of the scheme will vote against the proposals when they are put to the vote.

We believe that in Committee, when the Government are forced to face the arguments about cost and the lack of proper safeguards inherent in the Bill, they will have to change tack. At the very least, we expect the Minister to answer the questions being put to him by Labour and Conservative Members. He should tell us what capability will remain in Rosyth and Devonport dockyards to deal with an emergency. He should tell us what he proposes to do to prevent foreign control of the companies which run the dockyards and what arrangements he will make to prevent foreign naval refits being carried out side by side with refits of our frigates, submarines and nuclear deterrents. He should tell us what he means about the likelihood of jobs and apprenticeships remaining in the dockyards under the contracts that are brought into being. Above all, he should tell us the truth about the real cost of this scheme to the defence budget and to the public expenditure budget.

If the Minister of State told us the truth about his proposals for the defence of the nation and for jobs at Rosyth and Devonport, there would be not one or two but a large number of Conservative Members joining us in the No Lobby tonight. That would make it impossible for him to proceed with the Bill.

The Bill is bad for the Navy, for the work forces at Rosyth and Devonport and for the country as a whole. The Minister of State would be doing a service to the country if he withdrew his proposals.

8.50 pm

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): May I draw the attention of hon. Members to what has happened in Portsmouth. At the 1979 general election a Conservative party leaflet was headed "Defence of the Realm" and contained the simple slogan

"Your jobs and our dockyards are safe in our hands".

There were 6,500 employees in the Portsmouth dockyard in 1979; today, there are just over 2,000. So much for the jobs in Portsmouth that were safe in the hands of a Conservative Government.

Despite the Secretary of State's answer to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) that there would be no job losses at Portsmouth, this measure to privatise the dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth will have a knock-on effect at Portsmouth. The industrial pay records will not come to Portsmouth. Consequently, the jobs that were promised have been lost and future jobs will also be lost. As 15 per cent. of the capacity of naval stores will be lost at Portsmouth, there will have to be cuts.

The Secretary of State for Defence, by his absence today, is treating the House with contempt. He is also treating the people of Rosyth and Devonport with contempt, and, to a lesser extent, the people whom I represent. He may be exploring the bolt-hole that is contained in the Bill. It is strange that the only measure before the House this Session that relates to defence contains a bolt-hole that enables the Secretary of State for Defence to get off the hook if this piece of garbage—that is the only word that can be used—is passed.

The Bill has not been thoroughly prepared. The House should have been provided with the answers to the questions that the Secretary of State has posed to his departmental heads. If there were answers to those questions, there would be no need for 19 working groups to be set up. The questions that the working groups are to explore are fundamental to this legislation. Is the Minister of State suggesting that we do not have the right to question him and get answers about the effect upon the fleet maintenance bases and upon naval manpower? Is he suggesting that the House has no right to expect answers from him on the vexed question of war planning? The Bill should not have been introduced until the Minister of State was able to answer those questions.

It is interesting that the Minister's Department put some very interesting questions to the work force. The dockyard planning team's quarterly review suggests that several questions remain unanswered. I hope that the Minister of State will be able to give us answers to those questions. The Minister's opening speech and the speeches of his right hon. and hon. Friends lead me to believe that the answers are only in the minds of the mandarins in his Department. They are certainly not in his mind.

Is the Minister able to tell the House how material will be supplied to the dockyard companies and how the refitting and repair of ships other than warships will be handled? Will the land, buildings, machinery and facilities of the naval bases be made available to commercial operators? How will naval base organisation be affected? How will the CED's current responsibilities outside the dockyard be undertaken? How will nuclear safety be assured? This point was raised by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). How will environmental safety be assured? How will the fleet maintenance bases be affected? How will the changes affect the conditions of service of civilian employees? What will be the effect on Royal Navy personnel? What will be the effect on war and emergency planning? How will quality assurance be maintained? How will the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service and harbour services be provided? How will transport services be provided? What new financial and accounting systems are needed? What measures are required to maintain security? What are the future computer needs? How will design and support information be supplied? What needs to be done to maintain the protection of Government and commercial information?

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hancock: No, I have waited too long to make this speech to be interrupted at this stage, particularly by hon. Members who have not participated in the debate.

Those questions should be made the subject of close and rigid examination. However, all that we get from the Minister of State is a smile or a smirk. That does not offer to me the kind of satisfaction——

Sir Antony Buck: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hancock: No, I am not prepared to give way.

We need answers to those questions from the Minister of State. We should not have to wait until the Bill reaches its Committee stage. The mere fabric of the Bill demonstrates that the exploration of the possibilities will be very limited in Committee. Who will the Minister of State listen to if he does not listen to hon. Members? Will he assure us that the reports of the working groups will be made public to those hon. Members who deal with the Bill in Committee?

Mr. Norman Lamont *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hancock: The Minister of State shakes his head. We are not to be provided, even then, with the answers.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has made quite clear where the alliance stands on this proposition. He has the support of the whole of the alliance. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the leader of the Liberal party, has been to Rosyth and spoken to the unions. My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has also spoken to the unions at Rosyth. He has pledged the wholehearted support of the alliance in the battle to prevent this bit of nonsense becoming law.

The Public Accounts Committee's report made six valid points, to which I hope the Minister of State will be able to give answers. The Committee found that all the options discussed by defence open government document 85/01, including both commercial management and the trading fund, have not been accurately costed by the Government. Secondly, there is no clear-cut evidence to suggest that the Government's option is more efficient. The Committee could not be certain that the Government's calculations were valid. Those are real doubts on two points of finance.

The third point is whether the commercial refit comparison exercise is a prudent step—two ships being refitted in the commercial sector and two in the dockyards. I have tried repeatedly during the past couple of months, through questions to the Department, to obtain comparisons, but it appears that we will not be told how much it will cost to have ships refitted in commercial yards. We are not to be told whether that compares favourably with the costs of refitting at either Rosyth or Devonport. Yet again we are not to be given the information that we need if we are fairly to judge whether the Government's policy——

Mr. Norman Lamont: Surely the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to disclose the prices actually being charged by different companies tendering for work.

Mr. Hancock: In a recent reply to me the Minister suggested that, eventually, we might obtain the figures. Surely the appropriate time for that is when the Bill is being considered by the House so that a fair and accurate comparison can be made. Unfortunately, Conservative Members——

Sir Antony Buck: Wait for the Committee.

Mr. Hancock: The hon. and learned Gentleman might say that, but when I mentioned the possibility of obtaining those answers in Committee the Minister shook his head. There are grave doubts whether we will obtain the answers before the House debates the final stages of the Bill.

Many other points have been raised in various Committees about the fundamental mistakes being made by the Secretary of State and his colleagues, and the route down which they are leading the House and the country. Hon. Member after hon. Member has condemned the proposal. The defence of the work force has been explicit in speeches from both sides of the House. We hope that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) will not just abstain tonight, but will support the Opposition parties, which are trying to expose her colleagues in the Government to the test of public opinion in her constituency. I hope that she will support those who sent her to this place by rejecting the Bill.

The arguments against the Bill are legion. The strategic fighting effectiveness of the fleet will be affected. Indeed, even the Government's handout questions whether an effective, efficient Royal Navy will emerge in the same form as it is in today. Parliamentary control and accountability will be diminished by the very act of privatisation. The dockyards will not be accountable to this place. The Government's proposal will severely test the morale of the work force and diminish what prospects it has of a future within the Civil Service.

If Conservative Members do not believe that, I urge them to draw on the experience of Portsmouth dockyard, which has been through a traumatic time. Its work force was completely sapped of morale. Some of its best craftsmen—those whom the Ministry of Defence could least afford to lose—were the first to go through the door because they were sick to death of the Government playing about with their futures. Surely the Government must learn from their mistakes at Portsmouth.

It is no good the Government adopting an ostrich-like attitude, believing that that experience cannot be repeated. I should be foolish if I were to believe that that same experience will not occur at Rosyth and Devonport. Those who care most will look for other jobs, because they do not want their jobs to be hung on a thread at the whim of a commercial contractor, or on whether that contractor has the gall or the substance to deliver the goods to the Government.

As surely as tomorrow will come, there will be doubts about the contractors. The substance of the job is so large and so complex that many of the contractors will not have the expertise required to maintain the efficient and effective work force that is so necessary if we are to maintain the defence of the realm at the level that we have come to expect.

As other hon. Members have said, the contractors can hold the Navy to ransom. My right hon. Friend the Member for Devonport said that it was not privatisation, but piratisation. Indeed, there will be land-based pirates holding the Navy to ransom. The ships will be tied at the quayside when we want them at sea.

I urge the Minister to take back to the Secretary of State the true voice of the House. It is not the response in the Lobbies of the unseen Members who have not been present today, but who will suddenly appear out of the woodwork at 10 o'clock. It is the feelings and opinions of Members who have attended the debate and who care enough about the issue to voice an opinion. The Minister must tell his right hon. Friend that when the chips are down, those who work in the dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport will respond to the country's needs—if that is put to them properly and if they are given the trust and the dignity that they deserve.

[Mr. Hancock]

When the House met to discuss sending a task force to the Falklands, redundancy notices had been issued to the work force in Portsmouth and then withdrawn. Had those Nott cuts been introduced six months earlier, Britain could not have got that task force to the Falklands. The Hermes would not have been in a suitable condition to lead that force. Although the workers of Portsmouth had been issued with redundancy notices and had the prospect of being without jobs later, they responded magnificently, because they put the national interest first. The same can be said of the workers of Rosyth and Devonport.

It is wrong for the Government to take the action that they are contemplating in the face of such loyalty and commitment. By attempting to rub out, as it were, hundreds of years of committed work by the people of those areas, they are doing a disservice to themselves and the nation.

Apart from many hon. Members feeling that the Bill will not achieve what the Government say is their purpose, the Government must have great reservations about the measure. After all, 19 working parties would not have been established if the Government had answers to the many questions that have been posed. Those questions should have been answered long before this stage. Indeed, if the Government did not have doubts on the issue, the Secretary of State would have been here to present the Bill on Second Reading. Because of his doubts, the right hon. Gentleman did not change the date of the debate to suit his arrangements.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Devonport pointed out, the Select Committee on Defence said:

> "We urge the Government to approach the debate on the Dockyard Services Bill with an open mind and a readiness to draw fully upon the opinions expressed in all quarters in the best interests of the fighting efficiency of the fleet and the defence and security of the nation."

In that connection, I refer again to the Conservative election leaflet in Portsmouth. It was headed:

> "The Conservative party and its caring defence of the Realm."

The Conservatives have failed the people of Portsmouth from 1979 right up to the present. Indeed, I am living proof of that, for I would not have been elected had the Conservatives lived up to their promise to save the jobs of the people in the dockyards.

I urge the Minister to express the voice of Parliament to his right hon. Friend, and by that I mean the views of hon. Members, and not simply the voting figures in Divisions in the House. We do not want pirates in our dockyards. We want dignity, loyalty and efficiency. Those qualities exist now. I fear that they will be lost if the Government's proposals go ahead.

9.8 pm

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I regret that the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) refused to permit my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) to intervene while he was speaking, because my hon. and learned Friend would have raised points of considerable importance to hon. Members on both sides of the House who will be taking part in the Committee proceedings.

It is nonsense to suggest that once the dockyards are commercialised the good workmanship and management expertise that now exist in them will be lost. I speak from experience of having taken a considerable interest in a naval dockyard which has already been commercialised.

I draw the attention of the House to the situation in the naval dockyard in Gibraltar. That was a royal naval dockyard which was closed by the Government and became a commercial dockyard. When the Government decision was made to commercialise the dockyards, it was said that the operators would be chosen for their experience in running well-managed companies.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who has left the Chamber, complained about the small number of Conservative Members present. I do not see many Labour or Liberal Members present and there is only one Member representing the SDP. The concern expressed by one or two Opposition Members is not reflected by the number of Opposition Members present. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, in his sensational outburst, endeavoured to create the sort of emotionalism that can be generated when such matters are discussed. Therefore, it is important to look at the precedent set by the Gibraltar dockyard.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East asked what would happen to the Admiralty work. The Admiralty work continues in the Gibraltar dockyard, and 14 RFAs are scheduled to be built there in the next three years, at £14 million each. Therefore, there is considerable work to be done in the dockyard.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether foreign vessels would come into the dockyard. Foreign vessels went into the Gibraltar commercial dockyard and the base is still maintained. Labour Members should not let their fears run away with them in regard to running a dockyard on a commercial basis. There is a shortage of skilled people at Gibraltar as a result of the large amount of work generated by the commercial operator. There is a rig from Brazil in the dockyard. Foreign vessels have come in from Germany, and even Russian vessels have been seen in the dockyard in Gibraltar. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) failed Gibraltar when he was Foreign Secretary, before defecting from the Labour party to the SDP.

Dr. David Owen: Speak to Sir Joshua Hassan.

Mr. McQuarrie: I speak to other people than Sir Joshua.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East expressed his serious concern about total control leaving the dockyard. It must not be forgotten that the commercial dockyard, once established, will be an entity. The Secretary of State will set up the companies to employ the work force at the dockyard. The ownership of the companies will be assumed by the first contractors and then by any subsequent contractors.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Bill implied criticism of the work force. I have read every line of it and I challenge any Opposition Member to show me in the Bill one criticism of the work force. The work force should be given the opportunity to study the value of commercialisation in the shipyards and the dockyards. It will then see for itself the way to achieve continuity of employment.

If there were less scaremongering and a little more effort to ensure continuity of employment, it would be much better for the people concerned. It would be better than trying to raise the tempers of people who want a safe job and future for themselves and their families.

9.14 pm

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Second Reading of the Bill marks a major debate on the dockyards. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) took us back to 1578 and the role of John Hawkins. As always, he enlightened many of us on the background. I do not propose to go back that far, but since 1970 there has been a succession of reports and investigations. It is perhaps not surprising that the last—and in some ways most important or significant—report is the smallest, the least respected and the most universally condemned.

As with so many matters relating to our national security and the Navy, national pride and the feeling that our fleet should get the best possible deal are always our prime concerns. Anyone who comes into contact with any of those involved, certainly in the dockyards, is left in no doubt that the loyalty, commitment and ingenuity of the dockyard work force and managers are beyond question. We have heard many tributes from both sides of the House not just to the contributions that they made to the Falklands war, but to their repeated ingenuity in dealing with difficult and often unexpected tasks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said that there have been recorded increases in productivity of around 17 per cent. in Devonport and 15 per cent. in Rosyth, at a time when Vice Admiral Tippet is saying that

"there is very considerable apprehension in the work force as to the future."

A measure of the commitment of the men and women in the work force is the fact that, at a time when they have been treated so shabbily by the Government, when the consultative processes have attracted the opprobrium of both sides of the House, they have been prepared to work on in the national interest to prove to the country the quality of the work that they can produce and the industry of their effort.

A four-clause Bill with an almost neutral financial effect will be, as one official said,

"a trivial element of the total of Government expenditure."

It will be only a "trivial element", but, at the same time, the turnover of the dockyards and the work involved is about £500 million.

The privatisation will not be subject to a flotation, as with British Telecom, or put into the queue, as with British Gas or British Airways, to fund the next election campaign, although some of the firms that have shown an interest contribute considerable sums to the Tory party as distinct from the public exchequer. The Bill is not intended to widen share ownership or to turn draughtsmen, fitters, pattern makers or boiler makers into a new generation of petty capitalists. We are told that the Bill will free the dockyards from the constraints of Civil Service control and remove the work force from the Civil Service altogether. The workers will not cease to exist, but their status, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) said, will be little better than chattel slaves moving between one contractor and another.

We have heard much about the prospect of unemployment, but we have heard precious little mention from the Government of the fact that 2,000 jobs will be lost in Devonport in the near future and 400 will be lost at Rosyth. While it is assumed that the other jobs will remain, the gratitude displayed by the Government to those people means that nobody's job can be regarded as safe. The only consolation that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East found was in the Touche Ross report, which said that there would be a possibility of obtaining contracts for the refitting of ships from the South African or Argentine navies.

As yet we do not know a great deal about agency management. When the Secretary of State introduced the open government document and started the so-called consultation period, he claimed that there were examples of agency management in the United States. There are, but they are concerned with military vehicles, arms and munitions. The Secretary of State was not to know this, but it is easy to see why his golden boy, Mr. Levene, knew about the suppliers of golden screwdrivers, and so on, because it was in that area of production that Mr. Levene made his reputation in Britain.

While there is no experience of a similar undertaking to Rosyth and Devonport in the United States, Peat Marwick's researches on behalf of Plymouth council show that there is a dockyard in Australia where 2,500 people are employed refitting six navy Oberon class submarines on a cost plus agreed profit basis. The common feature of the American and Australian experience is that in both countries the tender has not been transferred to any other firm since the scheme started. So much for the prospect of competition between firms and the prospect of change.

It is true that profitability has been high. However, there does not seem to be much likelihood of there being substantial savings to the taxpayer, as is hoped by the Minister of State. One of the most famous cases is the American firm, General Dynamics, the activities and contracts of which are still under suspension pending investigation by the American Government.

It is against that background that we are sceptical and incredulous at the Government's proposals. Horror has been expressed by virtually everyone who made representations. The Select Committee on Defence received only one piece of evidence in support of the proposals, which amounted to a nine-line letter, the first line of which reads:

"Privatisation could put the Navy at risk in some circumstances."

Perhaps in the interests of brevity, Mr. Garnett decided not to go further, but starting off a letter of support like that speaks volumes for the extent of confidence in the proposals that those in the know have.

The Select Committee on Defence expressed disapproval of virtually every aspect of the Ministry's handling of the proposals. We had an interim report condemning them and calling for responses. We then had a statement from the Committee saying:

"Our misgivings about the Government's intentions have not been allayed by the evidence we have been given orally and in writing since our last Report."

As has been said many times, the Committee is not made up of a majority of Labour supporters. The members of it are respected for their independent approach. While we might not agree with all of them, it is strange that on such a controversial issue, which is endowed with an ideological content, a majority of Conservatives should come out against the proposals in the frank way that they have. Members of the Committee raised substantial objections. They spelt out those objections in the first report, but the Minister's responses in no way modified their position in the second report. They identified as a major difficulty the discontinuity of management.

[Mr. Martin J. O'Neill]

The Committee made it clear that a seven-year cycle could impede planning and affect morale. It has already been admitted that the work force is apprehensive about and has rejected the interim measures that the Ministry is endeavouring to pass. Anxieties have been repeatedly expressed about the problems of retaining British ownership of the companies that are granted franchises, and about the possibility that the parent companies of franchisers could be taken over by foreign enterprise. The Minister must satisfy the House and say why he is confident that that cannot take place.

By what mechanism can a British Government ensure that the parent company of one of the organisations responsible for carrying out the franchise work will not be subject to a foreign takeover, thus allowing the contracting company to become foreign owned? We will worry, and can only speculate, about the uncertainty during the period before a contract is renewed. Will the Minister tell us about the status of the contract during the year in which reselection will occur? Can he say something about management indifference following deselection, if that happens? We can imagine the Government's frustration if there were a short list of one which did not accord with the Government's wishes. In those circumstances, are the Government prepared to put in their own nominee, as the Conservative party usually does on such occasions, or, as the Government sometimes do in extremis, to nominate themselves? Officials have recognised that in their discussions with the Committee. They admit that there may be a short-term problem of managing transition. It may be short term, but it will be serious if nuclear work must be done.

Many people are greatly worried that the work group, which is responsible for nuclear maintenance work, is skilled and tightknit, and that we could not afford to have it broken up. In the long term, the interest which is shown in Rosyth may be a testimony to that sort of work, compared with the apparent indifference and almost reluctance of many of the contractors to grasp the nettle that is Devonport.

Will the Minister confirm that in an exchange with the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) he said that there was no likelihood of Devonport being broken up and sold off in sections? Will he explain the status of clause 1(2)*(b)*, which states that that is possible. It refers to

"the transfer of the whole or any part of the dockyard undertaking to that or another company with a view to that company providing any of the designated dockyard services at the dockyard under contract."

That clause gives a wholly different view from the impression that the Minister sought to convey to the hon. Lady. Our anxiety is not simply that Devonport could be sold off, but that it could be split into smithereens—a variety of companies and groupings — which could compound all the problems of security, transition and investment. That is a critical point on which the Minister will have to satisfy the House. He is taking powers in the Bill, but as is often the case with Government legislation that is ill-thought out and ill prepared, it may well be amended on the hoof in Committee. Will this be amendment No. 1? We are entitled to an answer, because, given the existence of that clause, the Minister has failed to allay the fears of hon. Members.

The Minister has even had difficulties convincing those who have constituency interests or some knowledge, understanding and respect for the work done in those yards. There has been extreme reluctance to support the Government. In many respects, we have seen displays of Conservative Back-Bench loyalty above and beyond the call of duty.

We are also worried about the guarantees that can be given in respect of the work in the dockyards. We have heard a great deal about the 70-30 split which the Minister hopes to introduce after about 18 months. But what is the 100 per cent. about which we are talking? Does it cover the 22 per cent. of naval refitting, including the Royal Fleet Auxilaries? If so, we are talking about a 70-30 split not of all the work available, but of about 78 per cent. of that work.

We must also take account of further slippage if we subtract the work done at Portsmouth. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) would, if he were present, be concerned about the prospects for Portsmouth. Is Portsmouth to be set aside?

The potential figure of 54·5 per cent. of work being made available to the dockyards is the source of anxiety among dockyard workers about the prospects for further unemployment. They see the work being contracted out almost before their eyes, and the figures and quotations they have been given are not the ones that the Minister has at the back of his mind. We know that there are many problems associated with unprogrammed work. The Ministry has said that there will be alternative provision for emergency work in the future and that this would be made as and when required. Frankly, the very nature of unprogrammed work suggests national emergencies and raises questions of defence and security. This kind of ad hockery is just not good enough when the nation's security is at stake.

As well as finding a place for the work to be done, problems could also arise about who is to do it. Some of the British suppliers do not give cause for a great deal of confidence. Indeed, the Select Committee considered the record of organisations such as Plessey, which has been somewhat less than dependable in respect of the torpedo programme.

Mr. Sayeed: If there is an emergency, be it short or longer term, people can be pulled off mid-life ship refits and put on to emergency work, such as fitting a new weapon. Secondly, as the personnel will be privately organised, the opportunities for undertaking extra work and overtime will be enhanced. That would not be the case if they remained in the Civil Service.

Mr. O'Neill: As the potential enemy sails up the Channel, there will be the unedifying prospect of trade unions, contractors and the Government sitting round a table trying to work out the price for the job and transfers from one yard to another—the kind of thing that did not happen during the Falklands war because the morale and the commitment were there. I assure the House that in the future the morale and commitment will be there from the work force, but there is no guarantee that they will be there from the new contractual owners who could well see their prospects of profit slipping through their fingers. The flexibility that the hon. Gentleman mentioned becomes even more difficult when there are separate contracts for two yards.

Sir Antony Buck *rose——*

Mr. O'Neill: I shall not give way, because I am just coming to the end. I am sorry, because I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman has been stopped before from intervening.

Separate contracts are a major problem. They are causing a great deal of anxiety. They will require far more than additional arrangements. They could create barriers between Rosyth and Devonport, the like of which have never existed before.

The prospects for the savings and changes in resources from tail to teeth and the like are far outweighed by the problems that we have identified. There are doubts about investment. As a country, we shall continue to own the assets, but the question of who will pay for the rental of new assets is vague. What will be the management's reward for its own investment? Will it be added to the profits? Will management be compensated? Such matters must be resolved. The Minister has not so far answered those points.

I suspect that if the Government, in their indecent haste to get the Bill on the statute book, tell us that the 19 committees will report within the next 10 days — by which time I imagine that the Bill will be in Committee —that might satisfy the House, but our experience of Civil Service committees suggests that it will take rather longer than 10 days to cover the points of anxiety which have been expressed by everyone here.

The Opposition are worried about national security and the working conditions and the rights of the work force. The Minister has to some extent given some guarantees about those matters, but we are not yet satisfied of one essential element of workers' rights — security of employment — because everything draws us to the conclusion that we shall see a deterioration in the working conditions and job security of people in areas of already high unemployment. That might be accepted in Harrow and the south-east, but in the south-west and the north such problems are far too apparent and real for us to accept the blandishments of a Minister of State in a hurry.

This enabling Bill is an unsatisfactory answer to what everyone regards as a problem. Everyone is now talking about solutions. There is a willingness on the part of trade unions and management and some sections of the Conservative party — certainly within the Select Committee on Defence—to participate in a consultative process, because everyone knows that the status quo is not an option. However, we are not prepared to accept the type of option offered by the Bill—an option which is a slap in the face for the work force and an insult to the management and which will endanger the country's security.

9.40 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

The rapture of some of my hon. Friends has been modified in their speeches on the Bill, but the most passionate speech against the Bill came from the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). I nearly referred to him as the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale and at times I even thought that he was still the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport campaigning against Randolph Churchill 40 years ago. He made practically the same speech as he might have made against any steel, colliery or hospital closure.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent took us back in history to the time of Henry VIII and John Hawkins, and said that Conservative Members were not interested in history. I should report for his benefit that Samuel Pepys, when Secretary of the Admiralty, had a rather different view of the royal dockyards from that of the right hon. Gentleman. In his diary, Samuel Pepys recorded sticking his fingers through new paint and finding rotten planks which had not been properly repaired. The right hon. Gentleman's recollection of history is selective and he does not address himself to the problems that exist in the dockyards today. He talked about the ideas incorporated in the Bill as though they were ideas from Mars—but anything to do with economics seems to strike the right hon. Gentleman as something from another planet.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent was certainly wrong when he quoted the Library reference sheet and disputed the fact, which I had made very clear in opening the debate, that on conditions of employment, redundancy, pay and leave, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply, so employees can be satisfied on that point.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) asked two questions about foreign ownership. He asked me about foreign ownership generally and I replied that tenders would be sought from British companies. He then asked what would happen if a company which had been awarded the contract came under foreign control or became subject to substantial foreign influence. In such conditions it would be written into the contract that the company would lose the contract to manage the yards.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli also asked for an assurance that the unallocated programme would be placed only with British companies. Provided that the work arises in the United Kingdom, that will happen. The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate, however, that sometimes the Navy needs emergency work almost anywhere in the world.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Minister define "substantial" in relation to substantial holdings of shares in the parent company? Does that mean that the contract will be terminated and the Ministry of Defence will go through the whole tender process once more?

Mr. Lamont: The precise proportion of shareholding would have to be written into the contract. That has not been defined as such, but a company that entered into the undertaking would know exactly what it was embarking on, as would any company likely to develop a connection with that company.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli also asked about the core programme,and questioned whether it would be more or less than half the existing programme of the dockyards. I made it clear in my opening speech that the initial programme would be roughly the current level of Rosyth and Devonport combined. That would be the position at the beginning of the period of the contract.

The right hon. Gentleman then asked what proportion of the programme would be priced competitively. I could make the point that none of the work at present is priced competitively in the sense in which he asked the question. When we award a tender we shall certainly be looking for a commitment to risk pricing, quotations covering hourly rates and overhead recovery. From the very beginning there will be a strong element of competitive pricing.

Mr. Denzil Davies: It is a very simple question: What percentage of the total work carried on in the dockyard will be subject to the tender programme and subject to tender?

Mr. Lamont: The companies will tender for the contract and for the individual contracts within that contract. In assessing which company wins, we shall obviously look at the proportion. No proportion is laid down in advance. We shall look at the companies and decide which one gives the biggest element of price competition.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) referred to the quality of the work done at Rosyth on the deterrent and asked where we could find such work done better. We have no complaint about the quality of that work. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the quality is extremely high, but that is not the only work carried out at Rosyth. The fact that work on the deterrent is done well does not mean that there is no argument for introducing commercial management for the other elements in the work of that yard and the opportunity for Rosyth to tender for other unallocated work. The threat to the deterrent from the Bill is certainly far less than the threat from Labour party policy.

As I have said, there is also the opportunity for extra work. With active commercial management and good corporate marketing, these companies will have the skill to build on the many centres of excellence in the two yards. There is the possibility of ship refitting and work on oil rig modules which the yards cannot go for at the moment. Both enterprises have the capacity and unrivalled skills to attract engineering work, including specialist skills and facilities for casting and machining, but they will obtain that extra work only if they are competitive. Several potential bidders have already begun to identify work of that nature which they believe could be secured for the two yards. In addition, the two yards will have the opportunity to bid for the unallocated defence programme; and, if they are competitive, they will secure a significant proportion of that work.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that it was absurd to separate capital investment decisions from the responsibility for running a facility, but what is proposed in the Bill is by no means unprecedented in the world. In quite a large number of defence facilities in the United States capital investment has been made by the Government.

Mr. Foot: Not in dockyards.

Mr. Lamont: Not in dockyards, but there are about 60 Government-owned contractor-operated plants covering the manufacture of aircraft, missiles, tanks, naval weapons, and so on, so the argument that capital investment and responsibility for running cannot be separated does not stand up. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has said, this may be the development of an idea, it may even be a new idea, but it is not necessarily to be condemned for that.

The right hon. Member for Devonport is sometimes so outspoken about privatisation that he is accused by his Liberal colleagues of being a closet Thatcherite. This measure brings the disciplines of the private sector and competition into the dockyards. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman does not apply to his own constituency the philosophy that he so boldly expounds on other occasions. This measure will increase efficiency and competition.

The right hon. Member for Devonport was less than fair to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he said that the redundancies at Devonport and Rosyth had been created at the fiat of the Secretary of State. Those redundancies were necessary if the dockyards are to become efficient. The Public Accounts Committee, which has been critical of the Government's actions, has criticised the efficiency measures that have been taken at Devonport and Rosyth. It claims that they are not what is required. The right hon. Member for Devonport, for all his alleged toughness and tenderness combined, is not facing the issue. Many people have criticised these yards. There is a need for them to become efficient.

The main criticism which has been made in the debate is that, in some sense, the Government's proposition is not proven and does not guarantee results. That was the view put forward by the right hon. Member for Devonport, and that was why he advanced the idea of a trading fund. The trading fund concept does not address the problem in its totality. It does not bring about a sufficient separation of the customer and the supplier, it does not provide the spur of competition, and it does not create conditions in which the contractor is anxious to get his contract renewed.

I was interested that the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) should describe the scheme as a form of reselection. That is a word that looms large in the minds of Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said that there had been far too cosy a relationship between the yards and the Ministry of Defence. That is precisely right. That is why a trading fund is not the right solution. We need to separate the customer and the supplier.

If the right hon. Member for Devonport thought that the trading fund solution was the answer to the problem of the dockyards, he could have introduced a trading fund when he was the Minister with responsibility for the Navy. He could have introduced such a fund in 1978 when he was a member of the Labour Government that examined the proposition and decided to do nothing.

Dr. Owen: The Minister comes fairly new to the Department. When I was Minister with responsibility for the Navy, I introduced Leslie Norfolk from ICI and set up the Mallabar committee, which recommended a trading fund. I have fought three elections at Devonport on the basis of supporting a trading fund.

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. Member for Devonport may have done some good things, but he did not go far enough earlier and he does not go far enough now.

It has been accepted for many years that a change in the yards is necessary. The PAC in its report pointed out that between 1971 and 1982 there were five major reports, all of which were critical of the performance of the dockyards. In its latest report the PAC referred to changes having

"little resulting real progress or effective action; we also considered the effect of current weaknesses in Dockyard performance and management."

The fourth report of the Select Committee, which has been critical of what the Government are doing, acknowledged that there was no support for an unreformed status quo. Everyone agrees that change is necessary. The only reason why Labour Members have become overnight converts to

change of some kind is that they want any change other than change by a Government who recognise the problem and are determined to tackle it.

The reason for putting forward these proposals is to increase efficiency and effectiveness, not to reduce the number of civil servants. The motive is to get value for money. The Opposition seem to think that there is something wrong in trying to get value for money within the defence budget. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said, it is all very well to talk about the effectiveness of our fighting force, but that force does not exist in a world where there are no limits on the defence budget.

If we manage by these proposals to save £30 million a year, over four years that will mean another frigate for the Royal Navy or another six or seven Tornadoes. If the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent does not like the thought of military equipment, he should consider that that saving could mean six 300-bed hospitals. Is anyone saying that that sort of saving is not worth working for and achieving?

The right hon. Member for Devonport and my hon. Friends the Members for Drake and for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) referred to the insecurity that the labour force will feel if its members are put into a management company which might in turn change in another seven years. I understand those fears, but I hope that the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends will not exaggerate or lend unjustified credence to them. As I said when opening the debate, pay, conditions of service and pensions will be unaffected by the transfer. The core programme of work will remain, and that will be equal to the existing work programme at both Devonport and Rosyth. In addition, there will be the opportunity to tender for the unallocated proportion of the work.

The right hon. Member for Devonport advanced a curious argument when he said that if the ownership of the operating company changed in seven years, the employees of that company would have no guarantee of employment. As I have said, the core programme will continue. There will continue to be a need for naval refits and naval dockyards. If the ownership of the management company changes while the assets remain in the Government's hands, that will not alter the need for continuing refits and a continuing programme for the Royal Navy.

There has been criticism by the Pubic Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence of the figures that the Government have produced for the savings that might result from introducing the dockyards to private management. When the Government last gave evidence to the Committee, they made it clear that the savings might be over £30 million, or 7·5 per cent. of turnover. Surely that would be a worthwhile saving. However, these are merely illustrative figures. No one would ever claim that such figures are anything but illustrations. Much depends on productivity improvements and the enterprise that is brought to the dockyards by outside management.

We are confident that private management of the dockyards will result in greater efficiency and productivity increases. Such developments are bound to result in more savings than if the dockyards continue to be operated by civil servants within a Government Department.

We have heard much talk from Labour Members about the effectiveness of our forces. I find that a bit rich from a party which is dedicated and committed to cutting defence spending. I find it a bit rich from a party which, when in office, cut defence spending to the lowest level in real terms since the end of the Korean war. Above all, it is utterly hypocritical that there should be so much said, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North observed, about unemployment at Rosyth. Work on the independent deterrent accounts for more than 50 per cent. of turnover at Rosyth. If the Labour party's policy is implemented, it will result in hardly anything being left there. Labour Members weep crocodile tears over non-existent dole queues at Rosyth while adhering to the policy of abandoning our independent deterrent, which would have a catastrophic effect on Rosyth.

The proposals in the Bill are designed to achieve better value for money. They will increase the effectiveness of our forces and improve our defences. Those ideas are not of interest to the Labour party, but they have been backed by the Navy as well as by Ministers. For that reason, the Bill deserves the support of the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 257, Noes 171.

Division No. 14] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Franks, Cecil
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry

Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Irving, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*

Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Mark Fisher and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

DOCKYARD SERVICES BILL [MONEY]:

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Dockyards Services Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State—

(a) incurred in connection with the formation or operation of any company formed with a view to, or for any purpose of, the provision of dockyard services at Her Majesty's dockyards; or

(b) incurred in assuming responsibility for any liabilities of any company which is or has been concerned in or in connection with the provision of such services. [*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

Sugar and Starch

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the names of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and his hon. Friends.

I understand that no fewer than 14 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in this one and a half hour debate, so I hope that speeches will be brief.

10.14 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I shall seek immediately to obey your request, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8687/85, 9178/85 and 8781/85, relating to the sugar sector and 11172/84 and 8688/85, relating to the reform of the starch regime, and supports the Government's objectives to secure satisfactory agreements on them which take account of the interests of both producers and users of the products concerned.

The core of the motion is the responsibility which Britain felt that it had, and which the House insisted we had, towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, and the continuation of cane sugar refining in Britain. It is important, and hon. Members on both sides of the House should remark upon it, to underline the generous way in which the Community, at Britain's behest, has sought to accommodate, at a price well above the world price, sugar coming from countries for which this product and this particular crop is of such great importance.

Of course, it is always possible to insist that we could have done more and better, but there are occasions when it is worth while saying how well we have done, and it is right and proper that we should, for those countries need the markets which we can give them, and it is a market and a responsibility which we shall continue to support.

The proposition is that we should continue the system which was perhaps best expressed in 1981 in the letter which was written on behalf of the Community to say that we should try to get a parallelism—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but that is the only word that I know which covers the matter—between, on the one hand, the price paid for raw sugar in the ACP countries, and on the other for the raw sugar produced by beet producers in the Community.

The second parallelism is between the margins which are provided for the sugar manufacturers in Britain and the rest of the Community and the margins provided for the sugar cane refiners.

There are those who suggested that we should have agreed with those who wanted us to narrow the margins which are provided for the cane refiners in order to increase the money that was going direct to the producers of cane sugar. That would have been a great mistake. We opposed that, and we did so for two reasons. First, if we are to defend the generosity of the Community in allowing the sugar into Britain and elsewhere——

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): My right hon. Friend is talking about the generosity of the Community. One of the cardinal points at issue when we joined the Common Market was that there should be a guarantee for the ACP countries of some 1·2 million tonnes of sugar.

Mr. Gummer: It was 1·4 million tonnes, of which 1·3 million tonnes was taken up by those to whom it was offered.

I used the word "generosity" in the proper sense, which is that that in no way detracts from the assurance. It is generosity by the whole Community, including ourselves, to continue to pay a price to people outside the Community which is well above the price on the world market. I happen to think that that is generosity. It is an absolute commitment, and I would not in any sense derogate from that commitment. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that. No other part of the world does that, and in that sense it is generosity.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. Will the Minister address the House and not turn his back on the Chair. Let me remind those hon. Members who are trying to intervene and catch my eye that a great number of hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Gummer: I repeat that I believe it to be generous. It is both a responsibility and a generous commitment, of which we should be proud, and which we should continue. It is important to defend that generosity. The only way to do so is to provide a reasonable basis. That basis is provided by the 1981 letter. It ensures that we should provide, for those who come from the ACP countries, a parallelism which is defensible and which ought to be defended. That is why we did not support the Commission's suggestion that we should narrow the margins that were provided for the cane refiners.

I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will allow me to say that it is important that the margins provided for the cane refiners should be kept at a reasonable level, otherwise the ACP countries will be unable to export their sugar to the Community. There will be insufficient refining capacity. The defence of that refining capacity is an essential part of any sensible policy that allows ACP sugar into the Community. We are pledged to defend that policy.

Secondly, the documents deal with the problem of the reduced price quota sugar for the chemical industry. This is a matter of considerable concern, both to this country and to the Community as a whole. There is no earthly point in using this as a means to encourage the production of yet more sugar. We need to use it as a means to sell the sugar that we already produce. That is why we were so strongly opposed last year to the Commission's proposals. They would have had the effect of increasing the amount of C, or non-quota, sugar, and it was thought that they would provide the basis for selling cheaper sugar to the chemical industry.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: It would be much better if I allowed as many right hon. and hon. Members as possible to speak, rather than allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene. That is not the real reason. The real reason is that I am more frightened of Mr. Deputy Speaker than I am of the hon. Gentleman.

For the reason that I have given, we shall resist the Commission's original proposals. We are seeking to improve the position. We welcome in principle this proposal by the Commission. It will provide an opportunity to encourage new markets for the sugar that we produce both in this country and in the rest of the Community. It will not provide, as the previous proposals did, a means of expanding non-quota sugar.

There is a problem about starch. The industries which use starch are helped in two ways. Protection is given to Community-produced products which use starch. Support is also given to the starch manufacturers. The Commission's aim is to ensure that both means of support are not provided. There is no proper answer yet to this problem. We are not happy about the proposals that have been placed before us. We are determined to protect the British food industry from what would otherwise be far too sharp an attack on the pricing structure and on the cost of the industry's products.

It is unacceptable to help people twice — by protection and by direct support. It is also unacceptable to change the system and thereby upset the market position as to make it impossible for those who rely upon it to put their house in order. For that reason, we have sought to change the Commission's proposals. Both we and the other member states have already secured important improvements. They were incorporated in the Commission's revised proposals, which were published in the summer of this year.

We are discussing a number of matters that are of great importance. The kernel of the issue is the question of quotas for each country. Many people have made a strong case that the current position is unsatisfactory. Many hon. Members, on both sides of the House, have put that case, especially those who, like myself, represent constituencies that produce beet sugar.

The discussions in Brussels are aimed at finding a way to meet two points: first, the continuing over-production of sugar; and, secondly, the sense of dissatisfaction felt in this and other countries about the way in which the quotas have been parcelled. I cannot believe that, in advance of those discussions, the House would expect me to predict which way they will go. Whichever way, it is necessary that the United Kingdom provides a continuing secure market for ACP cane sugar — provided that the price remains competitive with Community beet sugar. That must be basic to any decisions.

I do not believe that those who seek an improved quota for British beet sugar would want it to be at the cost of the ACP support that we have given — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Because we have a clear commitment, both moral and historical, to support that. I repeat that commitment tonight. However, at the same time it is right that the Government should put clearly the strong belief of the beet industry that the B quota, which was set up at the time of the arrangements in 1981, is not a fair reflection of our historic production. Indeed, it does not meet the problem that will arise if we expect an expansion in demand for sugar in the chemical industry—nor the circumstances that have already arisen, where the margin between what we produce and what we need as a nation is so narrow.

I hope that those who have been heartened by my clear promise on the ACP will also agree that it is reasonable for the Government to seek ways to improve the position for our beet producers, who feel that they have not been fairly treated——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: It would be wrong of me to give way to my hon. Friends, having refused to give way to Opposition Members. I must adhere to what you requested, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and speak briefly now and then reply to the points raised in the debate. When the amendment is moved the House will no doubt wish to comment upon it. When I have listened to the case for the amendment, I can make my recommendations on what the House should do. It would be original and unusual if I were not prepared to listen to the speeches in favour of the amendment. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, if I said that I would not listen to them, the laughter of hon. Members would be even greater than it is now.

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not intolerable that my right hon. Friend should waffle on with this sort of badinage, when we all want to contribute——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order.

10.29 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I want first to deal with the document on the starch regime, which removes its subsidies for starch in food use and transfers them to starch in industrial use, and at prevailing world prices.

Those who advocate the use in industry of beet sugar will know that the chemical industry sees a future for the increased use of sugar, as it sees an increase in the use of starch, only at world prices. I welcome that development because it will help not only the existing industry but the new biotechnological industries, and there is evidence that the availablility of world prices in countries outside the EEC has helped to site the new industries in places such as Austria.

I accept the Minister's remarks about Britain having a special problem in the sense that we have a dependence greater than the rest of the EEC on starch in foodstuffs and that there are commodities such as soups and sauces which do not have the benefit of an import levy. I urge the Minister in any negotiations to bear in mind that some commodities do not have that double protection, so that the rationale for the removal of the subsidy from foodstuffs is not borne out.

The main problem that interests the House tonight surrounds the three documents that deal with the sugar regime, which is in surplus and, as intended, is not self-supporting. It is extremely disappointing to note that the EEC has again ducked its responsibilities by proposing that quotas should remain the same in total. As introduced, those quotas were, as I think the Minister recognised, inequitable and almost capricious in the sense, to give one example, that they gave Belgium and Luxembourg production quotas which were two and a half times their comsumption.

But, if it has been bad in its internal effect in the EEC, the regime's external effect has been devastating. The outcome of the quotas means that in 1984-85 the EEC produced 3 million tonnes above the amount consumed, and that is the reality of the quotas now recommended for continuance.

We dump sugar from the EEC on the world market. The most efficient world producer can produce at only 12 cents a pound, but the spot price in New York for most of this year has hovered between 3 and 4 cents a pound. For many primary producers of which we speak tonight, that spells poverty.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): His Excellency the High Commissioner for Guyana, who is

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

chairman of the ACP High Commissioners' Sugar Committee, has spoken of grave concern if there should be any increase in the United Kingdom sugar beet quota. There is no doubt that such an increase would conflict with the guarantees. We are talking about extremely poor countries. Does my hon. Friend agree that Her Majesty's Government should give a plain and definite commitment tonight to the ACP suppliers on this important subject?

Mr. John: Later in my remarks I shall be asking for such a guarantee. I have been speaking of total production, and the over-supply is, I gather to be continued for two reasons.

The first is that the Commission asserts that enlargement of the EEC will

"cause the surpluses to fall heavily."

Its own assessment of the situation shows how much those words are exaggerated, for the fall will apparently be about 250,000 tonnes out of a surplus of 3 million tonnes, so that 91·5 per cent. of the existing surplus will remain in surplus even after enlargement of the Community.

Secondly, the plea is made that there will be further consumption of sugar in the chemical and biotechnological industries. I hope that that occurs and that the United Kingdom gets its fair share of development and innovation. But how much additional production and consumption will that mean? The estimates vary from 80,000 tonnes in the EEC today to about 500,000 tonnes in 1992; and by then, it is estimated by the Chemical Industries Association, Britain might be using 150,000 tonnes. But those estimates depend upon one factor, which I have double-checked with the association: that sugar is available at the world price. That means, on all the figures that we have, that it is charged at a quarter of the present price, with a 75 per cent. subsidy—double what is now being offered. The gap must force a downward revision of those forecasts of consumption. Indeed, the Chemical Industries Association says that, if the price remains as it is, there will be no extra consumption of sugar in those industries. At the moment, the United Kingdom is already producing a surplus of 200,000 tonnes, so that in 1985 we grow more than we estimate that the chemical industries could possibly need as a maximum in 1992.

Like many other hon. Members, I have been lobbied, fairly but firmly, by the British Sugar Corporation about an increase in the beet sugar quota to meet the expanded demand. If I were satisfied about the justification of it by statistics and assured that it would not go indirectly into the food industry, thereby destroying hundreds of jobs in the Westburn refinery of Tate and Lyle in Scotland, I might find the argument persuasive. But on the arguments I have given, I cannot see — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen talk about British sugar. We once talked about British steel, on which they were nothing like as protective.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Mr. John: No, I am talking about——

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is not giving way.

Mr. John: I care deeply about sugar. I care about it deeply enough not to tell people and producers in this country fairy tales by pretending that there will be a lot of consumption which I do not believe to be merited on the facts. I believe that the existing production will cover any reasonably sane estimate of the extra consumption in the chemical industries and the various other technological industries.

All efforts should be geared to bringing sugar production in the EEC under control. As the Commission has evaded the problem, it can only add to its unenviable reputation for procrastination. The regime is not self-financing. In 1985 it cost us £385 million on the CAP budget, and as consumers it cost us a great deal more.

Document 8687/85 tries to cure the problem by proposing a levy. Is that in fact so? In last Friday's *Financial Times* and this week's *Agra Europe*, one reads that a much more timid and therefore much more popular —in Europe—set of levy proposals now exists. If that is true, how can we be expected to take note of the document, except possibly as a historical curiosity? I believe that the weakening of the proposal will lead to a further charge on the CAP. Have the Government estimated how much that will be?

I did not seek to amend the motion, because I regard our pledges to the ACP countries of 1·3 million tonnes of cane sugar as absolutely and firmly binding. I hope that the Government have the same feeling about it. I notice that the Minister assents. If that is so, it is a shame that it was not put in the motion. But a ministerial assurance will suit me, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will repeat it.

In this case, as with so many agricultural matters, the problem is that many people see the parts without the whole. Although we note the documents tonight, we must regret that an overall view is as far removed from the Commission as it ever was.

10.39 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Hexham): I welcome the Minister's comment about the firm commitment to the Commonwealth sugar producers. Many of us are deeply concerned that the commitment should be honoured. It may be wrong to talk of us continuing to behave generously, but that is true, at least in the sense that there is no doubt that the Commonwealth sugar producers have benefited considerably, as the Minister said, in a difficult world market, from the undertaking that we and the Community gave when Britain became a full member.

We gave the clearest possible assurances at the Lancaster house conference of a secure and continuing market of comparable quantities to that which the United Kingdom and the Community had entered under the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement. We also said that we would give fair prices. At the conference we were asked for and gave what were described as "bankable assurances"—that we would accept the Commonwealth sugar in comparable quantities at remunerative prices. That is the justification for paying the Commonwealth sugar producers the appropriate price.

There is much discussion in the House about the need to aid the developing world and how we must help it through its debt crisis. The best way for us to help is by paying developing countries a fair price for what they produce. That is a specific and moral commitment, and I am sure that no hon. Member would want to withdraw from that.

Furthermore, at the Lancaster house conference I said:

"If quotas for beet sugar production were increased in such a way that imports from Commonwealth countries were threatened, it would be a breach of the undertaking by the Community."

What we wanted tonight, and what I think my right hon. Friend has given, is an unequivocal assurance that the undertakings given in 1971, and subsequently, are being honoured by the British Government.

The Commission found that the world market was in a serious state and that future prospects were bleak. For that reason it said that it was right that the existing quotas should not be increased. The Commonwealth sugar producers are concerned about what is happening in the United Kingdom because our consumption of their cane sugar has fallen rapidly: at one time it was two thirds, but it is now down to 50 per cent. Against that background, it is difficult to argue for an increase in sugar beet quotas, especially when we have overproduction, not only in the Community but in the United Kingdom. Even if an additional demand from the chemical industries is expected, that does not justify any increase in sugar beet quotas at present.

People have talked about the loss of jobs, and there is a real fear that the closure of Tate and Lyle's refinery in Liverpool might be followed by a closure in Greenock, Scotland. That might result in a loss of some 400 jobs. There are job losses to be faced in any circumstances, but the House must bear it in mind that we have an honourable record of keeping our treaty commitments, and there was a clear treaty commitment. I remind the House that it was demanded from the British Government by both sides of the House when we entered the Community.

I understand that there is a dispute about the level of the ACP guaranteed prices. The initial offer was for a 1·15 per cent. increase for raw sugar compared with 1·3 per cent. for white sugar. The Commission document, issued on 11 September, said:

"the Commission proposes that the Council should alter the intervention price for raw sugar so that it is increased by the same percentage as that for white sugar, that is, by 1·3 per cent., and that it should be set at 44·92 ecu per 100 kg with effect from 1 July 1985."

I hope that the Government now accept that. I have had a look at the explanatory memorandum submitted by my right hon. Friend the Minister to the House on 4 October 1985, which says:

"The proposal retrospectively to increase the raw sugar intervention price would mean that the refining margin would increase by only 1·8 per cent. while that for beet processors would remain at 3·5 per cent. The Government therefore opposes this proposal which would discriminate against cane refiners."

I should like it to be made clear that the Government are opposed to any discrimination against cane refiners in respect of those prices. It may be a small amount money, but it is a principle to which the Commonwealth sugar producers rightly attach importance. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will clear that up.

10.45 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I beg to move at the end of the Question, to add:

"and fulfil the objectives set out in the Resolution of the House relating to sugar supplies of 11th November 1974."

The amendment is in my name and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton).

I remind the House of what the resolution referred to in the amendment said 11 years ago:

"That this House takes note of Commission Document No. R/1900/73, but declines to approve Commission Document R1957/74 as it makes no provision either for continuing imports, at fair and stable prices, of at least 1·4 million tons of cane sugar from Commonwealth countries, or for the continued existence of and employment in the port sugar refining industry in the United Kingdom, or for securing long term supplies of domestically refined cane sugar at a fair price to consumer and producer." —[*Official Report*, 11 November 1974; Vol. 881, c. 202.]

The calling of this Back-Bench amendment is very important. Take-note motions are of major importance, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South said to the House in the debate on sugar supplies on 11 November 1974. Therefore, I am most grateful to Mr. Speaker for his recognition of the need to debate the amendment. I remind the House that it refers specifically to a resolution of the House of Commons. The Government's objectives must surely accord with those contained in the resolution. To accept the amendment would be to continue with the resolution.

The motion proposed by the Minister, despite what he said, is a little ambiguous. If hon. Members will allow the lack of modesty, the amendment removes that ambiguity. At the same time, it diminishes the fears felt by many people employed in the United Kingdom cane sugar refining industry, by their families, and by all those who obtain a living from the production of that crop in the African Caribbean and Pacific countries.

At one level, my deep concern is shaped by the important fact that the one remaining cane sugar refinery in Scotland is in my constituency. It is owned by Tate and Lyle, which owns another and bigger cane sugar refinery in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South. In Greenock, 400 people are employed in the refinery. As I have said before in the House, the refinery in Greenock is an integral element in the Scottish food and drinks industry, which employs between 16,000 and 20,000 people. Their fear, which is felt by many people in the ACP countries, is that Her Majesty's Government may agree to an increase in the United Kingdom's total sugar beet quota.

That deep anxiety is shared by my constituents' employers. On Friday I received a letter from Mr. Tomlinson, a director of Tate and Lyle, who said:

"There is a surplus of sugar throughout the EEC and in the UK. Thus the Commission is not proposing to change existing production quotas. In contrast, however, the UK beet industry is arguing for an increase in its quota. If this were to be granted it would have substantial repercussions for cane sugar refining. Over 400 jobs would be lost as a result of the closure of Scotland's only sugar refinery and many more jobs in Scotland's food and drinks industry would be at risk."

Recently, I have had cause on more than one occasion to mention in the House the scandalously high levels of unemployment in my constituency.

An increase in the United Kingdom beet quota would swell an existing sugar surplus. The European Commission would surely refuse to allow increased surplus production being dumped on the world market, which is already suffering from a severe depression. It has been argued that in the near future sugar could become an important feedstock in the chemical industry. That argument is buttressed by the threat that if there is not an adequate supply, the United Kingdom chemical companies will build plants in France and other Community countries. Others argue that there is no case for an increase in the United Kingdom sugar beet quota.

A document from Tate and Lyle states

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

"Existing UK sugar supplies are more than adequate to fulfil the anticipated additional UK demand for sugar for industrial uses.

There is already a large EEC beet surplus which is having to be dumped on depressed world markets at prices well below cost in competition with developing countries, thereby ruining their economies."

I am being asked about the people in the beet sugar industry. I am concerned for them, but their position is not affected by what is happening to the cane sugar industry.

In addition, I have mentioned the threat to the people involved in the food and drinks industry in Scotland. For those reasons, my hon. Friends and I tabled the amendment, which refers to a resolution of the House. I sincerely hope that it meets with the approval of the House.

10.52 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I hope that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will excuse me for not speaking to his amendment. I should like to follow the theme of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon), and thank my hon. Friend the Minister for giving an undertaking that the ACP sugar quotas would remain intact.

I remind the House that the ACP quotas came about because of the cessation of the old Commonwealth sugar agreements. Invariably, all the ACP countries from which we take cane sugar are Third world countries. That is an important factor. Until recently I was a director of Belize Sugar Industries, and I am now a consultant to Tate and Lyle. When we joined the European Community, two thirds of our sugar consumption was cane sugar, but now it is 50 per cent. The ACP countries are unquestionably worried about the continual pressure on cane sugar. They do not want to see any more erosion of their quotas, and my hon. Friend has assured them of that.

The ACP countries have met their quotas, but, nevertheless, they look at the European market and see that even in the United Kingdom we have a sugar surplus of 200,000 tonnes a year. As the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said, the excess in the Common Market is 3 million tonnes. That must be frightening for a country whose staple crop is cane sugar.

When we talk about the alternative uses of sugar, for example chemical ones, even MAFF has predicted that the maximum increase in consumption for the chemical industry would be about 50,000 tonnes. The British Sugar Corporation is asking for an increase of 350,000 tonnes, even though we have a surplus of 200,000 tonnes. If in 1991 — let there be no mistake that we shall have to wait six years for this — there is an increase in consumption of 50,000 tonnes, that will still mean a surplus of 150,000 tonnes.

The price of sugar is depressed throughout the world simply because of the glut, and in no circumstances should we increase the quotas for the EEC. My right hon. Friend said that the quotas that we gave to the ACP countries were generous. That is a point of view to which I do not necessarily subscribe. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham said, we have a moral obligation to the old Commonwealth Sugar Agreement countries, and we should remember that they are Third world countries.

In many cases a Third world country has two quotas — an EEC quota and an American quota — and the balance of its production is sold on the world market. The EEC quota is sacrosanct, and in many cases the American quota has just been reduced under the Carribean initiative precisely to protect the sugar industry in the United States. Therefore, these ACP countries have already suffered a blow.

Some Opposition Members criticise the Government's aid programme and say that it is not sufficient. Personally, I do not believe that we should be ashamed of our aid programme, but we are wrong in not helping the ACP countries. If the chemical industry wants more production, let us increase the quotas for the ACP countries, because economically that would be far better.

From a political point of view, we should remember that the staple crop of an ACP country is cane sugar. It is all very well for people in the United Kingdom to say, "Let them diversify," but in many instances such countries cannot grow something else because the agronomy is not good enough. Beet sugar is grown in a temperate climate, where there is far more opportunity for diversification— [HON. MEMBERS: "Into what?"] Cereals, barley and so on. Temperate climate countries have a better opportunity of diversifying than have Third world countries.

If cane sugar comes under attack and there is an erosion in production, there is the possibility of the closure of the Greenock refinery—[*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) says that the Lincolnshire farmers are impoverished, but I doubt whether anyone else would agree.

As for employment, we are not arguing that the beet industry should be cut. It wants to increase its production. Leaving aside the economics of the argument, we must realise that cane sugar is extremely labour intensive. If there is a world reduction because of our quota system, a political vacuum will be created and the West will have to pick up the bill and give more and more aid. I am convinced that it is much better to give Third world countries trade rather than aid.

10.59 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I wish to confine my remarks to what the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said — the importance of starch and sugar to the chemical industry. There is a market for starch and a growing market for sugar provided as my hon. Friend correctly said, the chemical industry can buy at world prices. He said that the chemical industry's sugar consumption might remain the same, unless that were to happen. I am more doubtful than my hon. Friend because this country's chemical industry must compete with the world chemical industry which buys at world prices.

The starch agreement is relatively good. It is welcomed by the chemical industry and the Chemical Industries Association. The sugar agreement, in particular sugar agreement No. 9178/85, does not go far enough. The only answer for this country's chemical industry, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd said, is to amend it or to introduce a new regulation which will allow the chemical industry to buy at world prices. We are not talking, as are the regulations and the common agricultural policy, of sugar as a food. We are talking of it as a feedstock which can provide an exciting new industry. I shall tell the House about some of the new developments

that can take place within the chemical industry, provided that the price of feedstock meets world prices and the rebate brings the cost down to world prices and not to a percentage of them. In that event, instead of having two hands tied behind its back, it would merely tie one of the industry's hands behind its back.

This country is in the lead in the development of various new chemicals. They can provide considerable employment and attract capital investment. One of the developments is a type of plastic called PHB. We are ahead of the world in its development. We are being restrained in the development of that bioplastic because of the price of sugar as a feedstock to the chemical industry. Xanthan gum is another of our developments. I have as little knowledge as most other hon. Members of these matters, but xanthan gums are used for oil tertiary recovery. It will be important when our oil starts to run out in years to come that we have a home-based chemical developed by our chemical industry to assist in the tertiary recovery of oil. There are many exciting developments —for example, single cell oils, enzymes and microbial cultures—taking place in our chemical industry.

I have intervened because I have a chemical industry constituency and I am deputy chairman of the House all-party chemical industries group. The Chemical Industries Association asks Ministers and the House to cease regarding sugar as a food only and regard it as it truly is — an important feedstock for the British chemical industry which can provide jobs for many thousands of people.

11.4 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I represent one of the prime sugar beet growing areas of this country. The Bardney factory is in my constituency and the Brigg factory is just over the border in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who is in his place for this debate.

Farmers in my constituency are in a quandary. They are possibly the most efficient in the world and they farm some of the most intensively cultivated land in the world. They are told that they are over-producing cereals. Where can they turn? They cannot turn to milk or potatoes, because those products are already subject to quotas, and there is little possibility of turning to sugar under the present quota arrangements.

That is an intolerable situation. We consume more sugar per head than any nation in Europe, but our sugar beet quota covers only 49·7 per cent. of consumption at 1·144 million tonnes. Our consumers have a right to the best sugar at the lowest price on offer. The farmers of Lincolnshire are ready to offer them that sugar but are denied that opportunity by our EEC partners.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Leigh: No, we have had enough spokesmen in this debate for the sugar cane industry. I intend to stand up for the sugar beet farmers of this country. We all know the historical reasons for the discrimination against them. It is King Cane. The Government must decide what is their first priority, Barbados or Bardney, Brazil or Brigg. The cane producers have had it too good for too long. We can no more allow old loyalties to maintain artificially high quantities of cane to the disadvantage of our sugar beet producers than we should maintain artificially high imports of New Zealand butter to the disadvantage of our dairy producers.

It is intolerable that our sugar beet quota covers only 49·7 per cent. of consumption while in other EEC member states the proportion ranges from 102·5 per cent. to 232·7 per cent. in Luxembourg. Current United Kingdom consumption is 2·3 million tonnes, and by 1990 it will have increased by more than 250,000 tonnes.

As the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) has said, we look especially for new opportunities in the biotech industries. The possibilities exist to use our sugar beet for the manufacture of pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, paints, bakelite, wood stabilisers, polymers, washing-up liquids and even citric acids. Those new industries should be set up near the large sugar producing areas of this country, not in Brazil. Without an increase in our quota there will be no secure source of supply for those new industries.

The Government must press for an increase in our sugar beet quota, first, by reallocating quotas from other member states. If that is not possible, as the United Kingdom is the only EEC state disadvantaged and discriminated against, a special case should be made out for this country. At the very least, we should restore the 1981 cut, leaving all the other quotas unchanged.

Since joining the EEC we have pursued a responsible sugar beet quota policy. Is our good behaviour to be rewarded by a stagnant industry? I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to hold true to his words of 20 November when he said that the Government would insist that Community measures did not discriminate unfairly against the United Kingdom. The insisting must start here in this House today.

11.7 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is right to say that there should not be discrimination against the United Kingdom, but I thought that in the balance that he mentioned beet quotas had been substantially increased as a proportion of domestic sugar production and consumption over the past 10 to 20 years. Assuming that that balance has been reached, the question is whether we need an overbalance.

I speak with two hats in this debate—as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, which produced a number of reports on the documents before us, and as a constituency Member, having put my name to the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

There ar three groups of problems. Documents COM(84)620 and COM(85)504 deal with possible new outlets for our sugar surplus. My right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) pleaded the case of the chemical industry. The Select Committee on European Legislation said in its report HC 5-xxx, 1984-85:

> "The Commission points out that the European Council of Chemical Manufacturers' Federations has said that if sugar were available at less than Community prices up to an additional 450,000 tonnes pa could be used by 1990."

I presume that that is in the chemical industry. Whether taking crops from the ground and putting them through chemicals is a good way of dealing with natural resources is another matter.

Document COM(85)498 deals with the current marketing year. I did not detect a specific report from the

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Minister to explain what is happening within the Council of Ministers about the current sugar year. I hope that he will tell us about that when he replies, and also about the problems in COM(85)433 with the new five-year regime.

We are discussing three issues that have been rolled into one multi-purpose motion. It was the all-purpose and non-specific nature of the motion which caused my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow to table a specific amendment to something that had already been decided by the House.

The attendance in the Chamber and the interest shown in the debate show how important the topic is. I think that I counted 18 Members rising in their places and seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few minutes ago. When the Minister opened the debate, he did not spell out the three issues that are before us. I do not think that he mentioned one of the documents numerically, which I found rather disappointing after the reports of my Committee and the memoranda which the right hon. Gentleman has submitted. I am aware of the pressure of time, but I wonder whether that is the right approach to these matters.

I shall conclude by taking off my Chairman's hat and putting on a constituency hat. I know that the House will not deny that right to every Chairman of a Select Committee when the time comes.

When the Minister began his speech, he made some conciliatory and helpful remarks about the Third world and the moral duty which the House has in continuing the arrangements of the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement and in upholding undertakings that the Community made to our Commonwealth partners. A great moral issue is facing the First and the Third worlds, and I am glad that the Minister referred to it. However, I do not understand his reluctance to declare his attitude to the amendment, which merely refers to a resolution of the House about 10 years ago.

The Minister said that he would listen to the debate, and here is my contribution. If the Minister has to listen to the debate to decide whether he will reiterate an undertaking, objective or view expressed by the House about 10 years ago, that is a pity. I see that the Minister shakes his head, which relieves me. I shall take it that he agrees with the objectives outlined by the House 10 years ago, and as quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). If, as I apprehend, the Minister agrees with those objectives, he must accept the amendment. If he does not, and if the House shows some disagreement over the matter, the only inference to be drawn is that there has been some slippage between what the House decided 10 years ago and what the Government want today. I do not believe, from his opening remarks, that the Minister meant that, but that would be a possible interpretation if he says that he cannot accept the amendment, which only reiterates the status quo. I do not believe that the Government would wish to indicate that the status quo has changed.

11.14 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Until my election to represent the people of Lewisham, I was employed throughout my working life by Tate and Lyle. The contractual relationship lasts to this day, and therefore I shall declare an interest.

I support the motion, but there are problems within the operation of the sugar quota system which, even with the terms of the motion, can be tackled effectively by the Minister in the forthcoming round of negotiations in Brussels, which can in turn secure the future of the Westburn refinery.

In support of the proposals that we are considering, it is argued that there are many reasons why there may be an increase in United Kingdom sugar demand between 1986 and 1991. Where will the increases come from?

I agree with the Minister that the Commission believes that there could be some substitution of glucose by sugar in fermentation uses. However, the total change is not expected to be more than 50,000 tonnes. The beet lobby argues that sugar will become an important feedstock in the chemical industry. However, even the most wildly optimistic estimate of sugar for such use is only 100,000 tonnes, and most industrial experts consider that the increased demand is likely to be no more than 10,000 tonnes a year during the next five years.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) spoke about the pharmaceutical use of sucrose as a base. First, ICI has made the plastic substitute PHB, which is an important development that could become a competitor functionally for polyesters. But it could become a competitor only if the feedstock was priced at between £80 and £110 per tonne, based on the world price during the past two to three years, not—as the proposals before us suggest—at £250 or £260, which is the B quota net of levy. Even the Chemical Industries Association says that there is no chance of that happening or of the pharmaceutical industry taking that amount of sucrose coming on to the market at £250 or £260 per tonne.

The second important factor to remember about ICI is that production technology is at an early stage and that the applications technology is even further away. The problem with the RHM microprotein—hon. Members will be aware of that product, which has been widely publicised—is that glucose is a much-preferred substrate, anyway. One disadvantage of sugar as a substrate is that it causes effluent problems, so it would be much more preferable to use glucose. Indeed, there is at present no competition with starch.

For these, and or antibiotics and blood plasma extenders, there is very little expected demand from the chemicel industry. Much research has been carried out on polymers oil recovery and on xanthan gum, not least in Knowsley by Tate and Lyle. It is expected that production will require no more than 1,000 or 2,000 tonnes of sugar between now and 1991. Finally, citric acid is made from molasses, which is an uncontrolled commodity and cheaper than world price sugar. Unless EC sugar is offered at the world price of the past two to three years, none of those will be tenable commercial objectives for production during the next five to six years.

Mr. Lester: We listened to my hon. Friend's enthusiastic support of British sugar beet farmers. Would they be prepared to produce sugar at those world prices rather than at the heavily subsidised EC prices?

Mr. Moynihan: The answer is certainly not. They would not even be prepared to produce sugar at the proper B quota price at a levy of 39·5 per cent., rather than a composite levy.

But even if the figures of 50,000 tonnes and 100,000 tonnes were correct — the House should beware

accepting them readily—the increased demand would be only 150,000 tonnes, which is already less than the surplus in the British sugar market of 200,000 tonnes. Therefore, even if we accept those figures—I do not—we are already in surplus to the tune of 200,000 tonnes. On that basis, there can be no argument for an increase in beet quotas.

The British market is divided approximately 50-50 between cane and beet sugar, and hon. Members will be aware that 100,000 tonnes of cane sugar is refined in an area of high unemployment on Clydeside, at the Westburn refinery in Greenock. The difficulty with the proposal before the House and the discussions that may have preceded tonight is that they may allow the British Sugar Corporation to increase its production by up to 200,000 tonnes of additional quota. That figure represents 9 per cent. of United Kingdom demand, and the proposal is to add it to a market which is already oversupplied by 10 per cent.

Sugar for the domestic market is produced under an A and B quota system carrying a differential levy. After payment of the levy, sugar is produced under the two quotas, it is in free circulation and is almost indistinguishable. In 1985, the United Kingdom's A quota was 1·04 million tonnes, carrying a levy of 2 per cent. As hon. Members will know, the B quota of about 104,000 tonnes—just 10 per cent. of the A quota—carries a total composite levy of 39·5 per cent. The levy is paid by the producer.

The whole point of the original proposals was that quota A was intended to equate to an approximate Community consumption and quota B was originally designed for specialisation, to encourage producers of high efficiency to produce the marginal additional sugar required. In effect, the idea was that only a producer with a 40 per cent. cost advantage equivalent to the quota B level would be encouraged to produce marginal sugar under quota B, but that has not happened, not merely in the United Kingdom, but in all European countries.

Growers and producers have worked together on an average pricing system, which effectively eliminates the disincentive effect of the much higher tariff under the quota B system. The result is that all sugar allocated under any form of increased quotas will be produced, and at an average of the marginal levy of approximately 5·4 per cent., whereas the marginal levy under quota B would, if the system were working properly, as it was set out and intended, be a 38·5 per cent. levy.

Because of this abuse of the two-tier system, it is certain that the whole of any additional quota being produced would be supplied into the market by BSC, and because of the nature of the BSC operation, the substantially increased volume of throughput would lead to average unit costs falling. At the same time, because of the increased average levy implied by the change of the ratio of B quota to A quota, the intervention receipt that is the basic intervention price—the average levy payable—will fall.

BSC, having much more of the margin with which to manoeuvre in the market, will compete against Tate and Lyle, and will be in a position to do so, but, because of the protective market in which it operates, caused by the process that I have described, the BSC will force 100,000 tonnes of sugar out of the United Kingdom market, and that will mean the closure of a fundamentally important job provider in Scotland. That is what is critical in this debate.

It is not palatable to hear B producers argue that if we do not go ahead with the proposals there will be a loss of jobs in beet because the debate is about an increase in quota, not a status quo. If the status quo remained, BSC would not be losing jobs. It has not publicly said so, but we know that if there is an increase in the quotas, because of the system working as I have explained there will definitely be job losses at Greenock for cane refineries. That is the critical point.

The international consequences of this would be serious. The importance of them is that the ACP countries will lose out. If there are 100,000 tonnes less of supply coming into the British market, even if it is shifted to Portugal—which has 50,000 tonnes given to it under the accession arrangements for its entrance into the Community—Portugal could still need 250,000 tonnes which it gains from either ACP supplies or the world market, and 100,000 tonnes will need to be shifted cross to Portugal, leaving 100,000 less coming from the world market. Yet again, there will be a depressed price for world sugar in countries that cannot even now supply at the world market price because it is so heavily depressed by flooded, over-subsidised European beet that is below the production costs of even the most efficient cane producers world wide, who have a competitive advantage in the production of sugar.

It surprises me that hon. Members who regularly argue for the workings of a free market, and argue to ensure that we have effective free competition, based on good quality competitive price and delivery terms—all the arguments of the free marketeers—suddenly pop up one evening, throw all that out of the window, go for massive protectionism, the like of which is even subtly suggested at being at a different level from that which quota A and quota B intended, and then happily appear tomorrow arguing in favour of free competition. If that point does not go home to everybody inside and outside the House, no other point will.

11.24 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I agree with the speeches of the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). My views on the subject are well known and they accord with what has been said by both hon. Members.

I do not want to get involved in the cane-beet debate, not because I am not interested in it but because I have yet another constituency interest, and there are many in this debate. A firm called Tunnel Refineries is in the forefront of converting from traditional maize wet milling capacity to the utilisation of United Kingdom wheat. By the spring of next year it expects to have achieved between 40 and 50 per cent. replacement of its raw material capacity by United Kingdom wheat. Therefore, in that respect the firm—no doubt this applies to others which make use of United Kingdom wheat as a raw material for starch and glucose production—can and does make a significant contribution to reducing the scandal of mounting United Kingdom intervention stocks of wheat.

Some hon. Members may have noticed *The Sunday Times* article on 17 November showing that some 330 secret grain stores exist in Britain, in which some 6 million

[Mr. Guy Barnett]

tonnes of surplus wheat and barley are stored. The total value of the surplus supplies is estimated to amount to a staggering £700 million. surely equally worrying is the fact that maintaining that piece of expensive nonsense costs the taxpayer £72 million a year.

At present, the United Kingdom consumer consumes in excess of 750,000 tonnes of starch and glucose based upon the conversion of cereals. Indeed, United Kingdom companies have a capacity in excess of 1 million tonnes. However, in spite of its intention to maintain internal cereal prices well above world price levels, the Commission also proposes to increase the cost to the consumer even further by removing the production refund for starch required by the food industry. It appears to think that all food products are protected from world price competition by the common agricultural policy.

I understand that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has identified a number of important products, including soft drinks, beers and baby foods, which are not so protected. The Commission proposes to retain the production refund for only a limited number of products for industrial application. The effect of that will be increased food costs for the consumer and reduced willingness of United Kingdom manufacturers, such as Tunnel Refineries, to invest in the plant required to convert grain surpluses. If the Government were to encourage the conversion of grain surpluses, the United Kingdom starch and glucose industry could consume over 1 million tonnes per annum.

If that wheat is to be stored in intervention the cost is 35 ecu a tonne. If exported out of the EC, the cost of export refunds is 77 ecu a tonne. So the total cost of storage and export is 112 ecu a tonne, while the starch and glucose manufacturers receive only 27·79 ecu a tonne under the current starch regime. That is a potential saving of 84 ecu a tonne; a saving which I am told can be estimated at some £52 million a year.

In view of that, I ask the Minister to oppose the loss of the production refund on starch on food and other purposes which is proposed under the new starch regime. I am told that the Dutch are insisting on special treatment for their potato starch industry, so why are the Government not insisting on special treatment for our industry? I would expect them to be more robust than they appear to have been so far in defence of our national interest as well as the interests of my constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It may help the House if I say that the Minister would like to begin his reply at 11.35 pm.

11.29 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I am a sugar beet man. I live among sugar beet. The main view from my window is of the largest sugar beet factory in Europe. I agree with the Minister of State that we have an obligation to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and that we must stick to it.

I regret that this debate has turned into an argument between Liverpool and Greenock on the one hand and Bury St. Edmunds and Gainsborough and Horncastle on the other. It is not an argument between Tate and Lyle and the British Sugar Corporation. It is an argument about how this country is to obtain a larger share of what the European Community is producing for this country.

My proposal is simple. There is a case for justice to be done to efficient British agriculture. This must not be done at the expense of ACP production. It must be done at the expense of some European countries that have higher quotas than they need. Our quota is lower than it ought to be. When the quotas were fixed, British agriculture was unfortunate enough to have had a bad year, and our production fell. Consequently our quota was set at the wrong level. I hope that my right hon. Friend will seek to obtain from the European Community an improved quota for the efficient British sugar beet industry, at the expense of those in Europe who can afford to give it to us.

11.30 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Not so very long ago I went to Belize on behalf of Mr. Speaker to present to the Parliament of that country its Speaker's chair. The importance of sugar to that country's struggling economy was impressed upon me while I was there. There has been a slump in the world sugar market, caused by the heavily subsidised dumping of surplus beet sugar by the European Community. It is causing deepening poverty in the already poor tropical and Third-world countries. As a result of dumping, prices on world markets have been below the cost of production anywhere in the world. That is immoral. It is blighting and destroying the hopes of those countries.

I thought that the Conservative party believed in free markets and in removing market rigidities, but that does not appear to apply to sugar. Rigid protectionism is being applied. Therefore, stocks are at an all-time high. They are equivalent to half the world's annual consumption of sugar. However, the production of beet sugar in the Community, bolstered by protection, is defying all the economic laws of gravity. The European Community price is six times higher than the world price.

The talks on the international sugar agreement have collapsed. There is now a free for all, which means that those countries with the biggest subsidies are winning. Therefore the richer farmers in the richer countries are enjoying the largest subsidies.

The European Community is one of the main culprits. Western Europe used to be a net importer of sugar. It is now one of the biggest exporters. It unloads millions of tonnes of subsidised sugar. Its exports have escalated dramatically. They trebled between 1978 and 1984. Western Europe's world market share is now 25 per cent. This is obtained by subsidies of up to 85 per cent. of the European Community's internal price. How can that be justified? Nor should we be deluded by the myth that this is self-financing. It is nonsense to think that the levies mean that the producers are financially responsible for the disposal of sugar surpluses. Producers get such a high price for quota sugar that they can easily afford to export surpluses at marginal prices.

Price discipline is the only sensible course. It is our duty to call for a change. The quotas result in an unseemly scramble for shares. Britain comes off worst, as usual, in the European Community, but that is another story. The cost of the sugar regime is 2 billion ecus. That is the cost not to the budget but to consumers because of artificially high prices. This is bad for the consumer. It is also bad for sensible farming in this country and for the Third world. It should be opposed by Parliament and by the Government. I hope that the Minister's constructive and conciliatory words in his opening speech will be carried

through to his closing speech. I hope that he will assure the House that there has been no slippage and that he will accept the amendment.

11.33 pm

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said that it is sad that this should have developed into an argument between the cane sugar and the sugar beet interests. The argument is more complex than that. I take seriously his point about the continuing concern in this country that the original arrangements for the quota were based upon a year that was atypical. That must mean that the British sugar beet industry feels that it has been done down by the rest of the European Community. That is why I said that it was not unreasonable to look for a redressing of that balance. However, when a system is in place, that is rather difficult.

I must tell the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) that the problems that he adumbrated about those in favour of the free market can be turned on their heads. He is not noted for his battling in support of the free market in other areas. We are trying to find an answer to two very different interests, both of which are concerned with jobs, both of which are important and neither of which can be ignored.

I listened with considerable care when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) spoke to his amendment. I am not especially happy about the wording of the amendment, not least because it refers to 1·4 million tons, which he knows became 1·3 million tons through no fault of this country, but because the countries concerned did not wish to take that extra amount. He will understand that my hesitance is not because I wish to slide or to slip. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) would acquit me of being of the temperament to do so without a good deal of previous announcement.

I do not like the wording of the amendment because it may be read as suggesting that we are not already doing the things that it suggests when in fact the achievement of the Government and the Community is to carry out precisely what is contained in the resolution of the House. Therefore, I should be sad if the amendment were read as an indictment of what we have done since 1974.

If the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will accept that those aspects are not central to what he is proposing, I believe that it would be even more misleading if I recommend to the House that it should oppose the amendment. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has put the House in this position. If I oppose the amendment, it might be thought that the Government were in some way resiling from the position that they and previous Governments have taken. Therefore, I shall recommend that the House accepts the amendment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that in the spirit in which it is said.

As I said in my opening remarks, I am confident that the United Kingdom will continue to provide a secure market for ACP sugar, provided that the price remains competitive with Community beet sugar.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) will, in retrospect, agree that to suggest that ACP countries have had it too good for too long is not entirely true. With a country such as Barbados, it is difficult not to accept that the standard of living, the dependence on a single crop and the problems that it faces really cannot make it comparable even with farmers in Suffolk — and I say that representing a Suffolk constituency.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: Social Democratic and Liberal Members have been present throughout the debate. Because it is difficult to formulate a reply, they have not said anything about the issue. I do not intend to give way.

We must consider the issue carefully. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) fairly put his finger on our moral responsibility to the ACP countries. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and others who pressed the issue will accept that in the circumstances of some increase in likely demand — not only because of the new accessions of Spain and Portugal, which we welcome, but because of the likely changes in the demand from the chemical industry—it would not be unreasonable to try to obtain some redressing of the balance for beet sugar. I do not think that such a redressing would have the dire consequences—it would not go far enough for that to happen — that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) suggested.

My hon. Friend pointed to some of the technological changes and warned against being over-enthusiastic about the new markets and opportunities. I hope that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has at no time been over-enthusiastic, but it would be wrong to ignore some of those opportunities, and it certainly would be wrong not to organise ourselves so that we can take advantage of those opportunities. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must fight for the interests of this country within the Community, however communautaire we may be.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way. Only four minutes remain and I have some important points to raise, particularly in reply to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John).

We are fully alive to the problems to which the hon. Member for Pontypridd referred in relation to the coming five years. He was right to say that the proposals now before the Council are not the same as were originally proposed. In the end we must arrive at an agreement between all the countries. I have looked at the issues carefully, and we are continuing to consider the way in which those matters will fall country by country.

There is no reason at present to suppose that we cannot produce an answer which may mean it being a self-supporting regime. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that the argument becomes much less reasonable if it is not self-supporting; it must be that, and we are determined to achieve it. It may have to be achieved in a different way from that originally proposed by the Commission. I am alive to the points that he raised, and we will do what we can to ensure that they are met.

I assure the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) that I remember the Tunnel Company well from the time when I failed to win that seat from his predecessor. I appreciate the problems with which it is faced.

In the long run, it must be reasonable not to protect people twice, once by subsidy and again by exterior protection. The hon. Gentleman pointed out that some

[Mr. Gummer]

products were not protected by an exterior tariff and that they would not be protected even once if we removed the subsidy. We have gone a long way in changing the Commission's proposal, and I assure him that we have been extremely robust on this issue.

We have moved a long way already and we shall continue to press the matter because we want to continue to help those areas where starch would not otherwise be protected, while removing the double protection at a speed which will not undermine the stability of the starch-producing industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh)—I question the words he used about the ACP countries—was right to remind us that we cannot ignore the fact that sugar beet is an important crop for large areas of Britain and that the continued viability of the sugar beet industry is vital for jobs and agriculture here. However, he must accept that a balance must be kept and that our commitment to the ACP countries must continue. It is a moral commitment from which I hope no hon. Member would wish us to resile.

Amendment agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8687/85, 9178/85 and 8781/85, relating to the sugar sector and 11172/84 and 8688/85, relating to the reform of the starch regime, and supports the Government's objectives to secure satisfactory agreements on them which take account of the interests of both producers and users of the products concerned, and fulfil the objectives set out in the Resolution of the House relating to sugar supplies of 11th November 1974.

Forestry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The borders and south-east Scotland as a whole represent a perfect geographical and topographical area within which to consider the wider national and international aspects of forestry as well as the important part that it has to play in the local borders rural economy.

I remind the House of the inordinately high level of imports of timber and related products that is countenanced at present. We spend about £4,000 million per annum on importing raw material—92 per cent. of total United Kingdom requirements. Home-grown timber could secure a high level of import substitution, which would benefit local economies such as south-east Scotland and the country as a whole. As only 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom is presently planted as commercial forest —although the figure in the borders is nearer 12 per cent.—there is clearly capacity available to achieve that high level of import substitution.

The production potential of our present forestry is maturing fast, and I understand that it is expected to double in the next 10 years. Therefore, we are on the brink of a significant potential expansion of the whole forestry enterprise and its related harvesting and processing industries.

In my last Adjournment debate on the borders two years ago, I expressed my fear that the Government were proposing to dismantle the Forestry Commission by stealth, by allowing wholesale and indiscriminate disposal of large expanses of forest in areas such as the borders. While still being critical of aspects of that policy—principally its continued insistence on keeping the purchase prices and the identities of purchasers secret—I am less worried now than I then was. It is true that two large forests in the borders have been sold, but the policy announced in 1984, which put the emphasis on rationalisation, has had an important and welcoming effect on the forestry enterprise and the morale of the local work force.

I pay tribute to those who work for the Forestry Commission in the borders. They are a dedicated band of professionals who carry out physically demanding and often dangerous jobs with a great deal of skill. They have played their part in achieving the results announced recently in the Forestry Commission's annual report. Those results show that they are ahead of financial targets set for them by Ministers.

If the amalgamation of the conservancies and the slimmed-down organisation is delivering the goods in the way that it seems to be, why not allow the commission to develop and refine its rationalisation policy to include purchasing forests and planting land where it can be shown that it would make economic sense to do so? At present the savings made go back to the Exchequer, and there is very little local incentive in south-east Scotland or elsewhere to do better simply to line the pockets of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I welcome the statement that was made some months ago by the Minister of State who sits in the other place, when he publicly embraced the concept of a mixed economy in forestry. I support that view, but the Minister

will be aware that the private forestry interests in the borders and elsewhere have recently been expressing some concern at the way in which the Department continues to administer the forestry grant scheme, and the consultation process involved in that scheme, when it comes to releasing land for forestry.

The view is that the Department is still adhering to the principles adumbrated first in 1939, when grazing land and lower pastures were completely sacrosanct from afforestation. Will the Minister accept that times have now significantly changed? Will he accept that, against the background of agricultural surpluses and the current debate about agricultural land use, forestry should be considered as a part of the solution to the surplus problem?

Private industry, as well as individual farmers, can play a part in future, to everyone's benefit. Of course, there must be safeguards in terms of the integration with the livestock sector, which is very important. There must be safeguards in terms of access for the public and the preservation of rural jobs. Both private industry and farming interests would measure up, if they were given a lead by the Government, to achieving most of the aims and objects. As an example of the sensitivity of private industry to some of those aspects, I cite the publication of the "Forestry and Woodland Code", produced recently by Timber Growers UK. It is a voluntary code, but I believe that it is a welcome contribution to the debate on conservation.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Gentleman has been generous to the private sector. He has been talking about safeguards to protect aspects of land use. He must be aware that in his constituency and in part of mine, which is on the border of the hon. Gentleman's, large areas of marginal farm land have recently been planted without the consent of the Forestry Commission or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Is the hon. Gentleman not concerned about the uncontrolled blanket of afforestation of some areas of south-east Scotland?

Mr. Kirkwood: That is a useful intervention, because it substantially contributes to my next point. There are potentially serious problems in the issue raised by the hon. Member. The Department cannot sit back and wash its hands of the problem, which may, if the industry does not face its responsibilities, lead us towards the introduction of planning regulations for forestry and agriculture. I am loth to pursue that line, but it is up to the industry, and I think that it should be given a chance with the voluntary code that I mentioned. I agree with the point made by the hon. Member for East Lothian, that if the industry does not adhere to the code, it will have to pay the price and face statutory regulations, which will not be in anybody's interests, but which may be inevitable.

In the statement last week announcing the relief for the bad summer weather, I noticed that the Minister said that he was prepared to implement article 15 of the European Community's agricultural structures programme. Surely that announcement, which if introduced will allow farmers to claim HLCAs for up to 15 years if they take stock off the land and plant trees, points to one of the ways forward. We could introduce a sensible scheme of farm forestry. I recognise that there are difficulties in planting a standing crop that lasts for 40 years before it matures and can be harvested. That produces legal problems for the traditional farm tenancy arrangements in Scotland, but I believe that, with application, and if the Government took a positive lead, we could resolve some of the problems to the satisfaction of farmers, who want to turn some of the their surplus agricultural land over to afforestation.

Last week's announcement by the Minister to deal with the problem south of the border points the way forward for farm forestry. If that is the way that the Ministry in England has chosen, a more flexible approach is required from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to releasing land of better quality than class 4B, if it is suitable for sensitive exploitation by the private sector for agricultural interests. In evidence I quote the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council, who said:

"forestry should be encouraged on lower land and grants should be paid to support sheep farming on higher land."

That quotation is from *The Guardian* of 26 November 1985.

I was also interested to read a written answer that the Minister gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who

"asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of local jobs per hectare supported by the principal land based activities in Scotland."

The Minister replied:

"The numbers of local jobs provided per 1,000 hectares by the principal land based activities in Scotland are as follows:

	Number
Dairy farming	31
Lowland crop and stock farming	22
Upland mixed farming	8
Forestry	7
Hill sheep farming	1"

—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. *150*.]

I am sceptical about those figures, as I was brought up to believe that in a contest between sheep and trees, one is always safer with sheep. I am interested in the figures, and it is right that we should look at them carefully. If the figures are right, we should look at forestry in terms of employment as well as in terms of taking surplus agricultural land out of use.

If all that is to happen, the Government will need to consider adopting a more radical and open policy, not just for land use, but for providing infrastructure support. I shall give an example in the south-east of Scotland. The Borders regional council no longer has access to European Community infrastructure grants because its development status has been removed. It cannot repair roads, much-needed and used by the industry, whether public or private, from the needs element of the rate support grant. I shall not go into that further. It is a subject for another debate on another day, probably tomorrow, if the press announcements are right.

The Government will need to sponsor research and to develop the downstream industries, and not just confine their interests, as they have in the past, to securing the planting of trees. They will also need to turn their attention to training young people to become not just foresters and harvesters, but forestry processors. As the Minister may know, the Scottish Development Agency, in association with Borders regional council, is looking at two areas in my constituency to see what rural development can be promoted there. Will the Minister ensure that any forestry related developments that might be identified as future projects will get ministerial support?

[Mr. Kirkwood]

My purpose in raising this subject is to alleviate the consequences of what I perceive as the potential rural depopulation, which, if we are not careful, will flow from inevitable changes in the agricultural sector in the coming years in south-east Scotland and other parts of rural Scotland. Forestry is a unique and commercially viable alternative source of stable employment, and with consistent husbandry and proper control it is infinitely renewable. That makes it different from just about every other industry, whether coal, oil or any other of the important industries in Scotland. Forestry is infinitely renewable if looked after properly.

Forestry has an important part to play in a local context in south-east Scotland and in the broader national economic strategy for the United Kingdom. If properly developed, it offers tremendous potential for rural betterment and prosperity, but the Government have a vital part to play by drawing together the diverse strands, consulting all the interested parties and setting out the right framework to enable the industry to realise its potential to the full.

11.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I listened with great interest to what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said about forestry in south-east Scotland, and in general. Some two years ago he raised a debate on the Adjournment of the House on the problems confronting forestry. It is significant that today's debate is taking place against a different background.

If forestry is to flourish, it has to be geared to the markets for its timber, and much of the wood processing industry now operates on a scale that transcends regional boundaries. There is a tendency to think of forestry as a rural and therefore local activity, but that is true only up to a point. The forests are there to produce timber, and to serve the needs of industry, and the scale and pattern of market demand mean that it is difficult, if not impossible, to look comprehensively at forestry in any part of the country in isolation. We have to take account of the situation at least on a Scottish, if not a Great Britain, basis. More particularly, in the south-east of Scotland, we have to look at the Great Britain picture.

Let us look, therefore, at forestry in this country. We need go back only some five years, which is a short period in forestry terms, to find an industry in some trouble. When we came to power in 1979, there was more doom and gloom about than optimism. New planting by the private sector, which is always a reflection of the confidence of the industry, was at a low ebb. The wood-processing industry was faced with the impact of a worldwide recession, and as a result many closures occurred with the loss of jobs and capacity for processing home wood supplies. The future of the whole industry was, to say the least, uncertain.

The Government then embarked on a major review of forestry policy, the outcome of which was announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in December 1980. The policy was designed to help get forestry back on its feet and in a position to take full advantage of the increasing output of timber from the nation's forests. But equally important, it was a clear message that the Government backed forestry. The hon. Gentleman mentioned our forestry product imports, which are a good reason for an increased forestry policy.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacKay: I should like to make progress, in view of the time.

Contrast the position today with that of five years ago. Confidence has returned in full measure and forestry in Britain is now going from strength to strength. The Government's forestry policy has played its part in that renaissance, aided by our determination that industry in general should find its competitive edge once more. The transformation has been far from easy. Tough decisions have had to be taken, but they have paid off, and the industry is now geared up for the future.

Regarding new planting, I am pleased to say that the private sector has responded well to the challenge that we set it. A new forestry grant scheme was introduced in 1981. While in Great Britain the amount of new planting carried out by the private sector in the year to March 1980 was some 8,300 hectares, the figure had nearly doubled to more than 16,000 hectares in the year to March 1985. Scotland had by far the major slice of that, with more than 14,000 hectares of private planting, in marked contrast to the 6,900 hectares in 1980. That is all apart from a continuing planting programme by the Forestry Commission of 5,000 hectares throughout the country, again with the bulk of the planting, some 4,500 hectares, in Scotland.

Now we have a further impetus to new planting by the private sector through the launch in October this year of the broadleaved woodland grant scheme. This is part of the Government's policy on broadleaves announced by the Secretary of State on 24 July 1985. Although these are early days, I gather from the Forestry Commission that the scheme has attracted a massive amount of interest, and it seems that we shall see many more broadleaves planted. The new scheme has particular relevance and interest to farmers, in that well managed woods can not only be productive in timber terms, but can bring shelter and sporting benefits, as well as being of value in conservation and amenity terms.

The way in which the wood-processing industry has turned round in the past five years is remarkable. This year alone has seen the coming on stream of two major plants—United Paper Mills newsprint mill at Shotton in north Wales, and Highland Forest Products structural composition board plant near Inverness. Those two developments alone will require a total of 600,000 cubic metres of home grown timber a year, and will make up for the capacity lost as a result of the three pulp mill closures in the recession in 1980. The other major development in the pulp and paper sector, dependent on home wood supplies, was the major expansion by Thames Board Mills at Workington to increase its capacity for the production of cartonboard. Other developments have taken place in the particleboard industry — with future expansion intended at plants at Hexham and Chirk — and in sawmilling, where significant expansion has taken place in Scotland with investment and modern technology to meet the growing volumes of material coming on to the market. Those developments have not only provided new jobs in the processing industry but have been instrumental in establishing and maintaining jobs in the timber and

haulage industries. They are proof of the vigour and enterprise of the domestic forestry products industry and tangible evidence of the Government's efforts during the past five years to stimulate and encourage new industrial investment.

How does all this good news relate to south-east Scotland? Clearly, what is good for forestry in general is good for forestry there. We now have the crucial element of secure markets for the timber from the area, which is the best possible guarantee of job security for many of those who work in the industry.

The hon. Gentleman discussed the jobs in downstream activities in south-east Scotland. It must be appreciated that in the pulp and paper sector, as well as in the wood-based panel sector, large-scale wood-processing developments are essential to provide a sound basis for the industry in Great Britain. Investments must be on the large scale necessary to compete effectively with imports. One of the crucial factors attracting industry to Great Britain is our ability to guarantee an adequate and continuous supply of timber now and in the foreseeable future. Here the Forestry Commission has a key role to play, with the result that over large parts of the country the planned output of timber from commission forests over the next few years is substantially committed to secure markets.

Bearing in mind the enormous quantities involved, timber supplies to major developments in this country have to come from far and wide. They are of direct benefit to a great many rural areas in providing a stable and continuing demand and thus a guarantee of continuing employment in harvesting and haulage. When it comes to location, a great many factors have to be taken into account, and the final decision is a commercial one which only the investor can make.

This does not mean to say that there is no scope for expanding or establishing smaller locally based wood-processing plants and mills. Far from it. Indeed, there are many examples of such developments in sawmilling in Scotland. But this is not so much a matter of broad strategy as of local initiative. I particularly welcome the fact that the Borders regional council, backed by the SDA, is proposing to carry out a feasibility study which will cover the opportunities for local timber processing likely to present themselves in coming years. Like the hon. Gentleman, we welcome that. It rests with local people to seize on any opportunities identified in that study.

South-east Scotland contains about 70,000 hectares of managed forests. At present the Forestry Commission is producing just under 100,000 cubic metres of timber from local forests, and private forests are producing about half this amount. Supplies of small roundwood go to various outlets. Some are sent to the Shotton newsprint mill, some to Thames board mill at Workington, some to Caberboard at Stirling, and to the particleboard mill at Hexham recently acquired by Egger Ltd.

Sawlogs form just under half the total output and are supplied to a number of sawmills some of which are located within south-east Scotland. The area — in common with the rest of Scotland—is expected to have a significant growth in wood production over the next 10 years—of the order of 80 per cent.—which is bound to have a beneficial effect on employment. It is not possible to say how much of the extra production is likely to be processed locally, but at least the raw material will be there, and as I have already said there is scope for local initiative.

As for future planting, we are looking to the private sector to continue to expand. In south-east Scotland over the past two and a half years, some 2,500 hectares of new planting have been carried out under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme. In the same period, 9,500 hectares have been cleared for planting, and this shows that interest continues at a high level and augurs well for a steady expansion of the forest estate. This coupled with an increasing restocking programme in both commission and private forests, should help to secure employment.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred to planting without grants and to the two cases that had occurred in south-east Scotland. Both hon. Members have raised this matter before, and I have responded in the past, not only to them but also to other hon. Members. At the risk of repeating what I have already said, these two cases are the first significant ones of their type since the introduction of the consultation process in 1974.

The Government do not wish to overreact, and I make no secret of the fact that on the basis of these two cases we do not contemplate any action, although we have made our displeasure well known in the private forestry industry. If other cases were to materialise, we should reassess the position as a matter of priority and take the appropriate action. I hope that answers the point.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire made the point that planting and the expansion of forestry depend upon land becoming available for planting. I am conscious of the anxiety being expressed that not enough land is being cleared for forestry. That is a complex subject, but the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Forestry Commission are together looking at the criteria for the clearance of agricultual land for forestry to see whether changes are now called for. I shall not attempt to anticipate the outcome of those discussions, but I can assure the House that we are very much aware of the need to strike the right balance between those two important rural industries.

The hon. Gentleman drew my attention to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) that I answered. I remember the figures well. I spent a wet day in the Glenorchy forest in my constituency in September discussing matters with the Forestry Commission. I discussed employment and environmental matters with the two members of staff who accompanied me. They were convinced and were able to give me figures that showed that forestry employed more people than hill sheep farming, although I suspect that they were not prepared to go to the extent that I did in my answer to my hon. Friend—showing seven jobs in forestry to one in hill sheep farming.

One of the problems that we discussed was that in forestry there are many jobs in the haulage industry—as I know, because my constituency is one of the most heavily afforested in the United Kingdom—which are difficult to quantify because the firms conduct other haulage business at the same time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the sale of woodlands in his area. He reminded the House that he had expressed anxiety about that. I am glad that some of his fears have been proved to be groundless. I know that there have been some redundancies in the Lammermuir forest where the commission is steadily selling its interest. Those job losses

[Mr. MacKay]

are obviously to be regretted. That said, it is to the advantage of the commission and the public purse that it can dispose of the woodlands that it finds difficult and expensive to manage. The woodland at Lammermuir certainly falls into that category.

Again using Argyle and Bute as a base, I view forests as large operations. A forest seems to me to consist of many trees and at least a few hundred hectares. The Lammermuir forest consists of 2,600 hectares in 74 scattered blocks. They are obviously more awkward and difficult to look after than 2,600 hectares in my constituency, all planted fairly closely.

In forestry we have an important industry. As the hon. Gentleman hinted, the commission has made an important review of the way that it operates and has amalgamated the two-tier system of local management at district and forest level to form one level of management — the forest district. That has had an impact on local management posts, and some local offices have been closed. That is, of course, to be regretted, but if the commission is to compete and provide the wood processors with competitively priced timber, it is important that it should match its local management structure with present and future needs and with the need to produce the timber as efficiently and effectively as possible. The commission has done that. I believe that, given the agricultural surpluses, forestry provides us with a means of using the land and creating jobs. I hope that it will marry the needs of agriculture with those of the environment. All those factors are important and make up the patchwork quilt that represents the rural scene.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Tourist Industry

1. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Paymaster General what has been the trend in employment opportunities in the tourist industry in the past five years.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): In the five years to June 1985 the number of employees in employment in the hotel, catering and leisure sectors, which are most directly dependent on tourists' spending, rose by 66,000 or about 6 per cent. In addition, self-employment has grown, for example by about 22,000 in the hotel and catering industries between 1981 and 1984. However, it is difficult to define tourist industries precisely, and various studies have suggested that 1 million to 1·5 million jobs are supported directly or indirectly by tourist spending.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his encouraging reply. Will he lose no opportunity to scotch the ridiculous suggestion that jobs in those industries are not every bit as good as those in other industries and that they are in some ways servile? Will he give publicity to the fact that more than 90 per cent. of people who complete YTS courses get jobs at the end of them, and that there are vacancies in this area?

Mr. Clarke: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend on both points. Certainly there are serious jobs to be had in the industries most directly affected, and in many sectors such as retailing and public transport, which also benefit from increased tourist spending and activity. I also confirm that, because that is one of the fastest growing areas of new employment in the economy, there is a high success rate for those who leave training schemes directed at it.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that one of the best ways to help the tourist industry is to make money available to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England and to the Historic Buildings Councils for Wales and for Scotland because they employ many people in skilled crafts, and help tourism? Does the Minister realise that the Scottish Historic Buildings Council is skint? Will he discuss with his ministerial colleagues what should be done about that?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is the inhabitant of a historic Scottish building and undoubtedly has a direct interest in the question. I shall refer the main point of it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is responsible. The Government must get the balance right between spending on the parts of the heritage that help to attract visitors and spending on the services that provide new employment.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that this welcome trend would be much faster accelerated if we introduced flexible licensing hours? Will he assure the House that in the Cabinet he will urge the implementation as quickly as possible of that desirable change?

Mr. Clarke: My views are declared because many years ago my hon. and learned Friend supported my private member's Bill which sought to achieve that end. Anybody responsible for tourism and leisure-based industries knows that there is great pressure for reform from everybody interested in employment in that area. The Government, especially my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, have the matter under urgent review.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Paymaster General aware that the highlands and islands of Scotland welcome the emphasis that the Government are rightly giving to employment creation in tourism? Towards that end, will he make it clear in principle that, if Ross and Cromarty district council inquired about the potential for a mountain railway and ski development facility near Ben Wyvis at Strathpeffer in my constituency, he, as Minister responsible for employment, would take a constructive and legitimate interest in the proposals?

Mr. Clarke: I shall take a proper interest in both projects if they are forthcoming, and I should probably refer them to the Scottish Tourist Board, which is responsible in the first instance for looking at the disbursement of funds in that area.

Adult Training

2. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about training for unemployed adults.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): We have increased the number of unemployed people helped through the Manpower Services Commission's adult training programme. This year we aim to help to train some 200,000 adults, about half of whom will be unemployed people.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister confirm that the Manpower Services Commission is to cut £15 million from adult training in the community programme? Will he make a statement that will show the long-term unemployed that he is concerned about their future and is willing for them at least to have the limited opportunities that the community programme affords them?

Mr. Clark: It is true that the take-up of off-the-job training places in the community programme is disappointingly low. For that reason, it is appropriate to divert the resources and use them in other forms of training. I draw the hon. Lady's attention to the fact that training expenditure has gone up from £458 million in 1979-80 to £1·2 billion in 1984-85 and to £1·23 million in 1985-86.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that when the Paymaster General met a deputation of the Knitting

Industries Federation from the east midlands he gave the impression that the Government were thinking of making more help available to adult training and retraining? Has he any statement to make on this matter?

Mr. Clark: I do not know about the knitting industry, but I can tell my hon. Friend that the amount of money devoted to training increases year by year and has more than doubled in real terms in the life of this Parliament.

Mr. Sheerman: The Minister has made a most dishonest statement——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot use that word.

Mr. Sheerman: The Minister is seeking to mislead the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is also an unparliamentary expression.

Mr. Sheerman: I withdraw both those expressions. The Minister is inaccurate in talking about an increase in training for the adult unemployed when there have been dreadful cuts in the skillcentre network. The Government promised that this money would be switched to the community programme for training. Not only have the skillcentres been cut to the bone, but now we have cuts in the promised training of people on the community programme. When will the Government commit themselves to quality training for the unemployed?

Mr. Clark: I have already answered the question about training on and off the community programme. The provision is there, but the places are not being taken up. The number of adults who have been helped under the training scheme since 1983 has doubled, and the amount of expenditure since the Conservative Government were first elected in 1979 has nearly trebled.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the total of people unemployed; how many of these are *(a)* women, and *(b)* men; and how many unemployed are under 21 years of age.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,277,000, of whom 1,043,000 were women, 2,234,000 were men, and 555,000 were under 20 years of age.

Mr. Flannery: Is this not appalling—*[Interruption.]* It is obvious from the way that Tory Members are laughing that they do not think that it is. Is this situation not productive of misery and a sense of despair and hopelessness just before another Christmas? When will the Government admit that all this is due to their dogmatic and wrong policies, and that if they do not make a fundamental change, next Christmas and the Christmas after—if they are still in office—they will still be trying to explain away more and more millions of unemployed people—bigger numbers, incidentally, than those who are claiming benefit?

Mr. Clarke: The situation is serious, but there are encouraging signs that it is improving. The seasonally adjusted unemployment figure has fallen for two consecutive months, and, when it fell last month, it was for the third time in five months. The rate at which new jobs are being created in the British economy is now high, and the increase of new jobs over the past few years is equal to the increase in the entire European Community. The number of vacancies in our jobcentres is the highest since 1980, and the number of people being placed is going up. Therefore, we are able to tackle the most intractable problem, which is that of the long-term unemployed,. We were able to announce initiatives a fortnight age in the job start scheme, following up through job clubs and contacting the long-term unemployed because we now have some hope of being able to offer them a return to work.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give the House his estimate of the number of unemployed who are actively seeking work? Is he satisfied that the work test is working properly? If not, will he say what plans he has to improve it?

Mr. Clarke: The last labour survey implied that some people who were registered as unemployed were not actively seeking work, but that others who were not registered as unemployed were actively seeking work. The figure is about 3 million. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important remember that to qualify for benefit the work test should be that somebody is genuinely available for work. It is right that we should continue to enforce the long-standing rules and ensure that they are properly enforced.

Mr. Wainwright: Can the Paymaster General confirm that, over and above the total of new jobs, there has been a net loss of 1·1 million jobs since May 1979 and that the more optimistic figures about the creation of new jobs derive from taking base lines during the recession of the 1980s?

Mr. Clarke: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman's first point is right. There was a great shakeout of labour in many of he uncompetitive sectors of our economy. I did not understand and therefore will have to read the hon. Gentleman's second point. I hope that he is not trying to undermine the objective assessment of the rate at which new jobs are being created. On the best independent estimates that are available to us, 670,000 new jobs have been created in the British economy since the spring of 1983. That record is unrivalled anywhere else in the European Community.

Mr. Budgen: May I remind my right hon. and learned Friend that his positive discrimination proposals will damage the black unemployed, since they make black people the object of resentment? Further, may I remind him that libertarians everywhere will note that there is no law to justify the pressure now being put upon employers to take into employment additional black people and that, when employers tell the Government to mind their own business, they will receive widespread support from right hon. and hon. Members who sit on the Government Benches?

Mr. Clarke: If I had in mind any positive discrimination proposals, I should be concerned about my hon. Friend's strictures against them, but I am not aware that I or any of my right hon. and hon. Friends have put forward any such proposals. We are concerned about persistent unemployment among deprived minorities of all kinds and about the state of the economy, especially in the inner cities. We have to ensure that no section of our

community is put at a disadvantage when we take measures to improve employment. My hon. Friend's fears that the Government will take steps that incite a white backlash are probably much exaggerated.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the Paymaster General consider the number of school leavers in Brent under the age of 20 who have been unable to find work for more than a year, the excellent report of the Church of England, and the survey of drug abuse in north-west London among youngsters who leave school and go on to the dole, with no possible hope of obtaining work? Is the Paymaster General unable to give any hope to youngsters in the inner cities who come straight out of school and go on to the dole?

Mr. Clarke: There is nobody in the country who is not seriously concerned about the state of many of our inner city areas and about unemployment there. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has read the report to which he referred, but it contains a number of inaccuracies, as one would expect from its rather Left-wing membership. To cite an example to those who may not yet have read it, the report candidly asserts that the only programme on which the Government have increased expenditure is police expenditure in the inner cities. Spending on unemployment and training measures alone has doubled in real terms since 1979. I hope that the hon. Gentleman,who is genuinely concerned about these matters and about the social problems in his Brent constituency, will address his mind to the problems brought upon the area by Brent council. It imposed rate increases on the area which made it extremely difficult to attract new business and new employment to the borough.

Mr. Parris: How many real jobs are created when the Government give £1 million to English Sewing Linited to destroy 300 jobs in my constituency and to create 300 jobs near Glasgow?

Mr. Clarke: I suspect that that question should be directed to the Minister responsible for the grant about which my hon. Friend complains. I shall address myself only to the generality behind the question. In all the measures that we take that are aimed at encouraging employment, we must take care that we do not simply create jobs in one place and displace jobs in another. We address ourselves to that carefully in managing the community programme and other measures for which our Department is responsible.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Paymaster General accept that the deplorable figures he has mentioned are but the minimum of the true level of unemployment, confirmed yet again by a recent survey in Scotswood in Newcastle which shows that seven out of 10 males are unemployed in the area? When do the Government intend to ratify the new ILO recommendation requiring Governments to accept their responsibility to achieve and maintain high employment levels, or is the 83 per cent. employment level in Britain high enough?

Mr. Clarke: I make no attempt to shrink from the fact that 3 million unemployed or thereabouts is a serious social problem for Britain. Frankly, I do not see the point in anybody, of any political complexion, seeking to exaggerate the figure by adding a million or two. All the steps that we are taking are designed to bring down the present total. The Government's responsibility is clear. it is to create a climate within which successful business can flourish and grow and create new employment opportunities. The figures for the past two to two and a half years are extremely encouraging and show that we are suceeding. I shall study the ILO recommendation, but it sounds as though it merely confirms the Government's commitment.

Local Enterprise Agencies

4. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to extend the scope or improve the effectiveness of local enterprise agencies.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): The scope and effectiveness of local enterprise agencies is ultimately in the hands of the directors and boards of the agencies. However, the Government intend to encourage agencies to plan their businesses and extend their services by making the provision of a business plan one of the conditions for Government grant under the new scheme of support for them.

Mr. Rowe: I do not believe that it is entirely due to my having put down a question that my right hon. and learned Friend should have chosen to announce a £2·5 million scheme for the financial support of the enterprise agencies. Is he prepared to put the same effort into manpower extension, in particular by using the management extension scheme as one source of additional assistance to those desirable agencies?

Mr. Trippier: The announcement to increase funding to the local enterprise movement was made some three weeks ago and it was only the detail of how the Government would match every pound raised from the private sector that was given yesterday. My hon. Friend makes a compelling point about the management extension programme, and I am certainly prepared to consider it with the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Does the Minister accept that the private sector is shedding jobs in manufacturing industry at a frightening rate? In my constituency, GEC has declared 300 further redundancies. How much effort realistically needs to be put in through local enterprise agencies before we can begin to create jobs? It will require an enormous effort by local authorities to wipe up the damage being done by that one company, let alone the damage being done by the private sector in manufacturing industry throughout the north of England.

Mr. Trippier: I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to my constituency, which is only 16 miles away from his, where we saw the shedding of labour to which he referred, in particular between 1980 and 1982 in what I call the teeth of the recession. As a result of setting up the local enterprise agency, we have managed to reduce unemployment from 19·1 to 13·2 per cent. Those are pretty compelling figures, and I think that the hon. Gentleman will draw comfort from them. While I am on my feet, I should compliment the local enterprise agency operating in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, which I visited on two occasions. It is doing a fantastic job.

British Tourist Authority

6. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Paymaster General if he intends to increase funding to the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, Sir, but I cannot give a precise amount at this stage. We are increasing the total funding for the British Tourist Authority, English Tourist Board and section 4 next year by some 20 per cent. to £40 million. I have asked the BTA and the ETB to submit details to me by Christmas on how they propose to spend the funds. I have asked them to give additional emphasis in their new plans to improving employment opportunities, encouraging the dispersal of visitors throughout the United Kingdom and extending the tourism season.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Does he feel that there should be any change of emphasis among the regions where those new resources should be deployed?

Mr. Clarke: We must look at those parts of the country, by no means all of them in the north, where there is potential for improved tourism and the more growth of employment based on tourism and leisure activities. That is a point on which I have asked the boards to concentrate in putting forward their proposals and, as I described in my main answer, to encourage the dispersal of visitors throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Before the Minister waxes too lyrical about the increased number of jobs in tourism, will he recognise that those are generally no-tech and very low-wage jobs and that that situation is likely to be worsened by the Government's proposals on wages councils?

Mr. Clarke: There is a tendency in manufacturing industry for there to be a declining number of unskilled jobs as technology changes the nature of work. It is, therefore, encouraging to note that some of the jobs being created in this area are for unskilled or less skilled people. Nevertheless, there are many other skilled jobs as well, and the benefits of the increased level of spending by businesses—22 per cent. up this year compared with last year—are spread over a great many activities and provide a wide range of employment for many people.

Local Enterprise Agencies

7. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies are now in operation.

Mr. Trippier: There are 308 local enterprise agencies currently in operation, as recorded by my Department.

Mr. Couchman: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Is he aware that his announcement yesterday of the details of the new funding for enterprise agencies will be warmly welcomed by the Medway enterprise agency, which serves my constituency and which, in its four years of existence, has helped to secure or create 2,500 jobs from 630 applications?

Mr. Trippier: That is a truly remarkable record, and I compliment the Medway enterprise agency on what it has achieved thus far. In the two and a half years during which I have been Minister responsible for small firms, I have visited the Medway enterprise agency on three occasions, when I have been impressed with Mr. Guy Sibley, its director, whose enthusiasm is infectious. I am glad to hear that he will welcome our new proposals for further assistance to enterprise agencies.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May we have an assurance that in the allocation of funds to enterprise agencies there will be no discrimination against agencies that are already successful? Will the Minister undertake to examine the relationship between Department of Employment offices where enterprise allowance arrangements are set up and enterprise agencies to see that they are communicating the names of recipients of enterprise allowances—in other words, to ensure that there is an adequate relationship between the two?

Mr. Trippier: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance for which he asks in the second part of that supplementary question. Indeed, I am currently working on a scheme which, I hope, will ensure that enterprise agencies are more involved with enterprise allowance scheme applicants. The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point in the first part of his question. We have said that we shall not be prepared to assist enterprise agencies with incomes in excess of £60,000, taking out any secondees that they may have. We are determined to try to help the smaller enterprise agencies that may have difficulty in attracting private sector finance, and we shall match the funds that they can raise from the private sector up to £20,000.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend commend private sector employers who have funded the Bolton business venture? Will he encourage the Churches to assist in the provision of funds for enterprise agencies in inner city areas?

Mr. Trippier: In answer to the first part of that supplementary question, I am happy to commend and compliment the private sector sponsors of the Bolton business venture. That, too, is a most successful enterprise agency, which is doing an excellent job.

The answer to the second part of the question is that I am keen to encourage the Churches to contribute to enterprise agencies, wherever they may be. There is greater need in the inner city areas, and what my hon. Friend asks would not create a precedent in that a number of enterprise agencies based in the inner cities are helped by various churches.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister accept that in Leeds, the work of the West Yorkshire enterprise board is regarded as an important component of the enterprise agency service? Is he aware that there are worries about the future of the enterprise board, and will he say what will happen to this important aspect of the work of the agency after the abolition of the metropolitan county council?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman is getting matters a little mixed up. The West Yorkshire enterprise board is not part of the enterprise agency movement. In an earlier debate on small firms I said that the Government have no wish to scrap enterprise boards that have been set up. We are entirely neutral on them. Some of the work that they do is good, although the cost per job created by some of them is remarkably high. The enterprise agency movement is private sector-led, although some local authorities help to sponsor it. The initiative lies with the private sector, and that is why they are successful.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have helped to set up a local enterprise agency in north-west Norfolk which, with the backing of local business and the borough council, should be a great success? I hope that it is as successful as the agency in Medway. Does my hon. Friend agree that one way of increasing the effectiveness

and job-creating potential of local enterprise agencies is to encourage them to set up local business expansion scheme funds?

Mr. Trippier: The House will wish every possible success to the enterprise agency being set up in my hon. Friend's constituency. Local enterprise agencies have an important role to play as marriage brokers under the business expansion scheme. They can also join together in drawing funds from their community, be it a region or sub-region, for investment in small firms in the area.

Women (Hours of Work)

8. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Paymaster General if he proposes to introduce legislation to repeal the statutory restrictions on women's hours of work; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We propose to introduce legislation to repeal the statutory restrictions on women's hours of work in the Sex Discrimination Bill, which we hope to bring forward early in 1986.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Equality is the theme of much of our current legislation. However, can my hon. Friend say how such legislation will assist employers and, therefore, employment? Will it be necessary to repeal some special industrial legislation, such as the Baking Industry Act 1954?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. The key point is that employers will not have to apply for special exemption to employ women outside the present restricted hours, so women will benefit from increased employment opportunities. If we did not consider repeal of the baking industry legislation, we should be left with the anomaly that men were protected for working at night but women were not, so we are asking interested parties for their views on the repeal of that legislation.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Minister agree that we should improve conditions, including hours of work, for men and women, and not remove restrictions that may result in women being exploited by having to work longer hours for mean rates of pay or risk the sack?

Mr. Bottomley: We should consider the deregulation aspect. At present, more than 200,000 women are exempt from the restrictions and can work at night. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has asked many of them whether they wish to be prohibited from working at night in the way that men may be prohibited.

Small Business Clubs

9. **Mr. Conway** asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the number of small business clubs which have been established.

Mr. Trippier: The latest directory of enterprise agencies produced by business in the community shows that at least 53 local enterprise agencies run business clubs.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that small business clubs are a good way of encouraging training and of helping to find some solutions to the problems of small firms? If so, will he encourage their formation and promotion?

Mr. Trippier: I shall encourage and try to promote them wherever I can. It is interesting to note that, during the past 12 months, there has been a 50 per cent. increase in the number of small business clubs. I agree with my hon. Friend that they provide a useful opportunity for people to get together to exchange ideas and to consider promotional activities, and they also provide an opportunity for local business men to be introduced to suppliers and buyers.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

10. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General what training is available for the self-employed on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Both private and public sector training, including the full range of the Manpower Services Commission's training provision, is available. The latter includes free study workshops designed for people considering self-employment and free courses for one-person businesses, small businesses and businesses with real growth potential.

Mr. Hamilton: I welcome the recently announced increase in the places available on this scheme and the reduction in the qualifying period. Can my hon. Friend estimate how many jobs have been created by the scheme, and will he say what proposals he has to improve training on it?

Mr. Trippier: The number of jobs that have been created as a result of the enterprise allowance scheme has been calculated at the rate of 100 businesses set up under the EAS creating about 99 additional jobs. The trick is to try to graft the training for which the Department of Employment is responsible through the MSC on to the enterprise allowance scheme applicants in such a way as to increase their awareness of their limitations in management expertise and marketing financial control. I am considering the matter and hope to make an announcement soon.

Mr. Skinner: What have all the enterprise allowance schemes, enterprise agencies, enterprise zones and small business clubs to do with the glorious success of monetarism and the market place that we were promised in 1979? Is the Minister aware that in my constituency it has been said that all this Government intervention is little more than an extension of post-war funk?

Mr. Trippier: On this, as on so many subjects, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) suffers from delusions of adequacy. Free market forces have a great deal to do with the local enterprise agencies that have been set up while this Government have been in office, principally because we have realised that the private sector——

Mr. Skinner: It has collapsed.

Mr. Trippier: No, it has not. The private sector has taken the initiative in supporting communities by backing enterprise agencies and thus providing new jobs. That is what the Government are about—providing new jobs through enterprise and free market forces.

Job Creation

11. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the estimated effects on employment in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland of the proposals in the autumn statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The proposals in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's autumn statement will further improve the climate for economic growth and new jobs in England and Wales, and in Scotland.

Mr. Hamilton: Why is the Minister so shy of giving any estimate of the effect on employment of the autumn statement? Now that the Government have achieved the miracle of creating more unemployment than Britain has seen since 1930, will he give a specific guarantee that, as a direct result of the autumn statement, unemployment will be lower in 12 months, or even in two years, than it is now?

Mr. Clarke: In previous answers I have referred to the encouraging growth in new jobs in the British economy, and everything that we are now doing is designed to reinforce that. The autumn statement will enable us to finance the job start scheme and the trials that we are now running in nine areas, including Dundee, which are designed to help the long-term unemployed to get back into jobs. More vacancies are being notified, more are being filled by the jobcentres and there is an expansion of employment in the economy, which enables me to give the hopeful answer that I gave.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right and learned Friend agree that much remains to be done, as shown by the fact that although there is no shortage of jobs in my constituency, many of the unemployed cannot afford to take them because of the tax and benefits structure? Does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that subsequent financial statements should give the highest priority to ironing out those anomalies?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, in his Green Paper, has put forward worthwhile proposals for consideration to open the gap between earnings in work and benefits out of work. I believe that further tax cuts, especially if concentrated on the lower paid, could do a great deal to increase the rewards for work. Recent Government initiatives, including the job start scheme, have been designed to enable people to make the transition more easily from benefit into work.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Minister accept that the Government's response to unemployment has been an abysmal failure and that they are misleading the House and the country when they argue that there are now more people in work? Unemployment relates to the percentage of people out of work, and that figure is growing. So far, Government action has failed to deal with mass unemployment, especially in the northern region.

Mr. Clarke: The figure for unemployment is not growing. With respect, the hon. Gentleman is resorting to generalisations and slogans, as most of his hon. Friends have done today. We are putting forward measures and figures which show an encouraging growth in employment.

Mr. Dickens: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's optimistic forecasts. Does he agree that more jobs are being created and more people are working in the United Kingdom than ever before and that in job creation we are outstripping the whole of western Europe?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is, as ever, factually completely sound. It is worth reflecting that there are over 1 million more people in work now than there were under Lord Stockton's Government of which we were all fervent supporters, and that they are all earning more money than they were under that Government. Our economy has been successful in sustaining higher levels of work and prosperity, but obviously we need to do more.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Paymaster General take it from me that he cannot fool the people by fiddling with the figures? The autumn statement makes it clear that the Government do not expect any growth in real jobs. The only promised improvement is the introduction of more schemes. The increases in the numbers of vacancies to which he refers are community programme vacancies. He has referred to about 600,000 jobs, but there has been a decrease in full-time jobs for men and an increase in part-time, low-paid jobs for women. There has been an adjustment to the estimate of the number who are self-employed. The Minister cannot fool the people with the sort of figures that he has presented to the House. They know that unemployment is still high and is not improving.

Mr. Clarke: It is probably by the medium of written answer that we can most usefully go into the statistics. It is absurd to allege that we are fiddling the figures. The figures on which we are relying have been produced by the same statistical service that serves all Governments and all Departments objectively and well. I cannot understand the Opposition's motive in trying to discredit the figures and make the situation appear worse than it is. The Opposition should be as encouraged as we are by the obvious signs of improvement in the economy. It is becoming somewhat pointless for them to continue to try to dismiss the signs of improvement and to suggest that the situation is worse than it is.

Mr. Wainright: In view of the Paymaster General's responsibility for employment, is he not unhappy that the policies of high interest rates and a high sterling exchange rate, as confirmed by the autumn statement, are inhibiting the real expansion of the economy and, therefore, employment opportunities, especially in advanced industries?

Mr. Clarke: I hope that we all welcome the prospects of reduced interest rates, which seem currently to be quite good. I reject entirely the notion that we should devalue our currency to compensate for loss of competitiveness. That approach has failed in the past. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will consider the valid inflation figures and take comfort from the fact that a steadily falling inflation rate is one of the factors that are helping to create an optimistic outlook for the immediate future.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the autumn statement would be more encouraging if the Government would say that if resources are available they will be directed, first, to raising the tax threshold and, secondly, to ensuring that British industry is not subject to unfair competition, especially the unfair practices of Japan?

Mr. Clarke: I shall refer both of those interesting suggestions to those of my right hon. Friends who are

responsible for such matters. I agree with my hon. Friend that one encouraging feature is that Conservative Members are able to indulge in interesting discussions on how best to deploy tax cuts to give a further stimulus to the economy and job creation.

Training Schemes (Injuries)

12. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been injured while taking part in Government training schemes since 1979; and what was the total amount of compensation paid out.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since 1 April 1981 over £930,000 has been paid under the MSC's industrial injuries scheme. Since 1980, nearly 1·5 million people have entered training opportunities, job training and youth training schemes, and 5,873 have been injured. Nearly all were minor injuries.

Mr. Brown: Is the Minister aware that many of those youngsters have no rights and are used as cheap labour? Does he understand that many of them suffer horrendous injuries? I take, for example, the case of James MacCormack, who was severely injured in 1981 and who died this year. He was one of my constituents. He was supposedly receiving training at MacGregors Quayside Mills in Leith. That young fellow suffered a lingering death. He had no rights whatsoever and his family did not even receive the death grant.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question, not make a statement.

Mr. Brown: It is an important point. Conservative Members may not appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All the points are important, but the hon. Gentleman must ask a question.

Mr. Brown: I hope that the Minister will reply. This young fellow——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman would be better advised to try to obtain an Adjournment debate on this subject.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know—*[Interruption.]*—that this is Question Time. He is perfectly entitled to ask a question, but he must put it in the form of a question and not make a statement. The Minister may answer.

Mr. Bottomley: I am aware of that sad case, and the hon. Gentleman has made persistent representations through correspondence with my ministerial colleagues. It is little consolation to the family, but the same compensation has been paid as would have been paid under the statutory scheme if it had been covered in that way. The arrangements under the MSC are for payments to be made equivalent to the DHSS scheme, even though there is no statutory cover.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Luxembourg for a meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Hamilton: Has my right hon. Friend seen the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, last week in which he said that, in spite of the many helpful measures passed during the past six years, parents still have insufficient choice in schools and standards of achievement are still too low? Does he agree with my hon. Friend, who is supported by many Conservative Members, that the solution to the difficulties would be to move towards denationalising the education system?

Mr. Biffen: I agree with my hon. Friend that there is great scope for further parental influence and involvement in the running of our schools. I hope that the Education Bill, which will be presented later, will move towards that. As for progress beyond that, I agree with my hon. Friend that there will be a continuing debate about the importance of a much more robust assertion of parental involvement in our education system and the changes that may be necessary to secure that.

Q2. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Will the leader of the House take this excellent opportunity to apologise to the 140 skilled members of the work force of the British Hovercraft Corporation who have been given their redundancy notices today? And we must not forget the 463 who have been given redundancy notices at Yeovil, Milton Keynes and Weston-super-Mare, all working for Westland. Does he not think it ironic that at a time when Westland is in trouble, his colleague, the Secretary of State for Defence, should be going to Europe to ask nationalised industries in Italy and France to bail out Westland, when the Government could have done much more to help?

Mr. Biffen: I express my regrets about the redundancies, as does every other hon. Member in the House, whether in respect of those in their own constituencies or otherwise. I understand that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) would wish to be associated with those comments.

I do not believe that anyone can fault the way in which the Government have sought to promote successful and major sales of Westland helicopters to the Indian Government. If they were attended with the success which I hope will be desired throughout the House, the position of the company would be further remedied.

Mr. McCrindle: In the light of the sad case of Jasmine Beckford, can the Leader of the House tell me whether there are any plans to introduce legislation on child care,

updating the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, and once again laying responsibility on magistrates and others to emphasise the interests of the child, even if from time to time that may lead inevitably to the break-up of the family?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend expresses a deep anxiety that will be widely shared in the light of the most tragic circumstances that have been revealed by the Blom-Cooper report. The wisest way to proceed would be to have a thorough and reflective study of the recommendations and then see what further action may be necessary on the part of the Government.

Mr. Kinnock: I echo the view expressed by the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) and take comfort from the fact that it is a matter of concern right across the House and that there are no political differences.

May I press the right hon. Gentleman further? First, will he give an undertaking that there will be effective steps to clarify the law in so far as it affects children at risk? Secondly, will he give me an assurance that the Government will not proceed with any proposals from the Department of Education and Science to make a cut in the training and retraining provision for social workers? Can we look forward to immediate and necessary action that falls within the general requirements of the Government and their responsibility for promoting the best practice to try to ensure against a repetition of horrors such as those suffered by little Jasmine Beckford?

Mr. Biffen: As I have said, the findings of the Blom-Cooper report will be given immediate study by my right hon. Friends and during that study they will take up the wider issues that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the creation of a common market in financial services does not require any amendment of the Treaty of Rome or any enlargement of the powers of the European Assembly, and does not need us to relinquish the veto, as it is fully in line with existing commitments by member states? Will my right hon. Friend transmit to the Prime Minister our support for the stand that she is taking?

Mr. Biffen: In response to the first part of my hon. Friend's question, that would be my judgment.

I shall happily convey the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend in the second part of his question.

Mr. Steel: Does the Leader of the House accept that we all welcome the fact that the Government will give serious and reflective study to the Blom-Cooper report, but will he convey to the Prime Minister on her return the fact that those of us who have seen the advance full text of the Church of England report on inner cities, which will be published later tonight, are appalled at the rubbishing anonymously given to it by Ministers over the weekend? Will he make it clear, on behalf of the Government, that we welcome any contribution to solving the intractable problems that come from that source?

Mr. Biffen: I at once repudiate entirely the proposition that the report was rubbished by Ministers over the weekend. The House would be well advised to treat the report as what it purports to be—a serious contribution to studying the problems in our city centres. We know from the words of the Bishop of Liverpool, one of the authors, that it is a substantial and carefully researched report by people who know a good deal about the cities. I should like to make an open contribution to the debate by asking that that research be carried just one stage further, so that we know the estimated total public costs of the proposal and to what extent they may be offset by the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief.

Dr. Mawhinney: Will my right hon. Friend accept that as a member of the General Synod I would hesitate to approach him and his right hon. Friends in the Cabinet at Downing street for spiritual guidance—*[Interruption.]*—but that as a Member of the House I have no intention of seeking political guidance from the cabinet of Canterbury because, however well-intentioned it may be, it is short on reality, on history and, above all, on theology?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules must apply to both sides: questions, not statements.

Mr. Biffen: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his perception of the limitations of what the Treasury Bench can answer. Of course he is right to entertain the anxieties that he does. I hope I may be permitted to say that the Church through the ages has sought to interest itself in social affairs, but when it does so it has to accept that it will be judged on the quality of its contribution to the argument.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: In view of the denigration of the authors of the report, will the Leader of the House find out from the Prime Minister why she keeps recommending to the Queen all these Marxists for appointment to bishoprics?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that it will not infringe the spirit of the occasion if I take the question seriously.

As to the first point about the composition of the commission, that certainly helps to explain the quality of the report. It is neither smear nor innuendo to observe that many of those people have long and distinguished careers in the public service, where they have never hesitated to indicate where the balance of their judgment lay.

As to the point about the appointment of bishops—*[Interruption.]* I say no, they are touching the truth—a great many words are spoken, some in mirth and some in passion. However, I hope that we will think seriously before disturbing the present relationship between the state and the Church of England.

Sir John Farr: May I ask my right hon. Friend for his advice in respect of some of my constituents who work for Leicester city council and who have been threatened with lack of promotion and even dismissal unless they attend a city-run racial awareness course? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a gross intrusion into the private lives of my constituents and a gross impertinence by the city council? What does he recommend I should tell them?

Mr. Biffen: The House has the opportunity of knowing of this matter, which sounds thoroughly disturbing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]. Because of the undue pressure which seems to operate. I think the whole House would very much enjoy the chance of hearing more about it. I hope that my hon. Friend is successful in bringing it before the House in an Adjournment debate.

Q3. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Leader of the House aware that when people see Ministers trying to smear and discredit the Church of England report they are reminded instantly of Nixon-style politics? Does not the report largely bear out the words of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—that no matter what publicity or propaganda there may be, however sleek, there is no evidence whatsoever that Britain is booming?

Mr. Biffen: I am not among the most devoted fans of the commission's report, but even I would say that it needed better friends than the hon. Gentleman. The report is seeking a serious and sustained debate about how we might use our resources in city centres to mitigate the evident social problems that exist, and to what extent that can be a partnership between private initiative and collective responsibility. It would be better if we conducted it in those terms.

Mr. Spencer: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the Transport and General Workers Union's leaders' late conversion to democracy? Taken with the fact that we have had fewer strikes than for many years, does he agree that in industrial relations the Tory party has got it right?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes an admirable point. The House has lived under the shadow of the belief that trade union legislation passed by this place and receiving the Royal Assent was, none the less, rendered ineffective by the friends of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We are now seeing that that is nonsense and that a triumph of moderation has been secured by this Government and their legislation.

Q4. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: Will the Leader of the House draw to the attention of the Prime Minister the position that exists in the Mid Glamorgan area health authority, which has the third largest waiting list in England and Wales and has been forced to make cuts of £5·5 million, resulting in hospital and ward closures and the sacking of 240 health workers? What advice will he give to the Prime Minister if the Shropshire area health authority, which has the second highest waiting list, is forced into making similar cuts?

Mr. Biffen: I should, out of county patriotism and intellectual conviction, point out that the Shropshire area health authority is run increasingly efficiently as a result of the application of general management techniques. As to the wider question that the hon. Gentleman asks, I noted his contribution to the debate on the Queen's Speech and the subsequent early-day motion. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the matter, as he requests.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about aggregate Exchequer grant for Scotland for 1986-87 and also about the arrangements for revaluation rate rebates next year.

On 24 July I announced an increase of £59 million in local authority expenditure provision for 1986-87, and that increased provision formed the basis of the current expenditure guidelines which I issued to all authorities in October. I am now in a position to announce the remaining element in the settlement for next year. Aggregate Exchequer grant for 1986-87 will be £2,005 million. That is a cash increase of £100 million over the figure initially announced for aggregate Exchequer grant for 1985-86, although, as the House knows, we made two substantial additions totalling £57·5 million to that initial figure as information became available about the effects of revaluation, taking the figure to £1,962 million. The figure that I have just announced is thus a cash increase of £43 million over the final grant figure for 1985-86.

A further addition will be made to the figure of £2,005 million, following consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in recognition of the transfer to local authorities of financial responsibility for list D schools in 1986-87. The figure I have suggested to the convention for this transfer is £3·65 million.

On the basis of present estimates of loan charges the grant figure of £2,005 million will mean a reduction in the grant percentage from 57·7 per cent. this year to a provisional figure of about 56·1 per cent. in 1986-87. This continues the pressure on authorities to reduce their expenditure and come into line with our plans. The effect of this on rates is a matter for authorities. Expenditure above guidelines pushes up rates and grant penalties, both of which have to be financed by ratepayers. I hope that all authorities will bear in mind the effects of high expenditure on ratepayers when considering their budgets for next year.

I will be consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in two week's time on the division of the grant into its usual elements, and on its distribution among authorities. Following those consultations, I shall lay an order before the House.

Earlier this year, I introduced special relief under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985 to mitigate the effects of the revaluation on domestic and commercial ratepayers, whose new rateable value was over three times more than their old one. It was never intended that that relief should be a permanent part of the system, but I realised that those receiving relief would face large increases in their rate bills if it were ended next year. I have, therefore, decided that the relief will continue for 1986-87, but at a rate of 75 per cent. The maximum relief on any one property will be £7,500. The cost of the relief in 1986-87 will be about £20 million. I will lay the necessary order before the House shortly.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): This is an all too typical example of the Secretary of State's stewardship. It is another sad tale of an inadequate cash increase, marking a substantial cut in real terms. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the grant is rising this year by only 2·2 per cent., which is well short of even the Government's most optimistic inflation forecasts? Is he not black affronted to announce a reduction of the rate support grant percentage to 56·1? Does he recall that the figure was 68·5 per cent. in 1980-81—more than 12 per cent. higher? Is he aware that if that figure were applied to this year's relevant expenditure a further £443 million would be available to help hard-pressed ratepayers? Is it not shameful nonsense that the Secretary of State can cooly announce a reduction in the help given to the unfortunates whose rateable values have increased by more than 300 per cent.? The relief on the excess is being reduced from 100 per cent. to 75 per cent., and there will be a great deal of irritation at that sadly inevitable but mean little saving.

Does the Secretary of State remember that at the Conservative party conference in Perth originally he promised £50 million and that it turned out to be £30 million in practice? Is he aware that he is now boiling the figure down to £20 million in the second year of the revaluation? It was not thought that relief would necessarily be permanent, but surely the Secretary of State will accept that there is no logic in giving help in the first year and then increasing the burdens in this way in the second year of the quinquennium. The way in which the money has been spirited away is a form of magic, but not the sort of magic that people want or desire. It looks more like sleight of hand.

What will happen to the domestic element? Will it be maintained at 8p? If so, will that have to be completely financed from the settlement that the Secretary of State announced today, or will he make additional money available? Where is the room in the grants total of which he has spoken for a realistic offer which might settle the teachers dispute? What has he included for that possibility in his calculations, or will he again provide additional funds for the type of settlement that will require a good deal of cash, but which we all badly want and hope to see soon?

The key to the statement is the statement:

"This continues the pressure on authorities to reduce expenditure and come into line with our plans."

It is another piece of bullying and a recognition by the Secretary of State that this is a cut in real terms. It is increasing the pressure for a reduction in services and jobs. They could well have been added to the casualty list implied in that sentence.

Will the Secretary of State accept that there is no good news in his statement, either for those who believe in local democracy or for those who are worried about the increasing shift under the present Administration from the Treasury to ratepayers? It is thoroughly bad news for anyone who is interested in decent levels of local authority services.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is long on rhetoric and short on fact. From what he said, one would not think that local authorities are planning to spend about 1·8 per cent. more in real terms this year than they were six years ago. That puts his ideas about cuts in spending into perspective.

The hon. Gentleman said that the settlement was miserable compared with that of last year. It is higher as a proportion than the original figure mentioned last year. I thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

It is true that the rate support grant percentage has been brought down. As the hon. Gentleman may remember,

when the rate support grant percentage was kept steady for four years running, local authority expenditure soared as a result and the ratepayers had to pay a great deal more as a consequence. In this case, the rate support grant percentage will go down further to persuade local authorities to bring their spending more into line. If they did not do so, the ratepayers would have an even greater burden to face because they would have to finance still more extra spending by local authorities.

I was surprised that the hon. Gentleman was so inconsistent in what he said about the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act. He accepted that it should not be permanent but seemed to be advocating that it should remain as it was last year. If that is not being permanent, I do not know what is. This extra help for ratepayers will continue next year at the rate of 75 per cent. of what it was, which is extremely generous and much more than most people expected.

It comes ill from the hon. Gentleman to say such things, because when his colleagues were last in Government, at the last revaluation in 1978, as he may care not to remember, the increases for many ratepayers were greater than they have been in this revaluation, and the Government, in spite of repeated requests from me and other Conservative Members, refused pointblank to give any extra help to any ratepayer.

As to the teachers' offer, I have already found extra money and have been trying to persuade the teachers to accept it. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's point about that does not carry any weight.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): In view of what would seem to be high current expenditure by local government in real terms, can my right hon. Friend assure me that those authorities that have behaved themselves and kept their expenditure to modest levels will do much better in the financial arrangements than they have done in the past? Will the guidelines be nearer the assessed needs than they have been in the past? I welcome my right hon. Friend's continuation of the rate relief. Is he confident that he will be able to introduce a new rating system before the next general election?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can assure him that the settlement this year should enable those authorities that have been spending within the guidelines for some time to be pretty fairly treated, although he will understand that I cannot give the detailed distributions until I have had a chance to speak to COSLA in a fortnight's time. The guidelines this year are nearer to assessed needs, and I hope that we shall be able to ensure that there is progress towards this when we announce the distribution.

As to rating reform, I assure my hon. Friend that we are on course for what I have undertaken to do. The Government will produce proposals around the turn of the year.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that two important debates are to follow the statement, and short questions will be appropriate as there is to be a debate on the order later.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Would the Secretary of State like to speculate about the response he would make to this statement if he were in opposition rather than in government? He referred to the £43 million cash increase. What does it mean in real terms, taking inflation into account? As to the reduction of relief following revaluation to 75 per cent., why do we in Scotland have to bear this burden when there has been no revaluation in England and none is proposed? Is this not too much from a Government who promised rate reform in 1979?

Mr. Younger: On the last point, the hon. Gentleman knows that we have already moved a long way in that direction by producing a Green Paper and making changes in the rating system, and we are in any case now involved in a major reform of the system. We are on course for producing proposals around the turn of the year, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman feels that we can wait to look objectively at those proposals when they come. As to increases, authorities are planning to spend in real terms about 1·8 per cent. more than in 1985-86. The settlement for this year that I have announced today means that there will be a small reduction in real terms on their budget for last year. That is consistent with our desire to reduce public expenditure.

I am glad to respond to the hon. Gentleman's first request. If I were in opposition today I should say, "May I congratulate the Government on their great generosity in once more recognising the hard times that ratepayers have experienced because of the overspending by Labour-controlled councils."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the rates of many Edinburgh shopkeepers have escalated tremendously? Will this settlement be of benefit to them, provided that the local authorities keep within the guidelines?

Mr. Younger: Yes. If local authorities spend at or on the guidelines laid down by this settlement, it will be possible for there to be rate reductions, not rate increases.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): As the Secretary of State is anxious constantly to remind the House of Commons about the rate support grant percentage figures in 1979, will he go over them once again and tell the House that since he took office they have been reduced by over 12 per cent. and that he has been able to reduce them only by putting considerable pressure upon local authorities to reduce the number of people that they employ and the number of services that they provide for the people who elected them?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's point about the reduction in the rate support grant percentage. I make no secret of the fact that it has been a major method of persuading local authorities to reduce their spending. However, I must confess that local authorities have not been very successful. They are still planning to spend more in real terms than they were when the right hon. Gentleman left office. However, the reduction in the rate support grant percentage has not, unfortunately, led to a reduction in manpower. By far the largest reduction in manpower achieved by local authorities took place when the right hon. Gentleman's party was in Government. In 1976, a very large reduction was made overnight. Even allowing for the reduction in the number of teachers, due to the fall in school rolls, the fact is that there has been a substantial increase in manpower.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): May I ask the Secretary of State as quickly as possible to get rid of the ghastly guidelines concept that was introduced by the Labour Government? There is now an assessed needs basis. It is ridiculous that my right hon. Friend's distinguished officers should have to work out what an area needs and should then have to invent what is called a guideline that causes prudent authorities to lose and spendthrift authorities to gain.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's point. We are making steady progress. I hope to continue to make steady progress over the assessed needs of all authorities. We should have made much better progress towards meeting the assessed needs of authorities and would have been very much nearer to meeting them if the overspending by certain authorities had not precluded the Government from moving as fast as they could towards recognising the efforts of those who have tried to reduce spending. It is a sad fact that the worst authorities are making life more difficult for those authorities which try hard.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Does the Secretary of State have any comprehension of what he is doing to the ratepayers of Central region in general and Falkirk district in particular because of his rate support grant settlement for 1986-87? It was the Secretary of State who removed outside plant and machinery from the rating and valuation roll in Central region and who refused to compensate the region for the £8·5 million loss that central region and Falkirk district had to sustain. Therefore, the rate increases in Falkirk district are primarily his responsibility. How will the Secretary of State explain to the people of Falkirk that he willingly joined Her Majesty the Queen in opening the new leisure complex at Camelon, only to see it closed later because of his rate support grant settlement?

Mr. Younger: The effect of the rating system upon outside plant and machinery has two aspects: first, its effect upon local authorities, and, secondly, its effect upon the industries concerned. It was in response to the heartfelt pleas of the industries concerned and the jobs that they provide that the Government felt that they had to equalise the treatment of those industries with the treatment of their competitors south of the border. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's plea. That is a factor for the ratepayers of Falkirk district, but another factor is the level of spending of the local authority, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Many ratepayers will welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend is maintaining downward pressure on the expenditure of local authorities, but will he recognise that the combination of the distribution formulae and the way in which the individual authorities establish their resources, on top of the perverse effects of revaluation, sometimes results in responsible authorities receiving less than they might reasonably expect while bolshie Labour authorities, including Fife regional council, which put a 10p impost on ratepayers this year, receive a great deal more?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says. When I announce the distribution of the settlement after consultation with COSLA in a week or two's time, I hope that he will see that we have managed to recognise the efforts of those who have tried to spend sensibly. If all authorities spent according to guidelines, it would be possible to have reductions in rates this year, and I hope that that at least can be attempted by many authorities.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Secretary of State aware that he will be seen as Mr. Rising Rate in Scotland in reducing the rate relief to 75 per cent., which he ought not to do until the Government redeem their pledge to deal with the rating system? In view of the reduction in the grant percentage, do not the Government's figures show that the right hon. Gentleman is accepting a thinner and thinner slice of the cake of United Kingdom outlays year by year?

Mr. Younger: No, that is not the case. If the right hon. Gentleman looks south of the border, I think he will find that my colleagues there have a cash standstill this year and we do not. The right hon. Gentleman might welcome that. I repeat that we are once more agreeing to give generous help from next year to those with exceptionally high increases in rateable value, something which no previous Government have ever done in spite of repeated requests from me and others to do so. There is no excuse for the Opposition to complain about the generous treatment that I have announced this afternoon.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I welcome the extra resources that my right hon. Friend has announced for local government in Scotland, but may I remind him that the revaluation rebate scheme, which is to be continued, will provide the most hard pressed ratepayers in Scotland with £20 million, a figure which is comfortably in excess of anything that those on the other side of the House, in particular the Liberal party, advocated that the Government should introduce last year?

Mr. Younger: It is remarkable how short memories are. If I recall rightly, the Liberals and possibly the Social Democrats, were talking about £2 million to £3 million being all that was needed to help the ratepayers. We are producing £20 million even in year two. My hon. Friend is right: most ratepayers will think that that is pretty generous.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Minister confirm that he is receiving critical representations from Tory councils, including the usually sycophantic Struan Stevenson, the leader of the Tory group on the Kyle and Carrick council, who is pointing out that the right hon. Gentleman's policy could already mean the closure of Ayr baths, golf courses and other facilities, and, worst of all, the threat to the future of the Ayrshire art festival? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that his announcement today makes things even worse for Kyle and Carrick and that Struan Stevenson should be taking the right decision and moving out of the party as Gibson MacDonald did before him?

Mr. Younger: Of all the adjectives that one could apply to Mr. Stevenson, "sycophantic" is about the last. Kyle and Carrick exceeded its guidelines, and it is being treated just the same as anyone else, which is perfectly fair. The hon. Gentleman would be complaining his head off if I were doing anything special for it, would he not?

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State enlighten us on his fiscal arithmetic for revaluation relief? We start with a figure of £50 million. The right hon. Gentleman achieved 60 per cent. of that and

now he reduces it to 50 per cent. of the original figure. How far do we have to go in this stupidity before he recognises that he is putting on local authorities a burden that they should not have to bear? He is asking them to finance essential services by a regressive tax. When will he recognise that the Government have an obligation to ensure that local authorities are properly funded and that the services that people require are properly provided?

Mr. Younger: After that question, I look forward to the hon. Gentleman warmly supporting our rate reform proposals when they come forward. I remind him that central Government pay the majority of the money that is spent by local government. As for the money for rate revaluation rebates, the £50 million that was spoken of was £50 million more than the Labour Government ever gave, and the £20 million is £20 million more than they ever gave, and the ratepayers will note that.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): What mandate did the Secretary of State receive from the people of Scotland for this deplorable statement?

Mr. Younger: I do not know what mandate the hon. Gentleman has from the people of Scotland — *[Interruption.]*—considering that his party is also in a minority.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Now that the Secretary of State has announced the level of rate support grant for next year and recently informed district councils of the amounts of rate fund contribution that they could make before being subjected to clawback, is he prepared to state the rent increases that he is expecting in the coming year from district councils, the Scottish Special Housing Association and the new town development corporations?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern about this subject; it goes back a long time. He will appreciate that those details will be announced in the normal way after consultation shortly with the COSLA housing committee.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): As local authorities attempt to make some sense of the remarkably low figures of 56·1 per cent., will the Secretary of State explain what figure he had in mind for inflation and what figure he has in mind for wage settlements? Are we to assume that the right hon. Gentleman is expecting no solution to the teachers' dispute over the duration of this settlement?

Mr. Younger: This is £43 million more, not less, than was previously projected. As for assumptions, this is the maximum that we can afford to provide and it is what local government must work within.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about the teachers' dispute is that I have already found a large sum of extra money—£125 million—besides which the sums which we are discussing pale into insignificance, but so far the teachers have shown no sign of wishing to accept it.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): When he is removed from office, would the Secretary of State like to be remembered as having been generous to local government or as having been a disciplinarian?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure. Long ago I gave up speculating in what way I should be remembered after leaving office. I can only do the best I can while I am here.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the extended revaluation rebate scheme bring the cumulative expenditure on this rebate over two years up to the £50 million that was promised in one year?

Mr. Younger: I suppose that, even on the hon. Gentleman's arithmetic, if one adds 30 to 20 one gets approximately 50.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If there is a cut in real terms, on the Secretary of State's arithmetic, there must be a figure in St. Andrew's house for the number of men and women in the service of local government who will lose their jobs as a result of this package. What is that figure?

Mr. Younger: No, there is no such calculation. Indeed, the number of people in local government has increased in recent years—*[Interruption.]* I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would know that the number of people in local government had not decreased but had increased. I wish it had not increased. The number should be reduced in the interests of ratepayers having less to pay.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Will the Secretary of State, when he refers to the last Labour Government, remember that two wrongs do not make a right? As he is short on memory as well as cash, will he forgive me for reminding him that the ratepayers of Scotland, many of them Tories, throughout his period in office have been ripped off to the tune of over £1 billion? Will he recognise the situation, for example, in the Lothian region and meet the leaders of COSLA and explain his strategy to them? Does he have the guts to do that?

Mr. Younger: I frequently meet COSLA and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State met COSLA yesterday. We shall be meeting again soon, and I shall discuss all the issues against the background that COSLA is still spending more in real terms than it did six years ago. The hon. Gentleman said that two wrongs do not make a right, but there have been two wrongs and no right.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I support the points made earlier by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). They said that the combination of the reduction in the percentage Exchequer grant and the reduction in the commercial rate relief and the delayed implementation of the client group approach leaves sensible, moderate and responsible authorities such as those in the Border region in an unjustifiably unfair position financially. It is wrong for the Minister to say that it is a shame that they cannot get more money because of the high-spending authorities in other regions.

Are we to assume that the reduction in the commercial rate relief to 75 per cent. will presage future reductions? May we expect the reduction in the 8p domestic element — a point raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—next year?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait until I announce the distribution. However, most of the authorities that have been spending sensibly have made steady progress towards their needs assessment and towards a reasonable settlement.

[Mr. Younger]

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the revaluation rebates. I cannot give an undertaking about the future, but I shall take into account all the pressures on ratepayers when considering whether the scheme should be employed in the future. The domestic rate relief will be announced in the normal way when I meet COSLA.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rose to make his statement, I went to the Vote Office for a copy of it. None was available, but I believe that copies were distributed elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Government. I have no knowledge of it.

Westlands (Redundancies)

4.3 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by Westlands of a major programme of redundancies entailing the loss of 750 jobs, mostly in Yeovil."

Westlands today announced redundancies amounting to 742 jobs of which the lion's share—461—will be from Yeovil. The redundancies will be a severe blow to the community that I represent and to areas such as the Isle of Wight. They will also be a blow to Britain's aerospace industry.

Unless there is a change of Government attitude and policy towards Westlands, the redundancies will prove to be only the first in a series. I have repeatedly warned the Government that, unless they stopped shilly-shallying, jobs would be lost, Westlands would be damaged and Britain's defence industries would be weakened. That has now happened.

The Government encouraged Westlands to take risks for the Indian order, but now refuse to provide temporary support until the order is formalised. The Government set up a competition for the new helicopter that the defence forces need so badly, but when Westlands won hands down against stiff international competition they promptly moved the goalposts and changed the rules. The Government have delayed decisions and strung out orders to save money for the Trident nuclear missile.

When the Government had their crisis in the Falklands, Westlands pulled out all the stops to help and was praised by hon. Members on both sides of the House for what it did. Now that the boot is on the other foot, all that Westlands gets in return is a kick in the teeth.

The Secretary of State for Defence is now, at the twelfth, or thirteenth, hour rushing round European Governments asking for help. I hope that he succeeds, but for 461 people in my constituency he is too late. We wanted action from the Secretary of State six or eight months ago. To say the least, it is ironic that the right hon. Gentleman is asking European Governments to do what he has refused to do. As all other European helicopter companies are nationalised, will the result of the negotiations be to put a representative of a foreign Government on the board of Westlands? Would not that amount to foreign nationalisation of Westlands while the Government have sat by and refused to do anything? Why did the chief executive of Westlands, a private company, not know about the discussions that could so crucially affect his company and shareholders until he read of them in a newspaper?

These are important matters that have serious implications not only for my constituency but for Britain's defence industry. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will agree that they are urgent and specific enough to be debated as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by Westlands of a major programme of redundancies entailing the loss of 750 jobs, mostly in Yeovil."

I do not underestimate what the hon. Gentleman has said about the impact of the announcement on his constituency and other constituencies. I have listened carefully to what he has said. However, I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Ordered,

That the draft Security for Private Road Works (Scotland) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 9193/84 and 7832/85 concerning the protection of workers by the proscription of specified agents and/or work activities be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

OPPOSITION DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Northern Region

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.6 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on this matter. At Question Time there was much discussion about the document on the inner cities of Britain, which was really about the inner cities of England. This motion is about policies in the northern region, which has the highest rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom. My understanding of the United Kingdom is that Caithness and Sutherland are the northern region. If the motion refers to England, the debate is about England. If it is not, will Scottish Members be called?

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is not responsible for the motion on the Order paper. It is an Opposition day.

4.7 pm

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): I beg to move,

That this House condemns Government policies which have brought to the Northern region the highest rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom outside Northern Ireland, shown callous disregard for the region's traditional industries, failed to provide adequate measures for the attraction and creation of new jobs and brought about a lowering of the quality of life; and demands a fundamental change of policy to end this savage decline.

It is significant that we are using part of our first Opposition day of the Session for a debate on the northern region. It is significant not only because we recognise the region's many problems, but because the Opposition realise the value of the north's contribution to the country, to the industrial development of Britain in the past and its potential for the future.

Most of the region's difficulties arise from its high unemployment which remains the highest in the United Kingdom outside Northern Ireland. It has held that unenviable position in the unemployment league since the Government came to office in 1979, and the position has worsened since that date. In October 1979 there were 99,900 people unemployed in the region—7·3 per cent. There has been no reduction in any year since that time. In October of this year there were 227,500 unemployed —a disgraceful rate of 18·1 per cent. The north has lost 219,000 jobs since 1979, 125,000 of them in manufacturing. It has lost 30,000 jobs in the service sector, while 369,000 service sector jobs have been created in the United Kingdom. The Government make great play these days about the service sector, but apparently that does not apply to the north.

However, that is not the whole story. In the north, 440,000 people earn low wages. They are paid below what the Council of Europe calls the decency threshold. That figure represents 42 per cent. of the work force in the north. When I asked the Prime Minister on 21 March about unemployment in the north, she replied:

"The wages in that region are also comparatively high."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 986.]

She said that that might be related to the high unemployment. All I can do is repeat what the right hon.

[Mr. Jack Dormand]

Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said of the Government recently — that they must live in a different world from the rest of us.

Those statistics are especially relevant to what was said by the present chairman of the Conservative party, then the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, in a debate on the north on 15 July 1981:

"I share and understand the concern at the levels of unemployment in the region, and that concern is recognised in our regional policy, which gives such a high priority to the North of England."—[*Official Report*, 15 April 1981; Vol. 3, c. 354.]

In view of the figures that I have just quoted, heaven help those who do not get such high priority.

George Bernard Shaw once said:

"You can get used to anything, so you have to be very careful what you get used to."

Those are wise words. I confess that I have become extremely worried that the people of the north will get used to the low standard of living brought to the region by the Government.

I chose a quotation from the former Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry in 1981 for a specific reason. At that time, the Government's new regional policies were beginning to take effect. Some might have thought, "Let us give them time to work." Those regional policies were introduced with such a fanfare in 1979 by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, now the Secretary of State for Education and Science. They were so good and effective that they had ~~to~~ be changed again last year, although the changes last year were instituted as part of a cost-cutting operation. The words "flexibility" and "cost-effectiveness", which were bandied about so much at the time in relation to regional aid, were euphemisms for the biggest cuts ever made in regional provision. On the Department of Trade and Industry's own admission, total aid to the north during the past six years has been cut by no less than 57 per cent. If the Minister has received any praise for the new system from employers, local authorities, trade unions or anyone else, the Opposition would like to hear it.

That brings me to the nub of the problem, and to what the Opposition believe to be the essence of the debate. How much longer must we wait for the Government's policies to work? That is a perfectly legitimate question to ask. If six and a half years of Tory government is insufficient time, any impartial judge would say, "Enough is enough. Confess your failure and start anew."

Of course, we know what the answer will be. When the Minister replies, he will give a catalogue of events dressed up as progress. However, he had better remember the words of the Under-Secretary of State for Employment —I am glad to see him in his place—in an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) as recently as 22 October 1985. In his typically straightforward and whimsical fashion, referring to the Prime Minister's recent description of success stories in the northern region, the Under-Secretary of State said, "Alas, they are few." We admire his truthfulness and perception, but he had better be careful. He might drown in the sea of crocodile tears which the Prime Minister continually sheds for the north.

I shall be so bold as to anticipate two points with which the Minister will regale us. He will tell us that organisations in the north have responded positively to the youth training scheme and that the Manpower Services Commission plans to provide more than 25,000 places for young people in the north this year. He is perfectly entitled to report such progress, if progress it be — *[Interruption.]* The Minister laughs. What worries me and my hon. Friends is that the Government appear to believe that those places are an adequate substitute for what we call real jobs. I do not say that some of the experience gained by some youngsters is not valuable. However, I advise the Minister to listen to the colourful language used by some youths in my constituency when describing their experiences. I beg the Government to begin thinking about permanent, productive employment for our youngsters.

The tragedy of the position was starkly illustrated a fortnight ago by the devastating reply from the chairman of the Conservative party to a northern newspaper reporter, who asked whether he agreed with the view being expressed in the north that there would be a lost generation —a generation of youngsters who would never obtain permanent jobs. The right hon. Gentleman said that he thought that could possibly be the case. When I hear such an admission, I wonder how some members of the Government can sleep soundly in their beds at night.

The Minister will also tell us about the Government's generous treatment of the coal industry, which plays an important role in the economy of the north. We shall be told not to worry because NCB Enterprise Ltd. will take care of all the problems caused by pit closures. However, we have some questions to ask about that. Why, if it is such an important and necessary organisation, was it not established until late 1984? Pits were closing long before then, and the Government and the NCB were determined long before the miners' strike to accelerate the closure programme. The scheme is barely in operation now. If it is the best way of coping with job losses in the coal industry, why was it not established in 1982 or 1983? After all, the Government have had the exact parallel experience of the steel industry.

Secondly, why was the pitiful sum of £5 million allocated to NCB Enterprise Ltd? The Government partly answered that question by shortly afterwards increasing the sum to £10 million, more recently increasing it to £20 million, and saying that more money will be made available should it be necessary. It is difficult to imagine a more pusillanimous, hesitant or muddled attitude to any Government policy. Perhaps the real reason is that their heart is not in it.

In the context of a completely misguided policy for the coal industry, I hope that the scheme will make some contribution to the well-being of mining areas in the north, but my recent experience shows its limitations. A fortnight ago I had the pleasure of opening a new factory in my constituency. I was delighted that such a well-known company as Bowaters Containers should come to the area. That factory employs 16 workers now and hopes to increase the number to 40 within a few months. Exactly one mile from that factory is Horden colliery, which the NCB proposes to close with the loss of 900 jobs. The pit will go through the new review procedure, but if, like so many pits in the north, it must close, NCB Enterprise Ltd. will have to perform little short of miracles in the area. The Government have been completely ham-fisted in this matter. Any rational and caring Government would have provided a bridging period for an area with such difficulties.

The Government can refer to one success in the region——

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Before my hon. Friend leaves the point about the problems of jobs for coal miners, may I ask whether he agrees that another travesty of justice by this Government is the decision to close the development corporation which has the task of creating industry? My hon. Friend has raised this matter many times. Does he agree that the corporation could have created jobs for the miners?

Mr. Dormand: I was just about to make that point.

The Government can refer to one success story—the record of the three new towns in the area—but I do not believe that the new towns will get a mention as the Government have reached new heights of lunacy by deciding to abolish the development corporations in 1988.

Washington, Aycliffe and Peterlee cover a very large sub-region of the north. They have attracted thousands of new jobs and will continue to do so. They also have ready access to excellent road, rail and sea communications but —I hope that the Minister will acknowledge this—their great appeal is to offer what is called a "one stop" deal for companies. The proposals now being made simply do not meet that criterion. With an accelerated pit closure programme, can the Government believe that there will be no further use after 1988 for the expertise and dedication of the staffs of the new town corporations? The Government's decision in this matter epitomises their misjudgments and misconceptions about the northern region. I ask them to reconsider a decision that was based purely on a doctrinaire attitude.

The motion refers to the quality of life in the northern region — and having a job makes the biggest single contribution to that. The Government have failed abysmally in that respect. There are, however, other factors to which I am sure my hon. Friends will wish to refer.

The state of the environment is an important factor in the quality of life. As vice-president of the Northumbria tourist board, I would be the first to praise the attractions of that part of the region. The beauty of most of Cumbria is self-evident, but there is a considerable legacy of the industrial revolution, and present-day heavy industry also leaves scars on the region. I could give horrific descriptions from my own constituency, but I prefer to mention two recent reports. The Commission on Energy and the Environment published its report "Coal and the Environment" in 1981, an the 10th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution was issued as recently as 1984. I regret to say that both reports give special mention to the northern region. They make very depressing reading, but the Government's response to the recommendations in both reports has been negligible. When will the Government take action on those recommendations?

It would be more than a gesture for the Government to make arrangements with the Arts Council to increase the grant to Northern Arts. Northern Arts, which does an excellent job for the region in difficult circumstances, receives most of its income from Tyne and Wear county council which, as the Minister will know, is soon to be abolished. An act of positive discrimination is needed, but perhaps that is too much to hope for from such a philistine Government.

If the Government are serious about helping the northern region, they should change and strengthen their regional industrial policies by establishing a northern development agency, structured and financed on the lines of the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies. The Government could also transfer Civil Service jobs to the region. The Labour party has not forgotten that one of the first acts of the 1979 Tory Government was to cancel the arrangement to transfer 1,000 Civil Service jobs to Cleveland. Since then, not one Civil Service job—as I know, having asked many parliamentary questions on the matter—has come to the north. The Government could also establish research and development agencies in the region now that there is considerable evidence that firms tend to stay in the area where the new products are developed.

The Government could improve their regional policies by accepting the advice of their friends in the CBI. The CBI adopted Labour party policy at its annual conference two weeks ago when it said that the Government should spend directly on reducing unemployment rather than on cutting income tax. The north needs £300 million-worth of road improvements and repairs. That is the CBI figure, not mine. The northern CBI last month said that the picture in the region was very mixed. Some companies are finding a worsening of the position. The heavy capital sector is still depressed and more orders are needed for shipbuilding and ship repair companies. The situation in six months is likely to be even less hopeful. If the Government will not listen to the Opposition, perhaps they will heed their own supporters in industry and business.

The last thing that the Opposition want to do is give the impression that the north is a dull, dreary, desolate place, lacking excitement, beauty, enjoyment and culture. In fact, the opposite is the case, despite our history, which has involved hard and dangerous work in heavy industry, the destruction of large parts of the landscape and an almost total lack of interest by Conservative Governments.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the Government's lack of interest and touched on the idea of an economic development agency for the north. Why did the Labour Government, of which he was a member, resist the pleas by Labour Members and others to take the opportunity offered by a devolution programme for Scotland and set up a regional development agency for the north?

Mr. Dormand: The hon. Gentleman has got his facts wrong. He has been a Member of this House long enough to realise that it is not possible for any Government to implement a full programme. He has obviously forgotten that the Labour party's manifesto at the last election specifically mentioned a development agency for the north.

The region's greatest resource is its people. They are responsible, proud and hard working. Any employer who has come to the north will agree with that statement. The people would like the opportunity to demonstrate those qualities in full measure. The Prince of Wales, in his recent statement on the so-called northern employee attitude, could not have been more wrong. It ill becomes one in his comfortable position to present such an inaccurate picture of northern workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that references to the royal family in aid of debate are not in order.

Mr. Dormand: In a modern society it is not unreasonable to expect to have a job, to live in a decent house in a pleasant environment, to benefit fully from the education system and to rely on the Health Service. The Opposition believes that the northern region is being denied those basic rights. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that Tory Governments have such meagre support in the north. If the Government refuse to recognise the reality of the situation, refuse to change direction and ignore the Opposition's pleas, we shall not be surprised if they receive even less support in future.

4.29 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I beg to move, To leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises the particular problems the Northern region has faced in the transition from old to new industries and fully endorses all the Government policies which have taken into account these particular problems in creating the proper basis for sustainable growth and thus lower levels of unemployment generally and, in particular, those policies providing special assistance to the Northern region and deplores the Opposition's continuing attempts to undermine the efforts of those in the region seeking to attract new businesses and new jobs.'.

I assure the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) that, contrary to what he may think, I am delighted to debate the problems of the northern region. I am also delighted to follow the hon. Gentleman, because he is distinguished in his capacity as chairman of the parliamentary Labour party and he has been a constant champion of the northern region. He has championed the northern region in a forceful and charming way for a long time as well as being the vice-president of the local tourist board.

The hon. Member for Easington and I are old partners in crime in terms of our capacities as pairing Whips for Government and Opposition in successive Parliaments.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): Crime in the Whips' Office!

Mr. Morrison: My right hon. Friend has picked on the word "crime" in terms of what we were up to in the Whips' Office. Of course there was no crime—we were merely enjoying doing what was best for all our hon. Friends.

I believe that we last debated the northern region some time ago, in 1983. I may be wrong, but it occurs to me that the timing of today's debate may have something to do with a by-election in the north-east on Thursday.

Mr. Dormand: If the Minister thinks that we need to mount a debate on the northern region to win the Tyne Bridge by-election, he is even further out of touch with reality than I thought.

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am an innocent fellow and such thoughts cross my mind occasionally, but I accept entirely that I was wrong.

I accept entirely that unemployment in the region is far too high at more than 18 per cent. I hope that the Opposition will acknowledge, although there is a political debate about it, that unemployment remains very much at the top of the Government's priority list. *[Interruption.]* The Opposition may mock that. We hear a great deal of analysis of unemployment levels from them, but we never hear any solutions. It is a continuing challenge to create jobs and to reduce unemployment. That is bound to be so. As our amendment states, the transition from the old industries to the new is more painful in the northern region than in other parts of the country.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Morrison: No, I should like to get on as I know that a large number of hon. Members wish to participate in the debate.

I hope that the Opposition will endorse the Government's view that the only way to tackle the unemployment problem in the northern region is to get the economy as a whole on a sound footing. That means being competitive, productive and profitable. It is not easy, but it is possible and it takes time. I emphasise that if the solution, which the hon. Member for Easington may have been suggesting, were simply to pump money into the region, the problems would have been solved long ago. I will give some figures to illustrate my point.

Since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, more than £108 million has been paid out in regional selective assistance and about £700 million has been paid out in regional development grant. More than that, the urban programme has entailed £214 million, urban development grant £11·5 million, which has attracted about £60 million in private investment, the traditional urban programme has reached nearly £10 million, derelict land grant more than £61 million and the housing investment programme more than £870 million. In all, that is more than £2 billion. That does not include the training and special employment measures to which I shall allude later and to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will no doubt also refer.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): What would the figures have been if the Government had not cut regional aid and the rate support grant?

Mr. Morrison: The right hon. Gentleman will surely agree that it is sensible to have some control of rates, as high-rating authorities drive business away. There is no doubt about that, as can be seen in various parts of the country, perhaps including certain parts of the northern region.

Throwing pounds at problems is not the simple answer that the Bishop of Liverpool or Sir Richard O'Brien——

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Those well-known Marxists.

Mr. Morrison: —would have us believe. As a Minister I have had to deal with both those gentlemen and I was not surprised at their most recent proposals as they have been in the business of throwing pounds at problems for some time.

The creation of jobs in the northern region will depend on the overall attractiveness of the area to potential investors and the competitiveness of local industry. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Easington that it is people who count. I know from my many visits to the area since I became a Minister that the people of the north positively welcome the outsider and the outside investor.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): How does the Minister expect the people of Cumbria, especially

those who work for Matthew Brown, to welcome the intervention of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and its attempt to take over a highly profitable brewery in Workington with the sole intention of closing it? Does the Minister wish to justify that, or will he condemn it from the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Morrison: I do not wish to get involved in what seems to be an internecine dispute between certain parts of the north. Business decisions are no doubt being taken, but it is not for me to promulgate from the Dispatch Box the benefits of Newcastle or Cumbria in a debate about the region as a whole.

The suggestion made by the hon. Member for Easington towards the end of his speech — that the Government were not interested in the north—is totally belied by the facts. Quite the reverse is true. There are many pockets of very high unemployment in other regions which do not receive the same attention. In the northern region, we have provided direct and practical help, first, for those most affected by unemployment through our wide-ranging employment and training measures, secondly, through our regional industrial policy aimed at reducing disparities in employment opportunities, and, thirdly, through our urban programme aimed at combating inner city deprivation.

Mr. Beith: The Minister refers to areas outside the region in which those measures do not apply, although similar problems exist, but those facilities have also been withdrawn from areas within the region by the narrowing of assisted areas and the exclusion from the urban programme of many small communities with severe urban problems.

Mr. Morrison: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but many other parts of the country can make the same claim. Tiny pockets are extremely difficult to administer, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the panacea that he seeks is not easily achieved.

The hon. Member for Easington, unlike some, did not promote an air of doom and gloom. He will recall that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described certain reporters as moaning minnies, and she was right to do so because they do not represent the attitude of the people of the northern region. They undermine the attitude and attractiveness of the northern region.

There are many successes, and I think that the future can be viewed with a certain amount of optimism—for example, the Newcastle technology centre was recently opened. No Government handout was given and the centre came about because of local initiative. That is a demonstration that there is confidence in the region and in its industry. The result will be more competitive practices and processes and the promotion of the take-up of new technology. This is good because it has been born out of its own.

The north-east is becoming increasingly less dependent on the old industries and more attuned to the growing sectors of the economy — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) laughs. Is he not proud of the fact that the pharmaceutical industry, which hardly existed 10 years ago in the north-east, now employs over 5,000 people? Is he not proud that 16,000 people are engaged in electronic-related industries, which range from component manufacturers to computers, radar, fibre-optics and opto-electronics? All the hon. Gentleman does is laugh at those who are employed in those industries. I am sure that his constituents would not be laughing.

The Nissan project was the most sought after scheme in the United Kingdom during the past four years. It is a £350 million development which offers direct employment which could—I emphasise "could"—reach 2,500. This is a great pat on the back for the northern region and confirms the point made by the hon. Member for Easington. It has happened by a combination of the Government's encouragement and the taxpayer's encouragement to come to the region. In addition to the 2,000 employees at Nissan, there may be a further 2,000 employed indirectly. That is a vote of confidence in the northern region.

The Nissan project is not the only project. Last year, NEK Cables of Norway announced a £4·5 million expansion, which will mean a further 100 jobs in Washington.

In October of this year, Ikeda Bussan (Japan) announced a joint venture with Hoover to manufacture car seats for Nissan. This is an investment of £1·5 million that will create 200 jobs. NSK Bearings (Europe) Ltd. of Japan last year announced further expansion in Peterlee. That is a further example of inward investment. I could continue to give examples of inward investment, but it is not just a matter of plant and machinery.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Does the Minister realise that pats on the back are fine provided that there are not punches in the solar plexus at the same time? Thousands of jobs have been lost in the northern region even since 1983, let alone 1979. When will the Government realise that unless they take steps to encourage intervention in the north-east there will be no possibility of building future success out of past failure?

Mr. Morrison: I said earlier that about £2 billion had been provided in urban grants, industrial grants and regional aid. By any stretch of the imagination, that is a significant amount of money over the past six years. Had no grant been available, those industries would have been less likely to come to the region.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington) *rose*——

Mr. Morrison: I must get on. I shall give way in a moment.

New plant and machinery are important and so, too, are new working practices. Labour Members may not like the example of Black and Decker, a factory which I have visited, but in 1974 it had about 2,500 employees and was producing 40,000 units per week. Now it has only 1,300 workers. This has caused a problem of about 1,200 unemployed in the region, but the company is far more productive and is now producing 150,000 units compared with 40,000 previously. The company is competitive and making profits, and that is what attracts new industry to the northern region.

Mr. Dormand: When?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is coming. He has heard of the examples and he can see them when he visits his constituency every weekend.

The basis of a sound economy is a relatively well-developed small firms sector. This sector is relatively undeveloped in the northern region because of its past

[Mr. Morrison]

reliance on large public sector industries. I am sure that the Opposition will be pleased to know, however, that the small firms centre in Newcastle deals with more than 1,500 inquiries a month. There are now about 90,000 self-employed people in the north-east compared with 57,000 in 1979, an increase of about 60 per cent. The House will be pleased that that is a trend in the right direction.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will be interested to know about the pleasing developments in Cumbria. In Workington, more than 500 jobs have been created in the enterprise zone since its creation two years ago. The number of firms in the area has doubled and full-time employment has risen. The largest single increase was on the Solway estate at Maryport, where over 370 jobs have been created. This was due to the expansion of existing firms and the fact that new firms have moved into the units offered by the English Estates as well as by private investors.

There are many examples. The CADAM centre in Middlesbrough could provide about 5,000 high-tech jobs by 1995 and—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members laugh once more. The Metro centre shopping and leisure complex, which is an investment of £50 million in Gateshead, could provide between 4,000 and 5,000 jobs.

Mr. Radice: The Minister has given us much anecdotal evidence. Can he say how many jobs have been lost and how many have been created in the northern region since 1979?

Mr. Morrison: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman precise figures and I do not wish to mislead the House, but——

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East) *rose——*

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman scoffs and scorns the enterprise and initiative that has taken place in the northern region. He is what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described as a moaning minnie. He is turning away potential industrial investment—because his words are closely heeded by the industrial investor—and that cannot be good either for his constituents or for the northern region.

Some Labour Members say that we ignore the northern region. They should remember that since 1983 we have spent £141 million on the youth training scheme within the region on about 61,000 entrants. It is said that a place on the YTS is not a real job. Those who take that view should understand that it is real training and that it enhances substantially — there is no question of this — the opportunity of getting a job at the end of what will be potentially for every 16-year-old a two-year scheme.

We have introduced the community programme for the long-term unemployed. We have spent about £190 million on the programme since October 1982. There have been about 6,700 applicants for the enterprise allowance scheme. These figures show that there is much activity.

I accept, as I did at the beginning of my speech, that the problems of the north-east are difficult. I accept that the problems in the northern region are greater than those in some other areas. There can be no doubt about that. However, I do not accept the implication of the hon. Member for Easington—that the Government do not care. Nothing could be further from the truth. We recognise the problems and, as I have demonstrated, about £2 billion or more of aid in many different forms—this is not an anecdote—has been made available by the Government. We care, and we are doing a great deal to try to overcome the region's problems. There is still more to be done, and we shall continue to do it.

4.52 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): The Minister was right to say that the debate has been initiated by the Labour party because of the Tyne Bridge by-election. Let the House have no doubt about that. The message that goes out from the House is that the Labour party is clearly running scared in Tyne Bridge and has initiated the debate to try to secure a party political by-election benefit. It has not done so because of the desperate unemployment that exists throughout the region.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: No. I shall give way later.

The Labour Opposition might have been expected to set out on the Order Paper a list of proposals to show how they would tackle the problems of Tyne Bridge, Sunderland, Teesside or other areas that are hit so badly in the northern region. As was said about a candidate in a Democratic primary, there is no meat in the diet that has been put before the House. The Opposition have moved an entirely negative motion. It was the alliance which had to introduce some proposals for dealing with the northern region's problems.

There are many ways in which the northern region can be helped, and we should welcome some of the information that the Minister has given to the House about the expansion of self-employment in the region and the number of new businesses that are being started. That activity goes to the core of one of the problems that the region must face. We need more new business start-ups, more self-employment and more service industries. That has been urged by many of us over many years in debates of this sort.

Unemployment in the north stands at 238,200—which is the equivalent of unemployment figures 30 years ago when Lord Stockton was Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is a sad reflection upon our abilities, and especially on the Government's policies, that the level of unemployment in the region is similar to that which prevailed when Lord Stockton was Chancellor of the Exchequer. The number of jobs has fallen—I shall give the figures if the Minister will not—by over 200,000. That is twice the rate of decline nationally and is the greatest fall in any region. That is why the northern region has the highest level of unemployment outside Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister visited a ward in my constituency on the day when she made an offensive remark about moaning minnies. There is 30 per cent. unemployment in that area—42 per cent. male unemployment. It is not good enough for Ministers to talk about the unemployed getting on their bikes, being workshy or being moaning minnies, and to lecture those in the northern region about getting off their backsides. Those are the implications behind the comments of many Ministers. When we in the north hold our surgeries we see week by week a sad trail of those who have tried time after time to get a job. Those

who are in that trail tell us that they have not even received acknowledgements of job applications, and that that has happened dozens of times. Against that background, we hear Ministers' offensive remarks about the plight of those who are genuinely searching for jobs and cannot find them.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Perhaps I did not make myself clear. I made precisely the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. I observed that a characteristic of north-easterners, or northerners, was that they were not moaning minnies. I said that the pity was that one or two were and that they gave the wrong impression. I agree with the argument that the hon. Gentleman is advancing.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: One of the major problems of the northern region is that it dwells too much on the past and does not think enough about the future. There is one way in which the region could help itself more than in any other —by snapping out of nostalgia about the old industries and directing itself—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members might listen to what I am about to say. Excellent work is being undertaken in Newcastle polytechnic on fashion design and — *[Interruption.]* That is a source of amusement for Labour Members. I mention fashion design as an example, because it seems so remote from the traditions of the northern region. It is the sort of service industry that has brought enormous employment opportunities in other countries and other parts of the United Kingdom.

Benetton of Italy has provided work for many Italians and has become an international firm. We must recognise what Laura Ashley has done in Wales. We must not scoff at what Newcastle polytechnic is doing. Many Labour Members wallow in the nostalgia of mining, shipbuilding and the past generally, instead of turning their attention to the industries of the future, such as the high technology and service industries.

Let us have Civil Service jobs by all means. They were referred to by the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) when he opened the debate. Let us have the white-collar industries and the professional jobs that the region needs desperately. The mix of employment oppportunities that it has been able to create and provide is all wrong. The entire region is skewed in the wrong way. Unless we address ourselves to that problem, we shall never provide a long-term solution to the present high levels of unemployment.

How can that be done? The Government must play a major role in bringing that about. It is no good the Minister reading out a list of the moneys that have been given to the region and boasting about them. Why did he not do that six years ago? Instead, he was decrying the amount of public money that was being put into industry and criticising the extent of Government intervention in industry.

As I said yesterday, there has been a C-turn, but I have no doubt that it will become a U-turn by the time of the next general election. The Government realise that votes for the Conservative party depend on reducing unemployment levels. By then, the Minister and the Government generally will have realised that unless they boast more about the contribution that they are making to the creation of jobs in areas such as the northern region, they will not win the next general election. That is what the U-turn that is taking place is all about. The Government have started to boast of their record. The Minister is hoist on his own petard. Having criticised public investment so much, he is now having to laud the Government's record to try to secure votes.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is unable to distinguish between the aid given by the Labour party, which was aid with strings attached so that it could control the industries in which it invested, and aid given by the Government to stimulate investment and make the economy grow.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The hon. Gentleman might believe the hyperbole and rhetoric from his own party conference, but he should not try to persuade people who look at those matters objectively that that is the case.

The Scottish Development Agency still exists. It is bigger in terms of the number of people that it employs —700 or 800—and it is one of the most interventionist agencies that one could imagine. The Government have not abolished it, for one political reason—they would lose even more votes than they did over Gartcosh. They are no different from the previous Labour Government. Let us do away with the party political hyperbole in which the hon. Gentleman is indulging, and look at the facts.

The facts are that the Government are intervening and supporting industry, but not as much as they should. Following their party conference hyperbole, they cut regional aid by a massive amount. They have halved the level of support to the regions since they came to office. In the most recent public expenditure forecast, they are again proposing to halve the support for regional aid. Inevitably, regions such as the north have been hard hit.

As we said in our amendment, there must be changes in the way in which the Government work and a radical change of attitude towards regional government. There should be decentralisation of power from Whitehall and Westminster. I mentioned the Scottish Development Agency. In the meantime, high priority should be given to the creation of a northern development agency. That should be the first step in shifting decisions to people in Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Middlesbrough rather than Ministers and their civil servants in Whitehall and Westminster.

The polarisation between central Government in Whitehall and the northern local authorities has undermined the valuable initiative of the proposed regional industrial executive. That was not mentioned by the hon. Member for Easington. It is amazing that it was not mentioned by him. The proposal is supported by some, but not all, in the trade union movement. It has the support of the local CBI and it would address a desperate need for the region.

One of the problems of the northern region, which Scotland does not have, is that it does not have a united voice and organisation, and it does not act in concert, as in Scotland. Instead, we have bickering between local authorities and between trade unions and the CBI. We do not have the cohesion that is found in other parts of the country. It is sad that the local authorities have not been prepared to give more credence and support to the proposal for a regional industrial executive, which has foundered because of the lack of cohesion in the region.

A northern development agency should have a venture capital arm and a small firms division, as in the Scottish Development Agency, to help business start-ups and small

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

businesses. The Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board are good examples of the excellent work that can be done by Government agencies, stimulating new businesses and helping existing small businesses to grow. There is a desperate need for that to happen in a more co-ordinated way in the region. It should also take over the role of the NEDC in promoting indigenous firms and attracting inward investment. It is equally important that it should co-ordinate the plethora of regional job-creation agencies.

We have the most incredible position, with job creation agencies all over the region fighting one another for jobs. I turn on Radio Tees and hear Easington spending money advertising for jobs in Teesside which has the highest level of unemployment of any county in the country. It is a ludicrous waste of money for a neighbouring enterprise body to advertise in an area that has higher unemployment than the area to which the advertisement is asking new businesses to go. There are many examples of that beggar-thy-neighbour attitude by local authorities and agencies that are all trying to beat one another, wasting public funds. They should help businesses rather than try to promote narrow areas—areas that should be promoted on a wider basis.

We saw a national example of that when Nissan and other overseas projects were being proposed. People tripped off to Japan spending public funds for no apparent reason in an unjustified and unco-ordinated way. It is even worse when one studies what is really happening.

The agency could build up links with financial institutions, even though it does not have Scotland's advantage of administrative devolution and close links between industry and the banking system. In my view, economic development in the region is held back by lack of private financial capacity. The region has no private investment trust, no commercial bank of any size, one major building society only, in Newcastle, and no local headquarters of a building society or bank. Of 52 pension funds in the region, only six are locally managed.

In co-operation with the banks, the agency could help to administer the industrial credit scheme, which we have proposed. As the House of Lords report on overseas trade — which is being debated today — recommended, it would be specifically targeted on low-interest medium-term finance for small and medium-sized enterprises directed at high technology projects, product innovation, marketing, exports and design. I was delighted to see that the Treasury spokesman for the Labour party took up the proposal of an industrial credit scheme. I hope that the Government will also take it up.

If we are to do anything about the state of the region's employment, there needs to be a regional dimension to the allocation of public spending directed towards increasing the region's share of expenditure on research and development, which is currently 2·5 per cent., contrasted with a remarkable 47 per cent. being spent in the south-east. The region also needs new venture capital incentives through a corporate business expansion scheme to enable large companies, including multinationals, to write off up to £100,000 per annum in investments in small high-tech companies and full 100 per cent. depreciation allowances in the first year for start-up high-tech companies.

Those are the sort of proposals that might get new businesses and new industries under way in the region, but the Government have followed a scorched earth regional policy. Last week the Minister admitted, in reply to a question which I tabled and which the hon. Member for Easington quoted, that the Government had cut regional aid by 57 per cent. in real terms, from £287·1 million in 1978-79 to £122 million in 1984-85. That is before the cut in regional development grants and before the cost per job limit was imposed. In December 1984 the Government cut the national regional aid budget by half. Projecting that for the northern region could mean a further reduction, in the next three years, of some £60 million in regional aid.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the Conservative party conference that regional decline

"now represents the gravest social and economic problem facing us as a nation. We ignore it at our peril . . ."

He went on to say:

"In making all our economic and regional decisions we should always ask ourselves this question: What impact will that decision have upon that gulf between the different parts of the country?"

Unfortunately, his colleague the Chancellor has no such awareness. Only the alliance has spelt out how the economic policies that we want will help the northern region. We estimate that cutting the employers' national insurance contribution by 1 per cent., will create 2,000 jobs in the northern region. The north-eastern share of the £1 billion infrastructure programme that we propose would create 20,000 jobs. Doubling the community programme in the northern region would create 15,000 jobs. Our anti-poverty programme, which expands FIS and gives the long-term supplementary benefit rate for those unemployed for more than one year, would boost demand and create 10,000 jobs. Expanding local authority spending on labour-intensive services and a crash programme of education and training for skills would create 8,000 jobs. Setting up new businesses through small firm investment companies and the industrial credit scheme, as well as the enterprise allowance scheme, would initially create 2,000 jobs.

Those policies, which we have proposed nationally, would reduce unemployment in the north by 50,000 to 60,000 within two years. That is a realistic target. It is not enough, but it would be a substantial improvement on the present prospects for the region. It would give new hope not only to Tyne Bridge, but to Wearside, Teesside and other parts of the region that have been devastated by the events of the past six years, particularly the devastation of our manufacturing and industrial base during that time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker Order. It will be obvious to the House that many hon. Members wish to speak in this short debate, so I appeal for short contributions.

5.10 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I agree that we should not dwell on the past but look to the future, but it is germane to remind the house that the industrial background of the north-east, with its traditional dependence on heavy industry, is largely to blame for the serious unemployment that we face. Such industries in all the western world face intense competition, especially from cheap labour in the far east, as well as technical change on a scale that was never foreseen, even 30 years ago. We are seeing technical change in a time span of five years that took a generation only a few years ago. All too often, those technical changes produce automation and

less employment in the traditional heavy industries. These are largely the reasons for the problems that we face in the north-east, and it is right to look to the past for that historical background.

We should look to the future and success stories such as Nissan, mentioned by the Minister of State, and described as the most attractive industrial prospect in recent years. The north-east won that chance through its own efforts.

The north-east is certainly not a desert. We should never, wittingly or unwittingly, convey the impression that it is. It is important that we create a true impression of the advantages in the north-east. I am sure that hon. Members taking part in the debate appreciate that. It is essential that potential employers are aware of the regional pluses and are not led astray by moaning about the problems that we face.

I remind the House that we possess the finest communications system in the country. We have an excellent system of roads, fine airports and up-to-date sea ports. Our rail system from the south is about to be electrified. We have outstandingly beautiful countryside. We have a skilled and hard-working work force. I pay tribute to our fine industrial relations. Traditionally, the north-east has enjoyed good relations between the two sides of industry. I am pleased to be told by those involved in the industrial scene that industrial relations have never been better than they are today.

I pay particular tribute to the leaders of both sides of industry who have been working quietly and persistently for about 18 months seeking to establish a new co-ordinating body for the north-east, which has, I am sure, the blessing of all hon. Members representing constituencies in the north-east. I believe that the scheme will also have the Government's blessing when the proposals are put formally to them.

We have not only the prospect of Nissan as a fine manufacturing centre but every sign of confidence from the retail trade. In fact, there are staggering signs of confidence in retailing. I am told by those who run the Newcastle branches of national shops that the trade that they are now doing in the city is among the best in the whole country. The Metro centre is opening in Gateshead in a year's time and will employ about 5,000 people. This imaginative local initiative will be the first such gigantic shopping centre in the country. There is every sign of confidence in the community in the north-east. That does not mean that we do not have problems, but we are confident that we can match up to them and we are seeking to do so by our own efforts as much as possible.

In recent weeks the Queen Mother, always a most popular visitor to Tyneside, opened the new coal staithes on the Tyne, an effective investment in the future by the port of Tyne. In Scotswood, the Vickers tank factory is one of the most modern plants in Britain. In my constituency, at the former Clellands shipyard we have a thrusting, dynamic and successful offshore oil industry firm — William Press. Also in my constituency is Elmwood Sensors, a very successful subsidiary of Hawker Siddeley. Eighty three per cent. of that factory's production is going to the German and French car industries, which is a great success story.

Recently, smaller companies have been established in north Tyneside, such as Aerial Access Equipment and Scanro, both of which recently received the Queen's Award for Exports early in their lives. The former company sells hydraulic lift mechanisms and the latter sells windsurfing boards. Both are examples of small businesses and both are very successful. There is, however, a need for us to encourage small firms and entrepreneurs more than we have in the past. The recent celebrated comment that more needs to be done in this respect was not wrong. As *The Newcastle Journal* said in an editorial at the time, it is not criticising the north-east to make that point but simply recognising a problem that is there, and one that most northerners, in their hearts, know is there. We need to face that problem.

Much has rightly been said by the Minister of State about the huge amount of money that has been made available for the north-east in urban and industrial aid. Enormous efforts are being made by the Manpower Services Commission in the region in training and in the many different schemes in which it is involved. I should like to give an example of self-help — the creation of Northern Investors. A number of leading industrial and commercial firms in the north-east have got together to provide finance for investment in new businesses in the region. It has got off to a good start, and I am sure that we all wish it well.

We can take great pride in our education system in the north-east. We have two fine universities and three fine polytechnics. However, Lord Elliott who, for many years, contributed to our debates on the north-east as a Member of the House, was accurate in saying in his recent maiden speech in another place, that in the past the north-east had given too much emphasis to academic education and training rather than vocational training. We should bear that in mind for the future.

I was pleased to be present at the recent opening of the technology centre at Newcastle university when he performed the opening ceremony. Mr. Reay Atkinson, the regional director of the Department of Trade and Industry, referred to the centre's major role in the regeneration of the region. He saw it as helping in the creation of new forward-looking businesses and keeping more of our young people in the region by showing them that there was scope and hope for them. This could help the north-east to become more closely involved in the prosperous offshore oil and gas business. That was a local initiative, taken by the university of Newcastle, working with local businesses.

I pay tribute to the work of Mr. Reay Atkinson, who, for the past few years, has been the head of the Department of Trade and Industry in the north-east. He retires at the end of the month, and I know that all hon. Members from the northern region will join me in paying tribute to his outstanding work. He has become very much a northerner in the past three years. Indeed, he originally came from our part of the country, but he suffered for a while because he was based in London.

I have said that I do not believe that we do enough to encourage people in the north-east to set up businesses and to become entrepreneurs and employers. We must however, also seek to increase the amount of inward investment in the region. It is for that reason that for a long time I have been of the opinion that we needed to improve the co-ordinating machinery in the north-east, which is now non-existent. I fully support, as I believe all hon. Members should do, the creation of a regional industrial executive, or whatever one likes to call it. It does not matter what the name is as long as we get the organisation right. I hope that in 1986 it will be the principal feature

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

of the north-east's move to help itself. I hope that during next year a proposal will come from the north-east to London to set up a new agency. It will probably take over the work of the North-East Development Council. It will have a small central staff and two prongs, one dealing with inward investment and the other with promotion of the region. It will be what is known as a one-stop shop. There is a great need for that if we are to play our full part in the development of the north-east.

This initiative of the region's Confederation of British Industry and the TUC, I hope to be supported in the near future by the local authorities, will be the greatest achievement that we can look forward to in 1986. In the north-east we have people of great ability and pride. It is only right that we should come to the Government in the new year with proposals to help ourselves by setting up an agency on the lines that I have suggested.

5.19 pm

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): I am delighted to take part briefly in this important debate on the northern region. If I concentrate on my area, I hope the House will forgive me, because the region stretches from the far north-east right across to the far north-west and embraces the county of Cumbria and my constituency of Carlisle.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) made an unwarranted attack upon the Labour party, bearing in mind that he would never have been in the House had it not been for the Labour party. I hope that at some time he will be honest with himself and publish the amount of money that he received from the Labour and trade union movement in the past when he was a Labour candidate and that helped to get him here. I also point out that humility is not one of his great characteristics.

I want to concentrate upon my patch, the city of Carlisle. A delegation met the Minister of State recently to request development area status. Although the Minister received us courteously, I very much regret that he turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to our request.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) referred to Matthew Brown and the Scottish and Newcastle breweries. This may seem odd coming from me, but the great fear in my constituency is that, if the deal goes ahead, not only will the brewery in Workington close but there is every possibility that the brewery of Theakstones in my constituency will also come under the hammer. When amalgamations take place, the ordinary working man and woman employed in the industries asks, "Will my job be secure?"

As hon. Members know, there is also the possibility of the amalgamation of Imperial Tobacco and United Biscuits. No doubt the first thing that my constituents who are employed by United Biscuits and who work at Carrs factory in Carlisle will ask is, "I wonder if my job will be safe." That is a perfectly legitimate worry. From my contacts in the past with the chairman of United Biscuits, Sir Hector Laing, I believe that he will do all that he can to retain the biscuit factory in Carlisle.

In the 1930s, there were many small family firms in my constituency, but over the years they have been swallowed up and now belong in the main to great combines. In the 1930s, there was very little unemployment in the constituency when the rest of the country suffered massive unemployment. In the 1980s, the position has changed considerably. In Carlisle in October of this year unemployment was running at 12 per cent., four times what it was 10 years ago when Carlisle had assisted area status.

More than 6,000 persons are unemployed in the Carlisle travel-to-work area. The unemployment rate shows an overall upward trend and, despite what the Miniser said, there is little to suggest that it will not continue to do so. Despite the promising fall during the summer of 1983, the unemployment rate is back to its highest level, equivalent to the previous peak in 1982.

In his speech, the Minister did not say one word about unemployment in the city of Carlisle. Male unemployment has gone up from 5·3 per cent. in 1979 to 14·1 per cent.; female unemployment has grown from 5·3 per cent. to 9·6 per cent. in the same period. A few weeks ago I met a group of young people, together with representatives of the social services. Every one of those young people was out of work. They could not get jobs and there is no hope for them. No wonder that at times people are driven to despair.

Statistics reveal that long-term unmployment is emerging as a major problem in my constituency. About 40 per cent. of all the unemployed men have been without work for more than a year and nearly a quarter of the unemployed men under 19 have been unemployed for more than a year. As for those under 19, there is nothing worse for a young person leaving school and looking forward to starting work than finding that there is no job to go to. There is no encouragement for them in what the Minister said today.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The hon. Gentleman said that I did not refer to his constituency; that is correct. I hope he will be generous enough to remind the House that he and some of his constituents came to see me only last week to discuss the position in Carlisle. I hope that he felt that he had a fair hearing.

Mr. Lewis: I thought I had made it clear that I had no complaint about that meeting. I thought I had paid tribute to the Minister; if I did not, I apologise. He received us courteously and listened to us. But when we went out of his office, that was the end of it. I give him full marks. The first thing that happened when we went into his office was that someone put on the kettle. The trouble with many Ministers is that they put the kettle on after delegations leave.

Despite everything the Minister said today, what hope has he given to the unemployed in my constituency? What hope will the Under-Secretary of State for Employment be able to offer to unemployed men and women in Carlisle when he replies to the debate? We look to him for an answer. I hope the Government will act as a result of this short debate.

5.30 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I can agree with the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) on one point. It is typical of the Opposition's cynical disinterest in the north-east that the first full-scale debate that they table on the north-east should take place in a week when their majority in the safe seat of Tyne Bridge is at risk. Tyne Bridge is a good example of the results of Labour misrule —

captive municipal misery, with people herded into council houses and deprived of jobs by high-rating Labour-controlled authorities.

It is a great shame that the Opposition motion did not draw attention to the systems of Socialism in the north-east that deny choice, frustrate ownership and deprive people of the standards of living to which they are entitled. The Socialism that we have seen in the north-east has contributed to a serf mentality in many constituencies.

The debate is about the role of government in the north-east and aid for the north-east. It should be about not the quantity of aid, but rather its quality. There should be no doubt about the quantity of aid that has been provided. The north-east has been an assisted area since the early 1930s. In the past 20 years it has received one third of the regional aid budget—about £6 billion out of £20 billion.

Since the Government came to power in 1979, the north-east has received, as we have heard, more than £1 billion. It is a £1 billion-pound region. Every Member who has studied the problems of the north-east knows that it is not the quantity of aid that matters. There is no shortage of public money. The problem has been the shortage of private money, capital, investment and enterprise. I can think of no project that my right hon. Friends have not been prepared to consider on its merits and to give aid where appropriate — Nissan, the electrification of the east coast main line and many others. The question before us is not the quantity, but the quality of aid that has been made available. How can we make it more effective? That is the test that we should apply to the Government.

There is no doubt that the Government are doing well on that test and that regional aid is very effective. There has been an end to endless capital subsidies and subsidies of replacement investment — merely modernisation investment that creates no new jobs. There has been an end to the Sullom Voes, the Moss Morrans and the Billingham nitric acid plants, and so on. More jobs are now being created for the taxpayer's money.

Subsidies are being reduced. The wasteful subsidies that we saw in the past poured down the pits and shoved into the shipyards and the steel plants have been reduced, and all three industries are now edging towards a more profitable position than they have had for some years. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) mentioned the smaller companies, the service companies and the new technology companies that are now coming. They are already there. They are not just pipe dreams for the future. In the north-east, 5,000 new companies register for VAT every year. New service companies are being created and new technology companies are now coming to the region.

About 20,000 people in the region work in about 160 new technology enterprises which operate across the range of the technologies — computers, telecommunications, electronics, and so on. It is a myth to pretend that those companies have not yet been created. Those jobs exist and there are more of them to come.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: I shall not give way because we are short of time.

The Government are stimulating job creation and providing training. Next year about 18,000 adults will receive training and about 25,000 youngsters will go through the YTS in the north-east.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West) *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: The north-east is seeing training and retraining on a scale that it has not seen in any previous time of industrial change. On that point the Government are to be congratulated.

Mr. Ryman *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: The role of the Government is not to fossilise the region through extensive and unnecessary subsidy, as encouraged by the Labour party, and not to prolong the agony of industrial change, but to assist that change, to put people at the front of that change and to stop them being the victims of that change. Public money should be used to do that, but it must be used wisely to clear away the debris of the last industrial age, to pay for the retraining of our work force, to stimulate job creation in a modern industrial environment, and, above all, to help re-establish in the north-east the spirit of enterprise and self confidence that the region needs.

Those policies will need time to take effect. The problems did not start in 1979. They are deep-rooted. They have existed for more than 20 years in the north-east. Even Joe Mills, the secretary of the northern TUC acknowledges that the problems of the north-east began over 10 years ago. It is a period, interestingly, that starts with the beginning of the former Labour Government.

There is no doubt that, applied thoroughly, those policies will succeed. The House need not take my word for that; it can take the word of those companies which have come to the north-east from overseas— Nissan to Washington, the Grove Corporation to Sunderland and Tabucchi to Teesside. It is inconceivable that the north-east would have seen overseas investment on that scale had Labour won the last election, had this country been pulled out of the European Community, and had those companies had to face the prospect of investing in a country with high inflation and with public finance out of control.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: No one can reasonably argue that Nissan would have come to this country.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: Nissan and the other Japanese companies that we hope to attract take a long-term view. They are correct to do so. They chose the north-east. They were not directed there. They chose it because of its strength and because this Government, unlike any previous Government, have provided the stability——

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: —the low inflation and the attractive control of public finances for which they have been looking. Instead of moaning about the north-east, we should be playing on those strengths. The north-east has plenty of natural resources. We have water, coal and offshore gas. We have human resources, skills in the new technologies and a work force that can adapt, as Nissan is proving, to new working practices.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: We have a work force that has transformed itself——

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? Is there not a convention by

[Mr. Boyes]

which, if a Member spends a considerable part of his speech talking about a factory or something else in another Member's constituency, he gives way, especially when he has made erroneous——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a matter for the hon. Member who has the Floor. I remind the House that there is great pressure on time and that interventions prolong speeches.

Mr. Fallon: I am not giving way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know that many hon. Members, especially Opposition hon. Members, want to speak.

We have natural and human resources. We have, above all, cheap land and housing, space for development and the attractive environment that the modern company needs. If those skills and resources are encouraged, we can promote the north-east not as an industrial museum which lives in the imagination of the Labour party, but as a region of opportunity, combining low-cost enterprise with a higher quality of life than that found in rootless southern suburbia or the overcrowded Thames valley.

My right hon. Friends can help in that process, first, by keeping down inflation. Low inflation puts more money into the coffers of companies in the north-east than any amount of regional aid or subsidies. They can help by keeping public finances under control to continue to attract overseas investment to the north-east. They can help by stimulating the enterprise and job creation that will allow and encourage our home-grown enterprises to expand and develop.

I agree with the hon. Member for Stockton, South that it is time that our public expenditure system was reviewed. There is no reason why it should not have a regional dimension. There is no reason why our public expenditure system should continue to discriminate against the English regions by over provision for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There is no justification for the formula by which the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland automatically receive block grants which are not based on proven need and which are beyond Treasury scrutiny.

Secondly, I should like the Government to cut down on some of the reverse regional subsidies—the southern comforts. Each year £300 million is spent on London and the south-east commuter services, and the Government, local government and other public bodies pay their staff £150 million a year in London weighting allowance. Will the Government consider mortgage interest tax relief, not the principle of it, but its effect of trapping people in the north, and making it more difficult for them to move within the United Kingdom labour market?

Finally, will my hon. Friend the Minister knock a few heads together in the north? As the hon. Member for Stockton, South said, a plethora of agencies are wastefully competing among themselves and chasing international investment. If we are to sell the north as a region of opportunity in the United Kingdom and overseas, we need to co-ordinate our efforts in a much better way than the development corporations, agencies, local authorities, and a range of other bodies have done until now.

5.40 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): The debate is taking place today because it is an Opposition day and the Government have never created an opportunity in their time to discuss the problems in the north of England. I remind hon. Members who have spoken—especially the hon. Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) and for Darlington (Mr. Fallon)—and the Minister, who is not present, that the issues of the northern region have been brought to our attention by an organisation called the North-East County Councils Association. Each year it produces a report, and this year it presented its sixth report to various Ministers and Secretaries of State. Those documents have been made available on six occasions—the seventh is being prepared—yet they have been almost completely ignored by the Government.

I had the honour and pleasure of being a member of a delegation which came to London to meet the Secretary of State for the Environment and his colleagues to present the fifth report on the state of the region. It, too, was examined and rejected. There is no question but that the north-east has been interested in presenting its case during the past six years, and the credit for that rests entirely on the shoulders of the local authorities.

The debate is important because the north of England has severe problems. That is recognised by various organisations, including the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, local authorities and other organisations that are keenly interested in the economic development of the region. We have valuable assets, but some are in decline. The coal industry is almost completely lost now, and the steel industry has been decimated. They were part of our natural resources. We have other resources, particularly our people.

During the past 150 years, we have developed the coal and steel industries, which were the foundation of the industrial revolution. I remind the few hon. Members from the south of England who are present that their prosperity is based on the resources that came from the north of England, Wales, Scotland and other peripheral regions. The south is reaping the benefits of what we in the north have established during the past 150 years.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Not for long.

Mr. Thompson: I am reminded that the south will not enjoy those benefits for long.

One remaining asset is our people. As the hon. Member for Darlington recognised, they have adaptable skills, but, sadly, the Government are penalising our people by actions such as the closure of the Killingworth skillcentre. My hon. Friends the Members for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) and I met the Minister earlier this year about the closure. I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) that we, too, had a cup of tea. That seems to be the procedure in the Minister's office. One gets a cup of tea but loses a skillcentre. I would have preferred it the other way round. That is an example of the Government's attitude to the north. The Killingworth skillcentre was the only one between the Tyne and the Borders, and we have lost it.

The retention of the skillcentre was important for training and retraining our people. Every hon. Member who represents the northern region recognises that we want to keep our communities together. That is of paramount importance. At present, we are not succeeding. We are losing our better educated young people because there are no opportunities for them in the north. Our communities are close-knit, and we are fighting

desperately to preserve them. As the Minister said, we should be allowed to play a full part in achieving national prosperity, but it should be a fair part, in the sense that we have the same rights and privileges as people elsewhere.

I shall tell the House a short story which reflects the employment position in the south and the north. Two years ago, before I came to the House, I met a gentleman in a hotel in London. He told me that he had a brother-in-law in Brighton who had lost his job two years previously, found another job, was made redundant, found another job, lost that one, and found another job. In other words, he had four jobs in two years. He was despondent about his brother-in-law. I reminded him that in the north when one loses one's first job there is no other job. That is the difference between the north and the south. We have the manpower, and the basic skills, which need to be topped up through skillcentres, but we are not allowed to use and develop them as we wish.

In the north, manufacturing investment fell from £613 million in 1979 to £343 million in 1982. That is a decrease of 61 per cent. All sections of our community resent the lack of a regional dimension in Government policies. At one time, the attitude towards the regions was positive —for example, in the days of industrial development certificates. They were important to the northern region, and their loss had a serious effect.

An aluminium smelter in my constituency directly employs 1,100 people. It came in the 1960s, with the help of intervention from the Labour Government. The company agreed to establish the smelter in the north, and the Wilson Government helped. The plant supports a further 5,000 jobs, which extend as far as the River Tyne, which is 15 miles away. That sort of project could be undertaken again.

The problem cannot be solved by encouraging large numbers of people to move. Already evidence shows that social pressures are building up in other parts of the United Kingdom because of the migration of people from the north. The south-east has housing problems, but the north is not under the same sort of pressure. Our main problem is unemployment. We have accommodation and people, but no jobs. Complaints are made in the south-east about over-development. We do not suffer from that.

It is not true that the northerners keep carping about the position. They are placid, quiet and gentle. That is shown by the fact that, despite all the economic pressures on them, they have not yet taken violent action, such as has occurred elsewhere.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) for mentioning this matter, but I think that he will support what I have to say. One of the reasons, although not the principal one, that Nissan came to the north-east—I participated in the exercise—was because the North-East County Councils Association met five northern counties, the Tyne and Wear county council and the North-East Development Corporation, and agreed to support a site at Sunderland. I was honoured and privileged to take part in that exercise. Nissan did not come to my area, but there has been a regional dimension in the work that has been done, and that will be expanded.

It is not all doom and gloom in the north of England. Many companies have settled there and are satisfied. The Government are keen to remind us of the value of private enterprise. If the United Kingdom were recognised as a private company and we in the north were recognised as shareholders, like the other regions, it would also be recognised that we have put a considerable amount of wealth into the enterprise. Now we ask only for the dividends to which we are entitled.

5.51 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I am grateful to the Opposition for giving us the opportunity to debate this subject, for it enables the House to consider three most important facts about the northern region. First, the region offers unparalleled opportunities for investment, industry and growth, and should be regarded as a frontier region, ripe for expansion, where the best hopes can be nurtured. The city of Newcastle is the gateway not to despair, as some would have us believe, but to future enterprise. Secondly, this is not a dream; it is coming true. There is now a thriving record of achievement with major new job creation, thanks entirely to the Government's policies. Thirdly, heavy and damning responsibility for the decline and industrial hiatus since 1974 must lie with the Labour leadership of the region and with the Labour party.

Bearing those three points in mind, it is curious that the Opposition have sought to highlight their failure and the Government's successes only two days before a by-election in a constituency that admirably proves all these points. It is all very well to talk vapidly about the future, but we shall not get it right if we do not understand the lessons from the past nor address ourselves to the difficulties that the region has faced and the way that they are now being overcome.

The region is particularly dependent on traditional smokestack industries which made it especially vulnerable to a combination of recession and fundamental changes in the pattern of market demand, which did not begin in 1979. This dislocation could have been avoided, and much of the blame for not preventing it from happening in the early days must be borne by industrialists and business leaders whose talents had become exhausted and who had lost the drive, initiative and inspiration that their predecessors on Tyneside had possessed.

The appalling condescension that these exhausted industrial leaders showed to their work force only encouraged the worst elements in trade unionism to prosper, and blame must lie on them. For sheer destructive obstinacy, little can beat some of the union attitudes displayed on Tyneside until a few years ago. They are responsible for as many lost jobs as bad management, which must also take its fair share of blame. Today, luckily, as many well as good industrial leaders in the north-east, there are many responsible trade union leaders.

An important part can be played by constructive trade unionism on Tyneside. For example, I should like to praise the efforts of Mr. Joe Mills, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) has referred. He recently sought to obtain all-party support in a move to improve the region. I welcome that, and I am happy to co-operate, as I am sure my hon. Friends will. In his letter, Mr. Mills had the honesty to point out that the region's problems did not begin in 1979, as some Labour Members would have us believe. He specifically and correctly pointed to a decline that began in 1974. Everyone knows which party was in power between 1974 and 1979.

Perhaps Labour Members who have been lecturing the Government on their economic policies can explain why they did so little when they were in power and why, if they

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

now claim to have better policies than the Government, such policies were not applied when the Labour party had ample opportunity to do so. Why, in 11 years of their national rule, did the region not improve but deteriorate? Perhaps they can explain why decades of municipal Socialism have succeeded only in creating inner city jungles of despair in the north-east and concrete labyrinths of decay, which anybody who visits Tyne Bridge, next door to my constituency, can see amply demonstrated. Perhaps they can explain that the problem lies in the failure of policies, not resources, the shortcomings of state planning as a system and the lack of virtually all incentive.

The success that the north so badly needs means independence, and that breaks the power of municipal bosses, shop stewards and Labour political control. The policies that have been advocated by the Labour party and pursued by their town hall apparatchiks have been anti-enterprise, anti-growth, anti-investment, and therefore anti-job creation, and ultimately anti-people. The results are living proof of the failure of intervention policy over the years.

It is no coincidence that the most deprived regions are always those that are controlled by the Labour party and that have lived longest under Labour rule. The so-called north-south divide is fundamentally not economic but political. Regions that formerly had almost identical industrial structures, and therefore potential problems similar to those of the north-east, were able to avoid the high unemployment and consequent problems because they had the political will and flexibility to adapt rather than become fossilised in a dogmatic Socialist dust bowl.

Thankfully, in 1979, a Government with the strength and determination to tackle the long-term problems in regions such as the north-east took power. Overcoming years of neglect was inevitably slow, but now clear results are being reported weekly. In the past few months, Tyneside has been promised almost 15,000 new jobs. I can list them. Some 5,000 jobs will come at the new Metro centre in Gateshead, with, according to the developer, a possible future expansion of up to as many as 11,500 jobs. In addition, between 500 and 1,000 jos have been created during construction work. There will be 2,500 spin-off jobs as a result of the Nissan project in Washington. Another 3,000 jobs will come from the Gateshead garden festival—1,200 jobs in construction and reclamation, which have been started, 1,000 during the festival and up to 1,000 afterwards, not to mention the spin-off jobs that will be created.

Another 2,000 jobs are to be created at the newly announced Armstrong centre on the north bank of the Tyne in Newcastle. This large superstore and leisure complex combined with a business park will create 350 construction jobs, with the promise of 1,700 jobs once it has been built. There will be 1,000 jobs at the Howard Doris oil rig construction yard at Wallsend, and 500 jobs at the new Lipton superstore at Tyneside. Another 400 jobs are to come at Burton the tailors, and 400 at Morrisons in West Moor. An additional 400 are to come at new Fine Fare stores on Tyneside. Also, 250 jobs are to come at the Charlton Leslie offshore company at Wallsend, 200 at the new Dewhirst clothing factory in Sunderland, 200 at Presto at Cowgate, 100 at NEI, 100 at Findus and 50 at Boots—I could go on and on.

Thousands of new jobs have been created and are being created by the Government's policies. Last week, the *Evening Chronicle* found it necessary to produce a special supplement to include the 300 job vacancies that were available on only one day. In addition, in the enterprise zone about 12,000 new jobs have been created, including the Vickers Dreadnought factory project and a tank factory on the banks of the Tyne. It is the largest covered tank factory in Europe. Apart from the permanent jobs that have been created, 6,488 people in the northern region have benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme. Under the city action team programme, Newcastle and Gateshead alone will receive next year £23·5 million of public money. It will be split among 300 separate schemes and will create hundreds of jobs.

I said at the beginning of my speech that the north is a region of opportunity. If the conditions are right, we shall flourish. We have the raw materials, people with skills and talent, unlimited space and a beautiful environment. The enterprise zone has shown what can happen if the shackles of the state are struck off and if an atmosphere of incentive is created. Great opportunities are available—for example, in tourism. Next year the tall ships race and the Gateshead garden festival will attract thousands of visitors and millions of pounds to Tyneside.

The Government are to allow £300 million of public money to be spent upon east coast electrification. There is to be direct investment in the roads system. The completion of the Newcastle western bypass is foreshadowed, as well as other major road projects.

I criticise the Government in only one respect. I do not think that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends sufficiently appreciate what the north could achieve if only it were encouraged to develop an enterprise culture. The north does not want subsidies or endless grants. It does not want its begging bowl to be filled. It wants to be freed from controls and overburdening taxation. I should like at least some of the advantages of the enterprise zone concept to be extended to the whole of the Tyneside development area. I want something fully and finally to be done about penal rates. The rates in Newcastle—the highest in the country—have destroyed many jobs. As industry is modernised and grows in the enterprise climate that is created, I want the Government to appreciate, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington, that a proper regional aspect—at least temporarily—to the Government's procurement policies is needed. The north-east wants change. It wants to look forward, not back. It wants to stand on its own feet. If it is given a full opportunity to do so, the only moaning to be heard will be the death rattle of the Labour party.

6.2 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) has made a number of points with which I agree: that the north-east has the infrastructure and the skilled manpower, the will to work and the ability to attract industry. However, I take exception to the fact that Conservative Members claim that they attracted Nissan to the north-east. They did no such thing. The Secretary of State for Wales went to Japan and tried to get the Nissan plant for Wales. It was only because the Labour-controlled local authorities and trade unions in the north-east acted in concert that Nissan came to the north-east.

There is no point in the hon. Gentleman also claiming that the Metro centre in my constituency was paid for with Government money. It was not. It is situated on land that is included in the development zone. It was expected that that land would attract manufacturing industry, but it did not. I am grateful for the Metro centre and for the construction jobs that it has created, but for every job that is created in the Metro centre another job will be lost somewhere else in the north-east.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central read out a long list of jobs that have been created. I shall read out another list of jobs that have been lost. In Tyne Bridge alone there have recently been redundancies. Vickers has made 1,918 workers redundant. NEI Nuclear Systems—not exactly low technology—has made 1,588 workers redundant. Smokeless Fuels has made 310 workers redundant; Osram 300; G. Shepherd, 255; BOC Cutting Machines, 254; Huwood, 180; Rose Forgrove, 160. The list goes on and on.

Between 1979 and 1984, Tyne and Wear firms lost 85,000 jobs. That represents a 16 per cent. reduction in the employment base. That is the reality of it — not the padded lists that have been handed out by parliamentary private secretaries to Conservative Members who are enjoying a short tenure of their north-eastern constituencies.

There are real problems in the north-east. Conservative Members agreed with the Government's policy to close the Consett steelworks, but it was producing the cheapest liquid steel in Europe. Why did the Government close it? It was closed because of the British Steel Corporation's stupid accountancy policies and because the Government believe that if we cannot make steel more cheaply than the subsidised steel of our overseas competitors we should import steel from them. For an island nation that is a very dangerous philosophy. If we do not have a steelmaking and shipbuilding capability and if we do not develop our indigenous energy resources, we shall be in strategic trouble. The sooner the Government realise that, the better.

It is no use the Government saying that this country can buy Korean steel because it is cheaper than steel that is produced by British companies. It is no use saying that the European Community's distribution of steel quotas is good enough. It is not. It has cost us dear. We are not pitting our traditional industries against the new technology industries. We need steel to make motor cars and other manufactured goods. To make steel we need coke, but the closure of the Derwenthaugh coke works in my constituency has been announced, with the loss of 300 jobs. It produces a third of the coke for the British steelmaking industry. If the Government are killing the cokemaking capacity by a third, they will cut the steelmaking capacity by a third. I warn those who make steel in other parts of the country that, because the Government have cut our steelmaking capacity, they will be in trouble.

The Labour party has policies to deal with this problem. A northern development agency is needed urgently. The billions of pounds that have been exported overseas since exchange controls were lifted by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer must come back to this country and be invested in British jobs—not in Taiwanese, Korean or South African jobs. British money ought to be invested in Britain. The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) is right. Private capital is not being invested in the north-east. In 1979, £600 million of private capital was invested in the north-east. In 1982 it had been reduced to £300 million and, it is still falling. We need capital investment. However, the Government are exporting it overseas.

There is a simple solution to the economic problems of the north: get rid of this lot and elect a Labour Government —the sooner the better.

6.8 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): It is a privilege to follow two of the best speeches that I have heard since I became a Member of Parliament. They epitomise the differences in philosophy and outlook between my party and the Opposition over the problems of the north-east. There have been speeches from two young, vibrant Members of Parliament. They looked to the future. Their speeches were not based upon class warfare or historic concepts. They looked to the future and brought to it the kind of dimension that I should have liked to find in the speeches of Opposition Members, but we have heard from the Opposition only words of gloom and doom. They came from the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson). That is part of the culture of the north-east which many of us are trying to eradicate, and the quicker we do that the better.

The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) wants to see changes in investment and at the same time he wants to claim the credit for Nissan coming to the north-east. Of course we want Japanese investment. We want multinational investment from all over the world. We want to make sure that there is an enterprise culture. We do not want that enterprise culture stultified at the end of the day by the dead hand of Socialism, which has been the ruination of the north-east for too many years.

Let me say something about Cleveland. Cleveland is a bureaucratic nightmare. Those who represent my part of it wish that they were still in Yorkshire and those who represent the other part wish they were still in Durham. [HON. MEMBERS: "Your Government created it."] We may have created it. We make mistakes, but I hope to God that we shall eventually get rid of it in the same way as we have got rid of Tyne and Wear, Greater Manchester, the GLC, and others. I have been on record several times as saying that I would like to get rid of Cleveland county council because it is a duplicated tier of local government which adds nothing to the economic welfare of the region. It is that stultifying hand of Socialism which creeps in. Conservative-controlled areas do not have special committees run by trade union officials and organised by trade unions to control the destiny of the local council and tell it what it can do.

I want to be fair. I do not want to suggest for one moment that the Labour party is entirely wrong or that the Conservative party is entirely right. That is also part of the culture problem that my hon. Friends referred to when they talked about the north-south divide being a political one. If Conservatives put forward an idea in my area, however well thought out and merited, that idea is knocked on the head straight away. It is not given proper thought, yet there might be a germ of a good idea there. That sort of thing does not enhance the area's economy.

Let me give a short example. A factory in my constituency wishes to expand and take on 20 people. It submitted a planning application to Langbaurgh council and was told that permission would be granted provided

[Mr. Richard Holt]

that the factory was relocated in South Bank — a Socialist ward. So that investment does not take place and there is no expansion. That happens on a large scale.

I do not want anyone to run away with the idea that Langaurgh does not have its success stories. I went to a factory the other day and was amazed to see a huge piece of metal. The managing director told me that it was a rib for a Trident submarine. When I went round the corner I saw some small pieces of metal, all worked in the same factory by the same excellent work force. I was told that they were the end cappings for motorway safety barriers. That sort of enterprise exists in the north-east if we can bring it out rather than knock it on the head with the planning and financial strictures which we enjoy from Socialism.

I must take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) yet again, and I apologise for doing so for a second time. Newcastle is not the highest rated authority; it has the highest rate poundage. Unfortunately, it is my people who suffer from the highest rate. Last year ICI, a fundamental business in the area, had to pay £1 million in increased rates. How many jobs might ICI have been able to provide within the region if it had not had to produce £1 million for no extra productivity? That money had to be handed over straight away to those who run the county council. That council is doing important business on behalf of the people of Langbaurgh and of the north-east. It is using that money to go to Spain for a meeting of the nuclear-free zone international committee—£10,000 worth of ratepayers' money.

My constituency stretches across Langbaurgh council and Middlesbrough council. When I leave my home I am in Langbaurgh. When I reach the border between the two local authorities, signposts tell me that I am entering a nuclear-free zone. I am waiting for the retaliation from Langbaurgh county council in the form of a signpost saying "Now you are leaving it, thank God." The money wasted on such things by local authorities in the north-east is what drives businesses, industrialists and others away from the region.

Since I was elected I have written hundreds of letters to people asking them to consider investment in the north-east. I have extolled all the virtues which my hon. Friends have mentioned. But the industrialists are not prepared to come to an area where others interfere in the running of their businesses.

The hon. Member for Blaydon talked about the steel industry and the price of steel. He should accept that if we have to use high-price steel we shall make high-price cars and we shall not sell either the steel or the motor cars. That is why it is necessary for us to produce steel profitably and properly, and that is now done for the first time in many years.

Of course, one of the tragedies of the shake-out is that far too many people are unemployed. Here I look to my Government for more concern in the way in which we handle this transitional period. Seven years ago on south Teesside, two employers, ICI and British Steel, employed 47,000 people. Today they employ fewer than 20,000. Frankly, it is impossible for 27,000 people to become hairdressers and ice cream salesmen overnight. The Government should look again for ways in which they can ameliorate the problems of transition. It was that to which the Conservative party chairman referred and which the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) mentioned when he talked of the lost generation. I lay much of the blame for that at the door of the Labour party, because it has not taken a proper lead in looking after the north-east. There has been low calibre leadership among the municipal authorities in the north-east for generation after generation. The people who come here are afraid of losing their electoral power base; they are not prepared to turn round and tell some of those in the municipal town halls in the north-east that they have got it wrong. The Labour party has had years in power, but there is only one area in which it has any political clout left at all, and that is the north-east, yet that is being rapidly dissipated. Labour Members will learn to their cost that they have neglected the north-east for too long.

It is because of the spirit of enterprise put in by the Conservative party to encourage entrepreneurs, having identified where the ratholes have been, that the people of the north-east are more and more turning to the Conservative party. We may not win the by-election on Thursday, but Labour Members will not be too pleased with the result either.

I said that the Government were not doing sufficient to assist in the transition. We should be looking at shipping, because the north-east had great pride in that industry and it employed great numbers. Successive Governments have allowed the shipping industry to run down and it is now in a parlous state. We should start doing something about that, thereby demonstrating what the Labour party could have done when it was in power. There are many problems that we are now having to put right, because former Labour Administrations spent and spent but achieved little.

Is the Japanese language being taught anywhere in the north-east? In other words, what is that region doing to encourage other than Nissan to go there? After all, Nissan is only one small jewel, whereas many more are needed in the crown of the north-east.

Mr. Fallon: Does my hon. Friend agree that the ports in the north-east would have a better chance of attracting international trade of the sort he is describing if they were able to opt out of restrictive arrangements, such as the dock labour scheme, and prove themselves as attractive as ports such as Felixstowe and others on the east coast?

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on."] Opposition Members may complain about my having spoken for 12 minutes. Some of them spoke for much longer. They may not like to hear the facts of life from these Benches, but they will have to listen to them.

The House has heard success stories and the job potential of the Newcastle area. Other excellent developments are going on elsewhere, although they are not mentioned by Labour Members. They do not mention Whessoe, the development for offshore oil and the huge development on Teesside. Klingers will become the major gasket manufacturers in the world, and Tees Components is already a leader in industrial engineering.

Having said that, I cannot allow the Government to get away with it. I think of the revenue by way of BBC TV licences and wonder how much is spent in return in the north-east by the BBC. Why do we not have something akin to the PSA and other centralised Government services in the north-east?

I conclude by not attempting to attribute blame 100 per cent. in either direction. We have a signpost to the future. It is clear that whatever the result on Thursday, the north will become a Conservative enterprise area, as is the whole of the midlands and the south of England.

6.23 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The question that I put to the House tonight is simple. To what region does Cumbria belong? Historically, we have been linked to the north-east, yet the Departments covering industry, employment, transport and the environment, and the operations of the MSC, are now based in Manchester. The only remaining link with Newcastle and the north-east is in the sphere of health. Indeed, I am wondering whether in the ministerial box today there are any civil servants from the north-west region.

The message that I bring from Cumbria is a desperate one. Five years ago, whenever a closure occurred or redundancies were announced, inevitably a fight was put up by the workers at the plants concerned to try to defend their jobs. That climate of fight no longer exists. Far too many redundancies and closures now occur, with the work force resigned to the loss of their jobs. They seem unwilling to fight for the future of their employment. Perhaps they recognise the Government's inflexibility.

I do wish, however, not to dwell on the past but to look to the future and to the prospect of a Labour Government being in power from 1988. That Government will set about the restoration of a compassionate society in a three-stage approach to resolving the problems of unemployment. In Cumbria, we shall see the restoration of the community programme on a sensible basis.

Some interesting work has been done by Mr. Gavin Davies of city stockbrokers Simon and Coates. He found that for the expenditure of £1 billion on tax cuts, only 21,000 jobs would be produced; that if the £1 billion was spent on public infrastructural works, 382,000 jobs would be produced; that if the £1 billion was spent on health, education and current public expenditure, 65,400 jobs would be created; and that if the £1 billion was spent on the community programme on the basis followed by the Government in the last two years, nearly 500,000 jobs would be created.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness) *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) spoke for far too long.

If the next Labour Government pursue that approach and spend £1 billion, we shall be able at a stroke to cut unemployment in the county of Cumbria, and that will be but the first stage.

The second stage will be to deal with the wider area of public expenditure increases. We shall increase expenditure on housing development and improvements and on the development of sporting facilities, and we shall try to establish a more equitable arrangement in the use of public money in the north and north-west of England compared with the situation in Ulster, where there is gross inequilibrium with other parts of the United Kingdom.

We shall see major expenditure in public building works. In Cumbria, £4 million is desperately needed now for repairs to schools, and we need £2 million to cope with the backlog of repairs to hospitals. Indeed, to restore the buildings in the hands of the county council to their former glory, we should need to spend £35 million. Yet in the budget last year, only £4·8 million was allocated when even to stand still we needed £11 million.

There are many public sector projects which the incoming Labour Government, following the next election, will support in the county of Cumbria. I can tell my electorate, and the 500,000 people throughout Cumbria, that the salvation of our county rests on there being a change of Government with the adoption of a brand new strategy based on the careful and selective use of public expenditure.

The third stage in Labour's new deal for the people of my county and of the northern region as a whole will be to set about the economic reconstruction of Great Britain. We shall have a real regional policy that deals with the underlying problems that have arisen not recently but in successive generations, problems that have been severely aggravated under Tory rule. That incoming Labour Government will take action on imports where at present there is much unfairness and injustice in international trade. We shall reconstruct a real policy on training and further develop schemes such as the YTS.

In the few minutes during which I have addressed the House I have explained how Labour will give a new deal to the people of the northern region. We are committed to putting them back to work. We intend to do that, and the sooner we have the opportunity to do it, the better. Our policies will be in the interest of all the people of Britain.

6.28 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The House will forgive me if I begin my contribution on a personal note. I am angry. I have spent much of the past three weeks observing and taking a small part in the Tyne Bridge by-election campaign and in the Scotswood ward. The Scotswood ward is where I was born and bred, where I was married 40 years ago—and I still am married—and where my two children were born. Having my roots there, having lived there for 32 years, and having represented the area for 10 years as a city councillor and for almost 18 years as a Member of Parliament, I can reasonably claim to know the area and its people well.

During the past three weeks that I have been in the Scotswood area, it has grieved me to see the amount of degradation inflicted on the people there. The awful increase in hardship is evident in the faces of people who answer their doors to canvassers. In the past I could readily identify long-serving Conservatives in the Scotswood area, because there were not many of them. However, let me tell the Prime Minister that many lifelong Conservatives whom I met during the past three weeks told me that she had forfeited their vote in the by-election and that they would not support her candidate in any circumstances.

If the Government had not juggled the figures for lost deposits from 12·5 per cent. to 5 per cent. of the vote, the Tory candidate would lose her deposit. Indeed, I am not sure whether, with 5 per cent. of the votes needed to save a deposit, the Tories will not lose their deposit on Thursday. Tyne Bridge will exact a heavy price at the ballot box on Thursday for the treatment that they have received from "TBW" and her Government.

The debate is on the northern region, but I wish to discuss the economic problems of the city of Newcastle.

[Mr. Robert C. Brown]

Unemployment in Newcastle has reached an unprecedented high. It has doubled during the past eight years. In October this year, 25,794 people were unemployed in the city, whereas in 1976 there were 11,900. That is the measure of the disaster that the Government have wreaked. A year ago there were 7,300 people unemployed in Tyne Bridge. In 12 short months that figure has increased to 9,815. Can anyone justify the Government's record during the past five years?

New job opportunities have contracted to the extent that there are now 17 unemployed city residents for every notified vacancy. In 1976, the ratio was 7:1, which was far too high, but it was like paradise compared with today. In July this year, 46 per cent. of the unemployed in the city of Newcastle had been out of work for more than 12 months, compared with 3,500 who had been unemployed for that time during the Labour Government's tenue of office.

School leavers are the worst affected group, with only 16 per cent. entering permanent employment within three months of leaving school. That contrasts dramatically with the 1974 figure when more than 75 per cent. of summer school leavers were in employment by the end of September, only weeks after leaving school. The problem has continued to deteriorate since the Government were elected. Of a total of 12,200 redundancies in the Tyne and Wear county, there have been 2,337 in Newcastle in 1984-85.

I could continue, but that would be unfair to the Front Bench spokesmen, who need the time to reply to the debate. I leave the House with the message that the debate may be taking place at a propitious time, but that we do not need any debate to sweep away Tyne Bridge's Tory candidate on Thursday.

6.35 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): We have had a good debate today on the problems of the northern region that have been created by the Government's policies. My hon. Friends have made genuine speeches about genuine people, and they have made constructive points.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand), who opened the debate with a magnificent and constructive speech. He talked about the development agency, which was in our 1983 programme and which the Social Democrats, two years later, have decided to follow, which is typical of the Social Democrats. My hon. Friend also made a point about aid for the arts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) discussed the problems in his area. My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) talked about the North-East County Councils Association and its report on the state of the region which all hon. Members representing constituencies in the northern region should read, if they have not already done so. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) discussed employment in the Tyne and Wear county and mentioned a northern development council. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) discussed the Tyne Bridge area and the city of Newcastle, which has tremendous problems. On Thursday, those problems will be drawn to the notice of the Government by the ballot box rather than by the brick as in other areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) talked about the problems in the county of Cumbria.

We have heard one or two speakers from the Opposition, and one wonders, having listened——

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Conservatives are not the Opposition.

Mr. Dixon: They will be shortly.

When I return to the north at weekends I wonder whether I am going back to the same area as before, because there is now massive unemployment and massive problems. It ill behoves some Conservative Members to lecture unemployed people in the north when they have two jobs themselves.

Our motion is about people who want the right to work but who are denied that right because of the Government's policies. It condemns the Government's deliberate policy of creating mass unemployment as an instrument of economic policy. Every week in my surgery I see out-of-work people who have suffered from the harmful effects of Government policies on family life. For the breadwinner, those policies mean acute financial hardship, worry and depression. For young people leaving school who are unable to find work, the effects are tedium and demoralisation, which in some cases lead to solvent abuse, to drug taking and eventually to crime.

Beyond Whitehall, in the northern region, there are real people living in the real world of bankruptcies and lay-offs. The region is the worst affected in mainland Britain, with 227,000 unemployed but only 11,000 vacancies.

We all welcome the coming of the Nissan plant, but, even if Nissan were to employ 2,000 people in a few years' time, it would take 120 Nissan plants to absorb the unemployed in the region. In its recent final recruitment phase, Nissan advertised 240 shop floor jobs at the princely wage of £6,700 a year—less than the sum hon. Members receive for their London accommodation. It expects 15,000 applications for those 240 jobs. That is the sort of thing that happens in the northern region. That is the truth about the north, not the nonsense that we have heard from some Tory Members and from the Minister.

In the north, we continue to have no control over our destiny. Since the Government were elected in 1979, more than 290,000 jobs have been lost in the region, and three in 10 of all manufacturing jobs have gone. In 1979, three quarters of north-east manufacturing employment was in firms controlled outside the region. Of the 43,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Cleveland, Durham, Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Cumberland between 1979 and 1982, more than 80 per cent. were in externally owned firms. Many of the larger companies in the region do not have local purchasing programmes, which means that they bring in their materials from outside the region. That does not assist the development of smaller companies or service industries. Many of the subsidiary firms that have been established are only production units, and we have discovered to our dismay that they can be shut at a minute's notice.

Many of the unemployed in the north are long-term unemployed. They suffer most from the brutal impact of unemployment. They suffer from severe poverty, desperate demoralisation, the loss of self-respect and the loss of self-confidence. The strains of family life become intolerable, and marriages break up. That is the reality of the Government's policy.

I wish to read a letter from one of my constituents. It is better than any speech I have heard in the House. It states:

"Please help me, through no fault of my own, I have been out of work for over a year now. I assure you, sir, I have tried. I have looked for work. Within the last year sir, I have had over 52 formal interviews within south Tyneside and out, including places as far as Dover, Hull and London. Some of these interviews I've even hiked it."

He probably took the advice of the former Secretary of State for Employment and got on his bike. The letter continues:

"Even whilst I write this letter sir, I promise you I am seeking fulfull employment. I feel despair, I feel degraded, no longer a member of the human race."

That is what the Government have done. That is what long-term unemployment means. Although one Minister talked about high wages being a problem, the director of the north-east region low pay unit, Al Rannie, claimed that more than half a million people in our area are low paid. The Minister talks about people pricing themselves into jobs, but what happens to the people who are priced out of jobs?

Of course, we relied on the traditional industries in our region for a long time. The steel industry at Consett, Hartlepool and Redcar has disappeared, and in Jarrow the last steel plant will close next year, with 240 men being thrown out of work without the hope of obtaining new jobs. The same thing has happened to the mining and power industries in our area. At one time, NEI Reyrolles of Hebburn employed 13,000 men and women. Indeed, the Labour candidate at the Tyne Bridge election, David Clelland, worked there for 22 years until he left two years ago. Only 2,000 people are employed there now.

One need only visit the River Tyne to see what has happened to shipbuilding. At one time one could walk from one bank of the river to the other across ships, but now there is hardly a ship on the river. It is no good telling the men that they priced themselves out of jobs. According to last year's financial report from British Shipbuilders, the Tyne shipyards made a profit of £13·3 million, so we cannot blame the workers on the Tyne for the problems there. It is economic nonsense to put a shipyard worker out of work. It costs £6,000 to put him on the streets, whereas the Government accept that it costs them only £3,000 in subsidies for each shipyard worker on the Tyne.

The shipbuilding industry is not dying. For as long as Britain is an island, it will need a shipbuilding industry and a ship repair industry to maintain its fleet.

We have heard a great deal from the Minister and from Tory Members about the new tech industries. I assisted my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) with a problem at Plessey, in his constituency. It paid off 600 people, and at the same time as we met the Prime Minister to discuss the matter, Plessey used Government grants to open a plant in Plymouth that will employ 600 people. That is an example of the problems with which we have contended for many years.

In addition to all our problems, regional aid has been cut. In 1984, regional aid to industry was cut by £28 million. The resources for the English Industrial Estates have been cut. Its money was frozen following the Government's decision to divert money to the west midlands, which resulted in the axing of plans to build much-needed factories in the north at a cost of £3 million. Schemes at Sunderland, Longbenton and in my constituency of Jarrow have had to be dropped. That is what has happened to the resources that the Government claim are being pumped into the north.

Local authority spending has been cut. For each of the past six years, the Government have cut financial support to local authorities, which are among the biggest employers in the area. The biggest employer in my constituency is south Tyneside council. Compared with the rate support grant of 1979——

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn) *rose*——

Mr. Dixon: Sit down. Go and take a car ride or something.

Compared with the rate support grant in 1979, Newcastle has lost £240 million and Gateshead has lost £123 million. That has been repeated all over the area. When the former Secretary of State for Employment talked about people getting on their bikes, he meant the young and active; but when they get on their bikes to look for work they cannot take with them community centres, old people's homes or libraries, which must be paid for by the rest of the people. Yet at the same time the Government are cutting resources.

Housing investment has been slashed. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) talked about housing. In Gateshead, the housing budget has been cut by £82 million, and in Newcastle it has been cut by £130 million. In 1979, when I was chairman of the housing committee of south Tyneside council, its HIP allocation was £14·7 million. This year, it is £6·2 million—*[Interruption.]* It is no good the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) looking at the clock. If his hon. Friends had not spoken for so long, we should have been finished by 7 o'clock. There is no way that I will sit down early.

Had south Tyneside maintained the 1979 figure, it would have needed £27 million in real terms this year. Those who desperately need assistance in the north are being denied it because of the Government's policy.

Adding to the devastation that their policies have wreaked on our communities, the Government, without inquiry or investigation, decided to abolish Tyne and Wear county council and remove the safeguard of a caring and active council that has been a powerful defender of jobs in public transport in our area. When one switches on the television and sees the Prime Minister shedding tears about her father, Alderman Roberts, losing his council seat because of the Labour party, one wonders how many tears she has shed for the hundreds of decent councillors who will be sacked because the Government wish to abolish the metropolitan county councils and the GLC.

The Transport Act 1985 has jeopardised the best transport system in Britain—the Tyneside metro. The Government have refused to guarantee that pensioners in the area will continue to be provided with valuable and much-needed concessionary passes. I challenge the Minister who will reply to the debate to guarantee that the concessionary passes held by pensioners in the Tyne and Wear area will be maintained.

The Government's new board and lodging regulations are a special insult to the young. On 13 November, *The Journal* in Newcastle carried an article headed,

"Young 'to be forced out for Christmas'."

It stated:

"Up to 1,000 youngsters in the North will be forced to leave their homes just two days before Christmas because of the new

[Mr. Dixon]

DHSS regulations on board and lodgings . . . Housing aid leaders throughout the region have condemned the new laws and say it will mean hundreds of youngsters wandering the streets looking for accommodation."

That is an example of what the Government have done to the area, and to Tyne Bridge, where the election will be held on Thursday.

Some youngsters went to the recent Tory party conference to present a petition about the board and lodging regulations. One of those youngsters was a Gateshead lad who lived in Tyne Bridge. In a letter——

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Dixon: I think that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) wishes to make an intervention. It will not take him long to find his place after the next general election. He will be back on the GLC if there is a chance for him there.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, the youngster in my constituency said:

"I am a Gateshead resident. I live here, my friends are here and my family live here, my life is in Gateshead. Yet the Government tell me to move to another part of the country every four weeks or lose my benefit."

My constituent then goes on to say—this is a message for the youngsters of Tyne Bridge——

"First they took our future, then they took our jobs, now they want our homes."

That is what the Government are doing to the Tyne Bridge area.

The by-election on Thursday will allow the people of Tyne Bridge to say what they feel about Tory party policy and about the Government's policies since 1979. As I said earlier, the people will decide and send their message via the ballot box rather than the brick. I have no doubt that on Thursday the people will do just that and sweep Dave Clelland in with a massive majority.

6.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): I recognise the depth of feeling and concern with which the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has spoken and which affects hon. Members who represent constituencies in the northern region. I have been in the Chamber throughout the debate and listened to all the speeches. I shall do my best to deal with as many of the points raised as possible in the time left to me.

There is general recognition that the region's problems are deep-seated and long-standing and that they have their origins long before the Government took office. The region has depended on traditional industries that have suffered setbacks over the past 20 years. World recession, technological change and market shifts have led to more than 200,000 jobs being lost. There has had to be a fundamental change from the old industrial pattern to new technologies.

The hope for the region's future is to be found in the new technologies and the second industrial revolution. Many of my hon. Friends have given examples of how progress is being made and new jobs created on these fronts. For example, 16,000 people are now engaged in electronics and 5,000 in pharmaceuticals. The £3 million CADCAM computer centre in Middlesborough will bring a further 5,000 jobs to the region.

I realise fully that the flavour of the impending by-election has run through many Opposition speeches today. For that reason, the Opposition are more than usually averse to hearing good news. But a volume of good news has been cited by Conservative Members who represent constituencies in the area.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) was the first hon. Member to be called after the Front Bench spokesmen. He began with a rather prim reproach to Labour Members for couching their assault in terms of the impending by-election. He then moved smoothly and characteristically into a strongly party political by-election speech of his own. He argued for the establishment of new businesses and suggested, as an example, that a fashion designer might establish new jobs in the area. That is a perfectly reasonable argument. He followed that with certain ritual arguments about new technology, but rather spoiled his case because his crash programme for establishing that was conspicuously uncosted. He concluded by making a plea for re-establishing a manufacturing base in the area.

That was the customary alliance specification for doing something for everybody and pleasing everybody who might listen to his speech. It was, in fact, the most overt of all the by-election speeches made this evening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) rightly drew attention to the advantages of the area in communications, industrial relations and the cheapness of land for industrial development, and he recorded his wish for a regional industrial executive for co-ordination. I understand that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has agreed to meet my hon. Friend to discuss that matter.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) made an extremely interesting point. He mentioned that in the 1930s there were many small family firms in the area and little unemployment. He recounted how the small firms had been swallowed up by the great combines and how small businesses had disappeared, resulting in an increase in unemployment due to their vulnerability to factors outside immediate local control. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that there are now 87,000 self-employed people in the region. That figure is more than 50 per cent. higher than when the Government took office and new business registrations are running at more than 5,000 a year. That figure, too, is rising and well exceeds business failures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), in an excellent speech, rightly drew the distinction between public and private money. He, too, drew attention to the strengths of the area—its cheap land, space for development and its loyal and efficient work force.

The hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) argued somewhat on the lines of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington, for a regional dimension. He referred to the North-East County Councils Association and the excellent work that it has done. I have attended meetings of that association in London. It always couches its arguments in a most temperate and constructive way, and certainly played a part in Nissan's decision to go to Washington.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant), also in an excellent speech, gave an interesting historical perspective on responsibility for the north's decline over many years. His catalogue of new jobs, however, was most impressive. It was significant

that the hon. Member for Jarrow tried to drown out my hon. Friend's recitation. That is a testimony to how uncomfortable the speech made the Opposition feel.

The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) at least made some attempt at a constructive argument, but when the unspoken question of where the money was to come from was asked, he replied that it should come from compulsory repatriation of sterling from abroad. I took that to be a slightly more exaggerated expression of the views which the shadow Chancellor formulated a month ago but which have since been discredited.

A splendid and robust declaration of war against the Cleveland county council was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who revealed to the House the political gerrymandering that blighted the flourishing of enterprise in his constituency.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was flagrant about the amount of expenditure that he wished to see. He expected an extra £1 billion to be spent on the community programme and an enormous nation-wide increase in public expenditure, but with the scrapping of Trident and enormous job losses in that work force. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) made a completely party political by-election speech with virtually no constructive elements in it whatsoever.

As I review the arguments of the Opposition, I find a depressing absence of any constructive solutions to the problems for which they are so ready to apportion blame. No solution has been offered which has not been tried before or is not tainted with the same inflationary and dirigiste dogma, the certain end result of which is to reduce the economic prospects not just of the region but of the whole United Kingdom and to undermine the efforts of those in the region who are seeking to attract new business and new jobs.

Many of my hon. Friends drew attention to the advantages of the area — communications, cheap land and lower housing costs. As for the qualities of the people, I can do no better than quote the words of the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) in the Adjournment debate on 22 October. He said:

"History has recorded the nature and character of the people. There are no doubts about their industry, tenacity and tolerance. There is an abundance of evidence of their adaptability and responsiveness to change." — [*Official Report*, 22 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 270.]

In the end, it will be those very qualities that will pull the region out of its difficulties into sustainable growth and low unemployment.

I invite the House to support the Government amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 280.

Division No. 15] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rhodes James, Robert
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the particular problems the Northern region has faced in the transition from old to new industries and fully endorses all the Government policies which have taken into account these particular problems in creating the proper basis for sustainable growth and thus lower levels of unemployment generally and, in particular, those policies

providing special assistance to the Northern region and deplores the Opposition's continuing attempts to undermine the efforts of those in the region seeking to attract new businesses and new jobs.

Silentnight plc

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. Speaker has selected the Prime Minister's amendment.

7.13 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I beg to move,

That this House gives its full support to the employees of Silentnight plc who are on strike; notes that the workforce of the company have shown great forbearance in the face of an aggressive and obdurate management, that the union agreed to forgo a claimed pay rise for three months in return for an undertaking by the company of no further redundancies, but that the company broke the agreement eight weeks later by declaring another 52 employees redundant and that the present strike was supported by a ballot of the workforce; condemns the company for refusing a union offer to submit the dispute to binding arbitration and for dismissing those on strike; further notes that the company's claim that it cannot afford a pay rise costing £210,000 in a year fits oddly with its ability to pay out dividends to family shareholders of £700,000; and calls upon the company to lift the dismissal notices and negotiate, and upon the Government to use its influence to bring an end to this dispute.

I begin by making it clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), deeply regrets his absence tonight and has asked me to put on record for the House and the Silentnight workers his regret that his duties have taken him elsewhere.

We have chosen to debate this dispute partly because we and the Silentnight workers want a settlement of this six-month dispute. We believe that if the Government were willing, they could use their influence to settle the dispute. We do not accept the Government's amendment and their suggestion that they find the dispute regrettable. If they did, they could use their influence to bring the dispute to an end.

We also wish to debate the dispute because of its wider implications. We want to know whether there are the kind of industrial relations the Government are now seeking. We hear much about a new atmosphere in industrial relations and about management's right to manage. We want to know whether the Government intend to return us to 19th-century industrial relations and to the bitterness and conflict that we see in the Silentnight dispute. We are all aware of examples of this style of industrial relations from our own constituencies.

In my constituency there was a similar bitter dispute that ended some months ago at Kenwal Brothers in Middlemore road. It lasted 19 weeks. It was a small textile workshop with appalling conditions and illegal rates of pay. The workers learned that the rates were illegal and that there were such things as wages councils which were meant to protect them. They learned of their rights, and it was not because the wages inspectorate came to inspect the offices. The workers joined a trade union. The owner conceded the minimum rates under the wages council and shortly afterwards deliberately provoked a dispute which lasted 19 weeks.

At the request of the workers, I was involved in meetings with the owner. He told me that he deeply regretted the dispute, that everything that he had built up in his working life was now lost and that he would have to sell up. Once the mostly Asian women workers at Kenwal Brothers decided that they could not go on with their strike, the owner reopened his business and took on more workers, as I understand it, at illegal rates of pay. Again the wages inspectorate has not intervened. We have

[Ms. Clare Short]

a strong sense of community in Ladywood, however, and the owner is finding it difficult to obtain enough workers. My hon. Friend could tell similar stories of a deterioration of industrial relations which the Government seem to describe as an improved atmosphere.

The Silentnight dispute has been going on for six months. It has caused enormous hardship to those who are on strike and has also caused the company's first loss. The half-yearly figures published in October showed an £828,000 group loss compared with a £1·1 million profit for the same period last year. The company, it seems, is willing to damage its financial interests as well as the livelihoods of its 346 workers, for purely ideological reasons.

The Government may wish to claim that the dispute has nothing to do with them. That is the implication of the amendment that they seek to move tonight. That claim does not stand up to scrutiny when we look at the record of the company, its involvement with the Conservative party and the record of Ministers and their entanglement with the company.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): The what?

Ms. Short: I shall come to what I am implying. Mr. Tom Clarke, who is a chairman of the company, is a member of the Conservative party and was until recently president of the Skipton Conservative association. His links with the Tory party got him an OBE from the present Government for services to industry. It also got him a visit from the Prime Minister — certainly a Minister — in 1983, who described him as "Mr. Wonderful". We want to know from the Minister tonight whether the Government still consider him and his industrial relations policy wonderful.

Even worse, in the Adjournment debate on 6 November initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) — we notice that he is not answering for the Government tonight and wonder whether that is some form of an apology — defended the management of the company and gave a misleading account of the dispute, taken, we believe, from a misleading company briefing published for the purpose of that debate. He made some wild and unsubstantiated allegations about violent conflict in the course of the dispute. Much of this was misleading and untrue. It is likely that some of it will be repeated this evening so my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley will deal with the allegations in some detail later.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): My hon. Friend referred to allegations of violence or intimidation —at least, that was the implication of her words. Is she aware that, after the 5,000-strong rally on Saturday in Barnoldswick in support of the strikers, Mr. David Marshall, the regional official of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union, was attacked and injured by two men with sticks? If pickets had attacked management representatives, right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Front Bench and every Tory newspaper in Britain would have been talking about or reporting acts of violence and intimidation. When union officials are on the receiving end of sticks, there is total silence from Ministers and Tory newspapers.

Ms. Short: I was not aware of that, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having put the matter on the record.

In the Adjournment debate to which I have referred, the Minister cannot claim that he was being impartial about the dispute and expressing the regret that the Government claim in the amendment that the dispute has been continuing for some time. He made no attempt to encourage conciliation and a settlement. Indeed, he said that the Prime Minister was right to praise Mr. Clarke, and added:

"We need more people like Tom Clarke." — [*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 103.].

I shall tell the House what the local newspaper, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): That is a good newspaper.

Ms. Short: —thought of the remarks of the Minister, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen. Its editorial of 8 November reads:

"What kind of employment minister is the one likely to appear more responsible — one who seeks to end a strike or one who fans the flames of the dispute?

We ask this because of the apparently crass and partisan behaviour of Rossendale and Darwen MP Mr. David Trippier, No. 2 at the Department of Employment"——

I do not know whether the Minister is No. 2 in the Department——

"during the Commons debate into the bitter, 22-week dispute at the Silentnight works at Barnoldswick, where some 500 employees were sacked after striking over a pay claim.

For we believe Mr. Trippier comes out of it very badly — in seeming to take sides and so wasting the opportunity to use his office to get both sides together. He is sufficiently experienced to know that no dispute is ever solved by intransigence, but his line in the debate can only prolong that attitude.

If his stance were prompted by a belief that the public generally does support governmental moves to curb over-reaching trade union power, he has made the mistake of going too far into the realm of pure union-bashing, something which, we believe, goes beyond most people's idea of political responsibility.

So in declaring his support for this employer and saying that the country needs more like it, Mr. Trippier overlooks the fact that firms cannot thrive in the atmosphere of polarised industrial relations and that it is the duty of a responsible employment minister to promote the alternative."

We hope that tonight we may get a rather different attitude from the Department of Employment.

The history of the dispute is well known. There have been articles in *The Guardian*, *The Times* and the *Daily Mirror* and a programme on Channel 4. That is quite remarkable for a relatively small localised dispute. It is surprising that it received such strong national coverage. Perhaps the reason is that the injustice is so gross. It is a typical example of the shifting mood in industrial relations which the Government seem anxious to promote.

In January 1985, the company asked the workers to forgo a wage increase for between three and four months to avoid job losses. The workers agreed to that. In April 1985, the company reneged on the deal and declared 56 redundancies. The workers accordingly requested their pay increase. The company refused and said that it could not afford to pay it. The trade union made inquiries to ascertain whether that was true and undertook some research. It found that the claim was false.

It found, first, that from January 1984 to January 1985 the company made a profit of £595,000; secondly, that the Silentnight group of companies made a profit of £2·5 million; thirdly, that the chief executive of the company,

Mr. Tom Clarke, received a £5,000 a year increase, bringing his salary to £50,000 a year; fourthly, that a family trust called Famco, which is composed of Mr. Tom Clarke and immediate members of his family, received £646,000 this year in dividends from group profits; and, fifthly, that it would have cost only £250,000 over 12 months to pay the members of the union their nationally agreed wage rise. These are the economic facts of the dispute.

In May, there was a ballot at the company on the refusal to honour the award. The result was that 352 workers voted for industrial action and 203 against out of a work force of 700. The ballot produced a 3:2 majority in favour of industrial action. The company remained obstinate and refused arbitration on a number of occasions. Despite what the company is putting out in its briefings and what the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen, said in the Adjournment debate, the union declared itself willing to go to arbitration in the absence of any terms. It did so because it was not possible to reach agreement on terms. The union has been anxious throughout the dispute to go to arbitration and the company has refused to do so.

As a result of the failure to come to an agreement, a go-slow started on 10 June. Again, the workers were anxious not to strike. They decided merely to take some action to promote negotiations with the management. Immediately the go-slow started, shop stewards were summoned by the management and told that if the workers were not working normally in 10 minutes, they would be suspended and sent home. The result was that 200 were suspended. The remaining workers walked out. Three factories came to a standstill and, in July, 346 workers received dismissal notices. They are still on strike.

Those workers want—and we want—the Government to use their substantial influence with the company to arrive at a settlement and get the workers back to work. Are the Government willing to use their influence in that way? Is the Minister willing to say that he thinks that the dismissal notices should be withdrawn and that there should be negotiations? If he is not, we are forced to conclude that this is an example of the industrial relations that the Government are trying to promote and that this is what they mean by management's right to manage. If that happens, we know that there will be more and more bitter conflicts of this sort throughout the land which will bring benefit to no one.

7.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"notes with regret the recent industrial dispute at Silentnight plc.".

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) started by apologising for the absence of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). If the turnout in the Tyne Bridge by-election is reduced from that at the general election, I am sure that he would not want all the credit to be given to him. If that is where he is, I hope that the weather is not too cold or wet.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): The Minister is wet.

Mr. Bottomley: I listened to what the hon. Lady had to say——

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Perhaps I should tell the House that my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) would like to express his apologies for his absence. He has been very ill in hospital and has undergone a major operation. He has not yet returned to the House. I think that his apologies should be recorded as the Silentnight dispute affects him and some of his constituents.

Mr. Bottomley: My words have been taken out of my mouth, but I suspect that that may happen on several occasions this evening. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

I am sorry but not surprised that some of the versions of the events preceding the dispute are not accepted on all sides. There are different points of view. As the hon. Lady acknowledged, with less elegance than I would have expected of her, the Government's amendment is neutral. We do not believe that to make such disputes matters of major party controversy helps their resolution. I do not think that it is useful if either side says, "We shall fight, fight and fight whatever the cost."

As the hon. Member for Ladywood has said, the House has had an opportunity to debate the matter. On 6 November, my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Under-Secretary of State, noted some of the facts. The report of that debate shows that some of the facts were disputed by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). We may hear more from the hon. Gentleman when he replies on behalf of the Opposition. Since the dismissal notices were issued, the company has said that it considers the dispute to be over. I am aware that many of the workers who were dismissed hope to bring their cases before an industrial tribunal, and we shall have to see what view is taken of these matters. I would not wish to anticipate or prejudice the tribunal's rulings.

It seems that there are three main areas where the facts are in dispute. During the early part of the year, when asking the work force to forgo any wage increase for a short period because of financial difficulties, the company said that it undertook to avoid any job losses if possible. The union claims that there was a no redundancy guarantee.

The union believed that the increases in the minimum rates provided for in the national agreement and finally conceded by the company after the ballot would be reflected in increases for all workers. The company believed that by that concession it had honoured the national agreement in full, and refused to extend the offer to pieceworkers.

Attempts have been made to put the matter to conciliation. I understand that the parties have not been able to agree to the terms of reference. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said on 6 November that the company had offered to put the matter to conciliation on

"terms of reference that were wholly impossible for the union to accept."—[*Official Report*, 6 November; Vol. 86, c. 102.]

I do not know what those terms were, but equally it could be said that the union could not accept conciliation on the terms offered by the company.

The hon. Member for Ladywood called on the Government to intervene and, in effect, impose the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service on the parties in the dispute. I remind the hon. Lady that it was a Labour Government who made ACAS legally independent of the Department of Employment. If I can

[Mr. Bottomley]

put it this way, they privatised it, or hived it off. Now they want the Government to renationalise it by telling it what to do.

Although the Labour party cannot seem to make up its mind, the Government have no doubts. Arbitration and conciliation can play a useful role in problems where both the employer and the union wish them to be involved. Both sides in the Silentnight dispute have had an opportunity to take advantage of the services of ACAS. They have failed to agree on what basis ACAS should be involved, if at all. How would we be able to solve that problem by forcing ACAS on them, even if we could? Governments cannot force ACAS on a party, but there are lessons that we can all learn from the sad events that we have been discussing tonight.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister trying to dissociate himself from the actions of the company? Do I sense that he wishes to condemn the company for what it is doing? Will he be more forthcoming?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, especially if it means that the hon. Gentleman will not intervene again but will wait to catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye to develop his own points.

We had a debate in which both sides of the argument were put. I do not believe that the Labour party was saying that all the right was on one side or that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was saying that all the wrong was on one side. Any reasonable reading of the debate will demonstrate that. I am trying to show those who are unfortunately involved in the dispute and those who may be involved in similar disputes that the solutions usually lie in their own hands.

In an industrial relations conflict, there are normally losers. Often the losers are on both sides of the argument. As many people have discovered over the years, it is better to resolve disputes before they become of interest to the House, the *Morning Star* or other newpapers. Once they become celebrated causes, things are normally lost on both sides.

We know that a ballot was held. I am glad about that. That is one of the few redeeming features of the sorry tale, even though the question on the ballot paper did not make it clear, as the Trade Union Act 1984 requires, that the industrial action proposed would involve the union members in a breach of their contracts of employment. The holding of a ballot can in no way protect workers from the consequences of following a course of action that cannot fail to put their jobs at risk. The Government's aim is to give union members the right to be consulted before taking that risk. In this case the union did not make its members fully aware of the possible consequences.

One of the lessons to be learned is that union officials have a duty to be open with their members and to lay all the facts and considerations before them.

Ms. Clare Short: They did.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady says in a quiet voice, "They did." She cannot deny that the question on the ballot paper called for support for action up to and including a strike. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) should stick to the terms of our agreement and keep quiet until I have finished my speech.

I strongly believe that employees can and must be told the truth and be responsible for their own decisions. They are in the same position as employers. If union officials, whether lay or full-time officials, fail in that duty they may sacrifice their members' jobs at a time when many people would be grateful for any opportunity to be usefully and gainfully employed.

I could go on at length and develop a theme that I think is important — keeping unit wage costs competitive. I shall leave that to the end if hon. Members are interested. If the hon. Member for Workington wants me to deal with that, perhaps he will ask during his speech, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is important not only for unions to be open with their members but for employers fully to inform and involve their employees in the running of the business. Employee involvement, workplace participation, building up trust and shared information between employer and employee is not an optional extra; it is the best way of doing business. It is also one of the ways, when developed over the years, to ensure that when an employer says something employees know that it is meant, and vice versa. Unions should be clear, not only with their members but with the employers.

Successful concerns are usually the ones that properly use the full potential of the people they employ. The better informed the work force, the less likely it is to take any action that would endanger its own prospects or the future of the company, or both, because they are normally bound together. Increased awareness leads to an increased sense of responsibility.

The hon. Member for Ladywood has mentioned the wider implications. In a broader context, the Department of Employment has produced figures that show that the number of working days lost through strikes last month was the lowest for 10 years. That is good news for all of us. With inflation falling, national output increasing and the number of people in work rising steadily, there is the opportunity for industry to compete effectively at home and abroad. That good news must not obscure or overlay the truth. Strikes will always put jobs at risks, as has happened in this sad case. There are seldom winners, and there are often losers.

In this case, the workers have lost their jobs and the management has lost part of its skilled and experienced work force. I do not think it is any comfort to the management, employees or ex-employees that the business is now being discussed in this forum.

The dispute could be seen as a throwback to the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s when unions thought that they could use power over employers, perhaps without thinking as deeply as they should or without due regard to the longer-term consequences.

Mr. Nellist: In defining this dispute in terms of robber baron trade unions holding power over healthy management, the hon. Gentleman should be aware that the union at Silentnight has been in existence for only 21 months. It was formed in February 1984 after months of attacks by management on the conditions and wages of the workers. It is not a plot by the union; it is the response of a work force that overwhelmingly admitted that in 1983 most of its members voted for the Government.

Mr. Bottomley: I shall respond to the hon. Gentleman in two ways. First, I think that he must have been listening to what I have said with his mouth rather than with his ears. I hope that he will refresh his memory tomorrow by

reading the *Official Report*. Secondly, I acknowledge that the building and organisation of a union is seldom easy and that building a business is never easy. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington interrupts again. He keeps making promises that he cannot keep. I suggest that he takes a course in business because he will discover that, both on the union side and on the management side, people saying things that they live up to is important. That may be one of the lessons to be learnt from the dispute.

The Government make no apologies for prodding the employers and the unions into the 1980s, reluctant though some may be to come along. We have given union members the right to be consulted before they put their jobs at risk by striking. The Labour party opposed giving union members the right to choose, and sometimes gives the impression that it is trying to obscure the consequences of their choice.

The dispute is also a throwback in another way. When the Government habitually intervened, in the days of beer and sandwiches at the 11th hour, both sides of industry came to believe that the Government could and would rescue them from the consequences of their actions. That belief fuelled bad industrial practices and irresponsible industrial acton. It would be damaging to recreate that atmosphere now when we have fought so hard to change it.

Last month, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary drew attention to the success of Silentnight over so many years, saying that that was because of the virtues of management and of work of the people employed in the firm. I hope that the future holds the prospect of continued profitability for the company, with all that that will mean for its employees and the local community. In our concern for those dismissed—people are concerned—we must not allow ourselves to be stampeded into any course of action that might destroy the real achievement involved in building up and establishing an important business. That achievement stems from a sense of individual responsibility, not reliance on Government, good communications over many years between management and workers, which was acknowledged in the article in *The Times* by the hon. Member for Blackburn, and their voluntary partnership towards a shared aim — the continued viability of the company and their jobs. That joint approach depends upon the freely given consent of employers and their employees, and not on directions laid down by Government.

Our general approach is not to intervene in particular disputes. After the debate last month, I do not wish to endorse either side's case in the unfortunate dispute that we are discussing. Our role is to seek to provide a general framework that makes for good industrial relations and minimises the danger brought about by such disputes for all concerned.

ACAS is available to conciliate and arbitrate and I understand that it has been ready to assist at any time should it be invited by both parties to do so. This is the right approach because disputes such as that at Silentnight are best resolved by the employer and the workers concerned. I regret that they have not been able to settle matters themselves without the loss of jobs and all the attendant bitterness that that produces.

7.42 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I am also sorry that the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) is not here. I know that he has been seriously ill. I hope that he makes a complete recovery and is soon back among us. The company is in his constituency. He knows it well and was associated with it, and I wanted to ask him some questions.

I wanted to speak in the debate because from 1974 to 1979 I represented the constituency of Nelson and Colne, which is now Pendle. There is at least one of Mr. Clarke's factories in Nelson and Colne. I was well aware of Mr. Clarke's activities, particularly his political activities on behalf of the Conservative party. He was known for being anti-trade union. The last things that he wanted in his factories were trade unions. He is on record as saying that if any of his factories were unionised, he would close them. The unions had great difficulties in getting themselves established in the factories, and one must ask: was he not waiting for the chance to smash the unions and return to being a non-union company? The Minister did not address himself to that matter. If he makes any more speeches like the one he made, he will be known as the Uriah Heep of politics——

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman should know.

Mr. Hoyle: If I should know, at least I have sat at the feet of your father-in-law. I wish that you had taken a few lessons from him——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He is not my father-in-law.

Mr. Hoyle: He is not your father-in-law, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I cannot go into your history, but I know that you have a proud record in many ways.

Unlike the previous Minister, the present Minister has not come out purely on the side of the employer. His was a more reasonable speech than that. He was not prepared to say that the company should go to arbitration, yet that followed from all that he said. He explained that ground rules have been laid down for trade unions, and they must hold a ballot before a strike. The union complied with that requirement. A ballot was held, and the ballot paper said that the union was asking permission from the members to take action leading up to strike action. The overwhelming majority of the employees supported the union. Given that the union did what the Government laid down, the least that the Minister could say to the employers, using his influence and that of his Department, was that they should go to arbitration.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I should like to correct the hon. Gentleman. He said that the overwhelming majority of employees voted for action leading up to strike action. It is true that it was a majority of those voting, but does the hon. Gentleman accept that the number voting in favour was 301 out of the total number employed of approximately 850? In other words, it was just over one third of the total number of employees, not the overwhelming majority.

Mr. Hoyle: The figure that I have is that 540 out of 800 gave the union the mandate that it asked for. The ground rules were obeyed, but the Government still criticised the trade union. It is no wonder that one has the impression that the Government are purely anti-trade union. They are prepared to defend anti-trade union companies. That is what Mr. Clarke's company is.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: I do not want to give way to too many hon. Members, but I always give way to those with knowledge of trade unions.

Mr. Thurnham: I should like to assure the hon. Gentleman that, in the opinion of trade unionists who voted Conservative at the election, the Government are not anti-trade union.

Mr. Hoyle: I can only say that not as many trade unionists will be voting Tory at the next election. They have learnt their lesson from the Government's actions. I am sure that many of those in Silentnight who voted for the Conservatives will not fall into that trap again.

The company said that it had a loss over the half year, but failed to explain that it would have cost just over £200,000 to settle the employees' claim. The company can afford to pay nearly £700,000 into a trust for the Clarke family. Indeed, Mr. Clarke is one of the highest-paid company directors in the United Kingdom. The company has been built up by the work force. Surely the rewards should be spread a little more evenly, some of it going to the employees.

Those of us who visited the two factories in Sutton and Barnoldswick noticed the different attitudes of the police. In Barnoldswick, there are good relations between the strikers and the police. Indeed, the police were commended. In Sutton, a small village in Yorkshire, we saw police with dogs trying to intimidate the strikers, although it is an official strike.

I hope the Government will think again, will see the justification of the strikers' case, and will say that the way the strikers have been treated is not good enough. The unions reached agreement with the employer that there would be no redundancies and that the employees would forgo a pay increase. When there was an announcement that there were to be rendundancies, 58 workers volunteered for redundancy. That was not good enough for the company; it would have only eight of those people. What happened later? When there was a go-slow the company said that the workers had to return to work and step up productivity. The company sacked 200 workers. If that was not provocation, I do not know what is.

Why do the Government take such a one-sided attitude to the dispute? It is said by some Conservative Back Benchers that the Government are not anti-trade union. If so, why do they not prove it? For once why do they not say that the employer is wrong? Why do they not point out in the House that the dispute should go to arbitration? If they do not, one can only reach the conclusion that there is one law for Mr. Clarke and another for trade unions. That is not the way to maintain good industrial relations.

Mr. Clarke's aim seems to be to starve the workers back to work and to smash the trade union. Is that what the Government want? They should come clean. We do not want any more statements such as we have heard about a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Let us have a clear statement that the Government will tell the employer that he should go to arbitration and let an independent arbitrator decide the merits of the case.

7.51 pm

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate because Silentnight is one of the most significant employers in my constituency. In January, before the dispute began, the company was providing jobs for 930 people in South Craven and West Craven. Approximately 200 of those jobs were in Sutton-in-Craven in my constituency and the remainder were at Barnoldswick, customarily referred to as Barlick for those who do not know. That town used to be in Yorkshire when I had the honour to represent it in the House.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that although administrative boundaries may change, it does not mean that geographical boundaries change? Places which were in Yorkshire stay in Yorkshire. Anyone born in Barlick may still play cricket for Yorkshire.

Mr. Watson: I am tempted to follow the red herring offered by the hon. Gentleman. What he has said is correct. For certain important purposes, such as cricket, the boundaries of Yorkshire remain unchanged.

Following the vagaries of the boundary commission, Barlick finds itself in Lancashire where it is represented with distinction by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), to whom I spoke on the telephone earlier today and who will be back in his office on next Monday.

The impact of Silentnight upon the local economy in Craven has been enormous. Both Sutton and Barnoldswick have suffered from the decline of the textile trade generally since the war. In addition Barnoldswick has seen a large reduction in the number of jobs in Rolls-Royce. Craven is not a natural distribution centre for Britain, and we cannot usually offer generous regional aid, yet unemployment in Craven is no higher than the national average and it tends to be slightly lower than the regional average. In large measure that is due to the jobs provided by Silentnight.

The rise of Silentnight since 1950 has insulated the area effectively against the decline in other industries. It is illusory to believe that such growth was just a happy accident. It occurred largely because of the commercial and marketing skill of Tom Clarke. It would not have happened if the owners of the company had not declined to take any dividends until the company went public in 1973. It would not have continued if the Clarke family had not waived over £1 million worth of dividends since 1973 to support the capital base of the company.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend has spoken about the decline in the textile industry. Does not the example of Laura Ashley show that we are not short of entrepreneurs who can find growth opportunities and that there are plenty of opportunities if only people will look for them?

Mr. Watson: My hon. Friend is correct. Silentnight is an industry immediately adjacent to textiles. It has been an adequate replacement for the textile industry in my part of the country.

The dispute in the factory, uncharacteristic of the company's history, is of major concern to all in the community. I am sure hon. Members on both sides of the House will understand that my concern as a local representative is solely to try to ensure that the dispute is ended as quickly and amicably as possible. Therefore, I need to question what possible purpose can be served by the debate.

It will not have escaped the notice of the House that I am not a member of the shadow Cabinet, but few prizes need to be awarded for guessing the discussion which led to the motion being put on the Order Paper. I suspect that

a sincere desire to end the dispute was probably not the most prominent factor. My guess is that instead the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will have given it as his opinion that it is a political opportunity to embarrass the Government.

Throughout the dispute I have had the doubtful privilege of hearing a number of speeches from Opposition Members. I do not make the allegation against all of them, but upon hearing quite a few of them, I have been left with the simple conclusion that they do not like successful people, rich people and particularly rich people who are friends of the Conservative party.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I ask the hon. Gentleman the same question as I asked the Minister. Does he condemn what has happened? Does he condemn the approach adopted by Mr. Clarke? Does he feel it was wrong?

Mr. Watson: I am coming to the brief history of the dispute.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We do not want the history; we want an answer.

Mr. Watson: The hon. Gentleman will have a full opportunity later to participate in the debate.

Some aspects of the management's handling of the dispute in the early stages left a considerable amount to be desired, but from the mid-point of the dispute I do not believe that such allegations can be made against the management of the company.

It is apparent that some Opposition Members like ballots for strikes which result in support for strike action; above all, they like to have an opportunity to embarrass the Government. I do not doubt that such sentiments are sincerely held, but they are unlikely to be of much constructive use in settling the dispute.

I have followed the dispute closely from the outset. As I have just acknowledged, I am forced to agree that in the early stages the management's conduct left something to be desired. The quality of communication with the employees was inadequate. Communication by management with the media was minimal. Areas of doubt were allowed to arise when positions should have been absolutely clear. However, what was very clear was the company's letter of 4 July to all employees. Similarly clear was the letter of 17 July. Those letters left the strikers in no doubt that employees who did not return to work on 22 July would be in breach of their contract and would be dismissed.

Of course, such information should have been included on the ballot paper. It was not. All credit should be given to the management for bringing that fact to the attention of its employees before the crucial date of 22 July. Originally there were 490 strikers. After 22 July there were still 350. Apparently the union had advised its members that the management was bluffing. Clearly that advice was incorrect.

Opposition Members have made clear the terms upon which they would like to see the dispute settled—all the strikers should be re-employed; a significant pay rise should be awarded; and only a small number of redundancies, all voluntary, should be allowed to take place. I honestly wonder just whose interest would be served by a settlement on those lines.

Of the 350 strikers, 100 have obtained jobs elsewhere. Presumably, they would have little interest in such a settlement. Of the 350 jobs previously filled by strikers, 200 have been filled by new employees. Many of them are now permanent.

Mr. Nellist: Scabs.

Mr. Watson: The hon. Gentleman says, "Scabs." Having honestly taken up an offer of employment, those employees would be out on the streets——

Mr. Nellist: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that pressure has been brought on unemployed workers by local jobcentres? They were told that if they did not accept the vacancies advertised at Silentnight they would lose their dole money. I would condemn pressure being put on workers to take such jobs, and I ask them not to do so. Will the hon. Gentleman ask the Government and the Minister why the jobcentres are being used as pressure points to protect that employer?

Mr. Watson: I cannot understand how the hon. Gentleman can regard that as pressure. By their own hand, the employees were dismissed in July. Their jobs became vacant and were advertised. I fully understand the attitude of a jobcentre manager who says that unless someone is prepared to fill such a job eligibility for social benefit would be lost. What about the 570 Silentnight employees who are not on strike? Would their long-term interests be served by a pay award higher than the company can afford to a work force greater than it needs?

Finally—and I ask this question with care—what about the Labour party's interests? There was a rally in Barnoldswick last Saturday which was attended by 2,500 people, most of them, apparently, from outside the town. Well over 50 per cent. of the people carried the newspapers, banners, badges and insignia of the Militant Tendency. One placard stated:

"Tom Clarke you rich scumbag we will get you."

The violence and picketing at the Sutton mill in my constituency has been alarming and dangerous to the residents of the village. For the Labour party to ally itself so closely with a cause fought with such tactics must call into question the validity of the current Labour campaign against militants within its ranks.

Industrial action against the company has not succeeded, and it is unlikely to succeed now. The most honest advice that can be given to the strikers who still sincerely hope for their jobs back is that such action can serve little further purpose. The only thing which will bring higher pay and more jobs at Silentnight is a return to the company's previous prosperity.

8.2 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I say at the outset that my right hon. and hon. Friends will support the motion. I say that because, when I make some critical comments, it may well serve me in some good stead if those around me realise that I shall be supporting the motion. There is instinctive sympathy for the underdog. Having considered the facts of the case, there is no doubt that the balance of right and justice lies with those who are on strike and out of work.

It would not be wise to follow the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) and look for ulterior motives for this motion. One of the problems of politics is having to try to avoid looking at what is in people's hearts and minds and rather to listen to what they say. If

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

the debate is to help the position in Barnoldswick or Sutton-in-Craven, it is desperately important to take on trust what people say and not to try to look for something behind what they say.

It will not serve the cause of the people involved in the industrial dispute if Conservative Members who offer some sympathy and who criticise some of the decisions are permanently barracked by Opposition Members. That is then seen as a sign of weakness. It is difficult to see what the debate can achieve if such entrenchment continues. It will do no good for the strikers and those involved in the dispute if we merely assert that one side is totally right and one is totally wrong.

The dispute seems to illustrate, only too vividly, the antiquity of many of our industrial relations procedures and the problems that exist out in the sticks in places such as Barnoldswick and Sutton-in-Craven. This kind of dispute and problem is repeated in many parts of the country. Such disputes are outside the ordinary processes of big business and the conglomerates, which in some ways are detrimental to the processes but which can often deal with them because they have the skilled personnel.

As soon as the dispute is taken over by people who want to make something of it, the position becomes entrenched. It ceases to be a matter which can be easily bridged. The second stage is the escalation of the dispute. There are those people who wish to make something more political out of it and try to say that the dispute illustrates all that is wrong between labour and management.

Thirdly, we have the exploitation of the dispute by those who wish to make political capital out of it. That is not just true of the far Left as the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon said; it is equally true of the far Right. Any suggestion that the blame is all one-sided is to the detriment of resolving all the great difficulties that exist in this microcosm of what is wrong with our industrial relations.

The dispute illustrates vividly the danger of giving party accolades to those who may appear to be temporarily successful in business. We have seen that with the Government before, with Sir Freddie Laker. We now see it with Mr. Tom Clarke. If any lesson is to be learned, it is that we should take care when giving a pat on the head to such people.

I suspect that the dispute has a history of promises that could not be kept or were not intended to be kept. There is an argument about the terms of arbitration and a refusal to refer the matter to ACAS. The Silentnight management's refusal to refer the matter to outside independent arbitration stands out. I had expected to hear from the Minister rather more positive advice to the management to refer the dispute to ACAS. Even the Minister regretted that there had been a failure to refer the matter to arbitration.

I find intolerable the antipathy to unionism shown by Mr. Tom Clarke and Silentnight's management. History has shown that it is a benefit to us as an industrial nation to have good labour relations. I am sure that the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon is aware of that from his experience of Waddingtons. We shall only have success as a nation if there are good relations with the trade unions and an acceptance of the legitimacy of having union officers inside a business to deal with the day-to-day problems that occur. I cannot accept the firm's apparent failure to accept unionism. I also find the company's lack of openness about its financial status reprehensible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Like most people, I regret that we are debating a particular company's dispute. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman could help the House by supplying some information from those who are on strike and those who have been dismissed. He speaks from somewhere in the middle. Were they led to believe that the management was not in earnest when it said that if they did not return to work they would be dismissed?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I understand from those who are on the spot and who have advised me that the workers accepted at face value what they were told about the company's financial state. They then felt themselves betrayed by the dividend paid to the family. I suspect that that was one of the factors that exacerbated the dispute substantially. The workers felt that the financial status of the company was not on the table for all to see. I suspect that that was a running sore in the dispute, which has become worse ever since.

At first I, like the Minister, pondered whether this was a proper and helpful subject for debate. If we concentrate our minds on business relationships and trade union status, we may learn lessons from the debate which will be helpful in other disputes, even if they are not constructive for the Silentnight dispute. I suspect that Tom Clarke miscalculated the consequences of his actions regarding the financial openness of the company. In saying to workers, "We must have 52 redundancies, and you must forgo a pay increase because of the company's finances," and later providing huge dividends to his family, he must have wholly misconceived how the work force would respond. That has contributed greatly to the dispute.

The matter is not entirely one-sided. A newspaper report states:

"There was never any trouble until they got the union in. The strikers will tell you that."

That comes from *7 Days*, which is a new Communist party newspaper. It was prepared to say that, and to examine the dispute carefully. The most balanced account of the dispute may well come from that newspaper. It is important to recognise that the matter is not one-sided, and that there are problems across the company floor. *[Interruption.]* I paused for response because it was bound to come.

What will happen now? How can the dispute be resolved? I share the anxiety of the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon that it is not sensible to threaten to sack the new workers. One may call them names, say that they should not have accepted the jobs in the first place, or refer to the duress that they were under, but the solution to the dispute is not to sack those who have now been employed permanently. We should also bear in mind that a significant number of those who were originally on strike have found new jobs.

It is desperately important that both sides of the House should unite on one view, if on no other: we should recommend Tom Clarke and the management to refer the dispute openly and without strings to ACAS. The problem has been exacerbated, but one way to heal the rift may be to recommend that course of action.

We should learn that such conflicts benefit no one. Three hundred and fifty-two people have lost their jobs, and the profits of the company have turned to losses. No

one has benefited. It is dangerous to believe that we can resolve such problems by legislation alone. I do not believe that we can pass laws which ensure good relations between management and the work force and change people's hearts and minds. Those in management must take workers into their confidence, and workers must trust management and be prepared to accept that they have a joint relationship which works co-operatively rather than adversarily. If we learn that lesson from the debate, we shall have learnt a great deal.

8.13 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): During the past few months there have been many questions and early-day motions on the Order Paper on this subject, and we recently had an Adjournment debate about it. I am appalled at the way in which Silentnight or any other company, and Mr. Tom Clarke or any other family, can be and have been attacked recently. Some Labour Members have used the dispute to make attacks on a company and individuals who have absolutely no means of replying effectively.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the hon. Lady declare her interest?

Mrs. Peacock: I shall declare my interest in a moment.

I am also appalled that such attacks on a company can be made in the House, whatever the issue. Such action cannot be helpful either to the company or to those who have lost their jobs.

It is disgraceful that hon. Members should make attacks on members of a family who are not involved in the company. They may be shareholders, but they are not directors, with the exception of Mr. Tom Clarke. The members of the Clarke family cannot defend themselves. As Members of the House of Commons we may from time to time wish to take up issues on the affairs of a particular company or an individual, but we should not attack members of a family who are not directly involved in the issue.

At this stage I shall declare my interest. I have a Silentnight company in my constituency called Lay E Zee which has a large factory in Batley. I am the National Bedding Federation parliamentary consultant, and a small shareholder in Silentnight. I have not met Mr. Clarke or any member of his family during the past 40 years.

Mr. Nellist: Did the hon. Lady say that she was the parliamentary adviser to the National Bedding Federation, and that she has not met Mr. Tom Clarke for more than 40 years? Is it not a fact that Silentnight is the biggest single member of the National Bedding Federation? What sort of job is she doing on its behalf if she has not visited its largest company?

Mrs. Peacock: I have not met Mr. Clarke or his family for the past 40 years, and I have contact with the National Bedding Federation.

I am in a unique position in the House. Forty years ago, as a seven-year-old schoolgirl, I used to pass Mr. Tom Clarke and his wife in his corner shop repairing mattresses. He lived in a small, humble district of Skipton, which is where his large business started. I remind Labour Members that they do not hold the monopoly for humble beginnings. Many Conservative Members and company chairmen know only too well the problems and tribulations of a shaky start in life.

Mr. Clarke may have been lucky, and he may have been in the right business at the right time, but he is an entrepreneur, who for many years has been able to back his judgment and build up a good, thriving business. Hon. Members should not forget that he had to work hard during those 40 years. An analysis of how the business has been built up shows clearly that it can be attributed to his entrepreneurial flair, and, more important, the willingness of the Clarke family to leave their money in the business year after year.

I do not intend to get involved in the rights or wrongs of the dispute. However, I wish to point out that 700 people at the firm are working hard to complete full order books and to put it back on profit before the end of the financial year.

There have been accusations that no pay rise was forthcoming and that the family shareholders received £700,000 in dividends. That is not correct. For the trading year 1984, workers at Silentnight received a 5·5 per cent. pay increase, or £5.25 across the board per week. In that period the interim dividend was 1p per share. The final dividend for that year was 1.75p per share, which makes a total dividend during that period of 2.75p per share. That was not an increase on the dividend paid the previous year, and it is hardly a great killing for investors. For the year 1985, while an increase in minimum rates of pay was agreed, no interim dividend will be paid. That is hardly a massive payout for the small investor. We need to invest in our manufacturing base.

It is interesting to note that Silentnight merchandise is today sold at prices similar to those in 1979, and that is hardly a massive increase of profit. Hence the need for product innovation and strengthening of the market.

It is also quite useful to note that any increases in minimum rates of pay do not automatically trigger off other increases. The Silentnight factory at Barnoldswick appears to be the only major company on the two sites that has had problems in this matter, even though it stance is in line with that of other manufacturers.

We must all have sympathy with those who were on strike and have lost their jobs. That cannot be wished on any individual or his family.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I ask the hon. Lady the question that I have asked two previous Tory speakers. Does she condemn the management for what it has done? Does she believe that what it has done is in any way wrong, or does she support it? The National Bedding Federation has a number of members, and many of Silentnight's competitors have condemned what has happened.

Mrs. Peacock: As my hon. Friends have said, the hon. Gentleman will have his opportunity to take part in the debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What is the hon. Lady's position?

Mrs. Peacock: The important point to me is that this business exists at all and——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What is the hon. Lady's view?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not keep shouting questions from a sedentary position.

Mrs. Peacock: The business has developed over the past 40 years to provide employment.

I know Barnoldswick and Sutton-in-Craven well and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) said, Silentnight has created jobs in an area that has seen a decline in the textile industry. Silentnight has grown over the years and provided employment for people in areas that badly need employment.

We should not forget that the main reason for the growth of Silentnight is that the Clarke family has had faith in the bedding industry, in the marvellous work force in the districts, and in the company, and has left its money in the business. I would go so far as to suggest that over the years the family could have sold those shares to an investment company in the City and lived a life of ease and luxury, but it did not do so. It chose to invest in the local work force.

It is grossly unfair of Labour Members to attack a family in this way when its members cannot reply. It might interest the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to know that the National Bedding Federation was not aware of the debate taking place and no approach was made to me. Britain depends on entrepreneurs for our manufacturing industry and we need those who are prepared to work hard and to develop the business and jobs. The sooner that Labour Members get that into their heads, the better.

8.22 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We should make it clear that Labour Members have good reasons for wanting to raise this issue. Unlike Liberal Members, we are not in a quandary as to what to do at the end of the debate.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am not in a quandary.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is already intervening. I can tolerate the heckling, although his hon. Friends do not like it. He seems to spend his time hiding away from the leader of the SDP, reading Communist literature and finding himself unable to speak clearly on behalf of a group of workers who, in the main, are on low pay.

The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) said that he could not understand why the Labour party had tabled this motion for debate. There are several reasons for this. In the first place, we are dealing with an area of Yorkshire and an area in Lancashire that are, by and large, areas of high unemployment. When we talk about the real issues in Britain today, we cannot avoid talking about the misery of the dole queue. These two factors, in areas where hitherto there were many textile mills and other forms of employment, are now experiencing a factory owner who is exploiting the situation. As there is high unemployment, especially among the Asians, he is carrying out the Thatcherite policy right down to the letter.

Secondly, we are concerned because, as these are areas of high unemployment, the almost natural corollary is that they are areas of low pay. The Labour party has to be seen, even if the Liberal party is not, to make it plain to the rest of Britain that we are concerned about those people who are not getting £170 a week as average wages—that is the figure that is usually trotted out by the Treasury Bench —but about people who have difficulty in making ends meet even when they are in work.

The third good reason why we should argue that it is proper and right for a debate to take place on this subject is that these workers have carried out trade union legislation to the letter. The Under-Secretary of State for Employment claims on most subjects to be a wet, and he did not know how to disguise that fact when he made his opening speech. He now shakes his head to say that the unions did not carry out the legislation to the letter. I can tell him that the unions have carried out the letter of the law much better than some of his friends in Johnson Matthey plc, including his relatives.

The unions have carried out the law to the letter and they have been penalised for holding a ballot. If any trade unionist should be listening to the debate or reads our words in *Hansard*, I suggest that if he should ever want to strike, and carry out the Tory legislation to the letter and have ballots, the chances are that the Prime Minister and all those on the Treasury Bench will trample him and his union into the ground just the same.

The Government will call on one of their Mr. Wonderfuls. Mr. Clarke happens to be an example of this. Eddie Shah was another — the Prime Minister used to meet him after conferences. She thinks well of those in charge of Grunwick, and of Freddie Laker and of all the others. She has a champion in the United States—she is about the only woman in Britain who has the nerve to call Ronald Reagan her champion, but he represents values similar to those set out by Mr. Clarke. They are the values of a philosophy that is already dead — the idea that somehow or another monetarism is working. The Government back Mr. Clarke because he is one of that dying breed that is trying to give the impression that it is possible to operate market forces and to use workers like pawns on the chessboard.

Mr. Watson: This dead and buried philosophy has provided 930 jobs in my constituency over the past 25 years. What would the hon. Gentleman have put in their place?

Mr. Skinner: Many people in similar occupations are having difficulty in using their ability to bargain. They are also representing their case because while they are allowed to join the trade union under the Tory party legislation, with wages policies based on the mass reservoir of unemployment, the Prime Minister and the Government are saying, "We will give you the freedom to join a trade union, but, by God, do not exercise any power when you have done so." That is why the hon. Gentleman has to toe the Prime Minister's line. He has no choice because if he does not he is out on his neck.

We are proud to be able to represent these workers, because it is a small union. It is not one of the giants but a little union, the membership of which consists of a few people producing furniture. It would like to have many more members, but while the Conservative Government have been in power, factories have been closed all over the country. That does not mean that the Labour party will not support that union, however small it may be. Even if the Liberal party does not know where it stands, the Labour party knows that it has a duty to tell people that this small union, which has members on low pay in an area of high unemployment, has a right to be heard in Parliament.

That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) moved an Adjournment debate on this matter a few weeks ago. He was castigated by the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That is why this

dispute is being raised twice in the course of a few weeks. The Labour party wants this dispute to be known about by the electorate.

At Barnoldswick on Saturday last I had one of the most pleasant surprises of my life. I have taken part in most demonstrations in Britain. On Saturday last 5,000 people invaded that little town. It was a pleasure to see them. They came from every part of Britain, including Tory marginal constituencies. They recognised the values that I have tried to explain. The demonstration at Barnoldswick had not been greatly advertised. I had not been billed as a speaker; if I had, there would have been 10,000 demonstrators. It was wonderful to see those people at Barnoldswick. The few people who were still out on strike after 26 weeks probably thought before last Saturday that they were on their own and that they were isolated. However, hordes of people from the trade union Labour movement made their way to Barnoldswick to take part in that demonstration. They recognise what this dispute is all about. That is why we must maximise our vote this evening.

We want this matter to be raised outside Parliament. We want the British people who have not yet heard about this 26-week strike to know all about it. However, although hon. Members are not supposed to talk about it, there are some absentees from the press gallery. I can see only three or four members of the press up there. The role of the media is despicable. It supports the Tory Government in all industrial disputes. Its role in supporting the Tory Government over this dispute is even more despicable. There is the classic ingredient of small Davids fighting a mighty Goliath who put £700,000 into his own pocket but who refused to hand out about £200,000 for a wage increase.

The Under-Secretary of State said at the beginning of the debate that the Government will wipe their hands of this affair and will have nothing to do with it. The Government say that they do not interfere in disputes of this kind. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) is in the Chamber. He knows that the Government interfere when it suits them. The Government say that they do not interfere in the industrial economy, although they are smashing it to smithereens. However, when it comes to bailing out banks like Johnson Matthey the Government do not need to put down amendments. They say to the Treasury, to the Bank of England, and to all those who represent their values, "Go and bail out that bank. It's in trouble." Then someone asks, "Is Johnson Matthey a pit? If it is, close it." But the Chancellor of the Exchequer says, "No, I think it is a bank." So the Prime Minister says, "Save it. Even if it is an uneconomic unit of production, it does not matter; save it. Even though it has no reserves, like a pit, save it." The Under-Secretary of State has had the cheek to come to Parliament, to slobber all over the Treasury Bench and give the impression that this Government do not interfere. But they interfere when it suits them. They used £1 million of taxpayers' money to bail out Johnson Matthey, but they do not have the guts to intervene in this dispute and treat these families decently before Christmas.

Mr. Bottomley: Does the hon. Gentleman say that the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service was set up to do what the Government told it to do, or does he believe what his right hon. Friend the Member for Blenaeu, Gwent (Mr. Foot) said: that it ought to do its work at the request of the employers and the unions concerned?

Mr. Skinner: If this Minister had the guts—he has not—he would see to it that a call was put through to ACAS to ensure that three or four weeks before Christmas something is done about workers who have been on low pay for donkeys' years and who have now been on strike for 26 weeks. Little kids are involved. Some would call it child abuse by Mr. Clarke and this Government. He would ask ACAS what it was going to do about it. He could say to ACAS that it has a machinery and an appeal procedure. When Johnson Matthey asked for help because all its money and all the Caribbean holidays had gone, the Government stepped in and bailed it out by using taxpayers' money.

We are not asking the Government to use taxpayers' money on this occasion? We are asking them to do the moral and decent thing, to give these families a chance before Christmas. The Prime Minister sheds no tears for them. This woman, who is supposed to be the architect of the family unit, is not bothered about all the little toddlers whom I saw in Barnoldswick on Saturday. There are no tears and no sweets for them at Christmas. The Labour party will put that right.

One of the reasons for the debate is to highlight this matter for the nation. We want to ensure that each of those families, notwithstanding what the Government and Mr. Clarke have done is fed—not just at Christmas but until this dispute has reached a decent and honourable conclusion. It is only three months since the Government found £350 million of taxpayers' money to bail out the Export Credit Guarantees Department which had been fiddling for donkeys' years. I do not say that under privilege; I have said it outside Parliament and I shall repeat it there.

This Government have the cheek to say that they do not intervene. A few weeks ago they bailed out the European Community with £252 million of taxpayers' money. There is a litany of Government intervention over many years, using taxpayers' money to do so. We are not asking the Government for money. This dispute is about wages. The Government showed their hand when these people went on strike. They were forced into it. This Government marched their troops through the Lobby to give an average increase of 17 per cent. to all those who are on top salaries, but it was impossible for £200,000 to be allocated between about 800 workers.

The Government talk about freedom. They have hijacked the word. There should be freedom for those who work in these two factories. They have done everything according to the law, yet they have been kicked and battered by their employer, with the connivance of the Government. This is the latest example of the Government's attack upon the trade union movement. Their treatment of the workers at GCHQ was bad enough, but the mineworkers and many others have suffered under this Government.

I call upon hon. Members and those outside Parliament to recognise this dispute. I call upon the trade union movement to take action and to feed these families. I call upon every local authority that is under Labour control to black all the firms that go through the gates of that factory. There are plenty of them. There must be a commitment that a future Labour Government will stop the grants that

[Mr. Skinner]

are given to Mr. Tom Clarke. I bet some other bedding manufacturers would not be altogether unhappy if they heard that.

Yes, we must be selective, like Mr. MacGregor. If the other side can be selective, what is wrong with us doing the same? Yes, 26 weeks is a long time in a family's life with a little union to support them. The Minister can do a job for himself today if he wants. He can be smart and clever. He can just hope that the vote will be successful so that he can move on to another day and the matter can be forgotten, or he can do something decent for a change. He can get on the phone tomorrow morning and speak to the people at ACAS. He can say that there is an opportunity. He can tell them to settle the dispute before Christmas. He would not be intervening in any great way if he did so. He would just be acting decently for a change. Why does he not do it? He should act like a Minister instead of acting like the Prime Minister's puppet.

8.40 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I do not speak as a constituency representative of any of the workers involved in the dispute, but I met and had discussions with the leaders of the strike committee a couple of months ago and I have followed the weekly reports in *Militant* which contained interviews with strikers and regular details of the problems that they are facing.

The immediate cause of the dispute was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). It was the management's refusal to honour an undertaking on redundancies and the refusal to give a rise on basic rates for piecework. The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), who speaks in the House on behalf of the National Bedding Federation, said that the workers had been given a £5·25 pay rise. It is because they were offered only 55p as opposed to £5·25 that a work to rule was begun in June. If the hon. Lady worked out the cost of 700 workers in Silentnight receiving £5·25 a week, she would arrive at the figure of £210,000 to which many Labour hon. Members have referred.

Twelve months ago the management at Silentnight sacked 88 workers. At the beginning of this year it gave a guarantee that if the work force postponed for three to four months the acceptance of a wage rise there would be no further redundancies. That guarantee was broken in the summer.

Despite attempts by Tory Members to portray the opposite, the work force is not naturally inclined to militancy. Most of the workers at Silentnight said that before the start of the dispute they voted Tory in the general election. They formed the union branch only 21 months ago, in February last year, after successive annual cuts in their wages. Many of those sacked had worked in the firm for more than 10 years. Many had worked there for between 20 and 25 years. One worker, Trevor King, has worked there for 27 years. Only a few weeks ago he was rewarded for his loyalty to the firm by being presented by the management with a tankard. He sent the tankard back. The last thing that he wanted after 27 years of loyalty to a firm was to be insulted with a tankard when he and his colleagues were forced into the street by a strike to defend their wages and working conditions. That was the attitude of workers before the strike, but those attitudes are very different now.

The workers have taken up all the constitutional alternatives on offer. They have had a secret ballot which produced a majority of 151 in favour of a work to rule —354 in favour and 203 against. On 22 July Clarke responded by sacking over 500 workers. ACAS was involved, but there seems to be no sign that the management intends to climb down.

In addition to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), there is another little message that we should like to send from the House of Commons to the management of Silentnight. The dispute has widespread support among working-class people and their families throughout Britain. Reference has already been made to the 5,000 people who supported the workers in Barnoldswick on Saturday 30 November in a march and demonstration. On that occasion the regional organiser of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union, Mr. David Marshall, was attacked and injured by two men with sticks. Had that been an attack on a member of management by pickets, the Press Gallery would have been full of people looking for quotes from Tory Members about violence and intimidation, yet nowt is being said about that attack on Mr. Marshall.

Mr. Waller: Emotions have run high in the dispute, but I condemn any attack on a trade union leader or member by anybody. Will the hon. Gentleman also condemn the well-documented cases of strikers having attacked people who have been at work? Will he do that without leaving any room for doubt?

Mr. Nellist: When the hon. Gentleman makes his speech——

Mr. Waller: Answer.

Mr. Nellist: The hon. Gentleman has asked me a question. At least he should allow me to use my own words to answer it rather than the ones that he wishes to put in my mouth. When the hon. Gentleman makes his speech, he can bring forward any information or allegations that he wishes to present and they can be the subject of debate. I have raised the documented question of an attack on a regional full-time official of the trade union and put forward the perfectly proper argument, having sat through all the debates on the miners' dispute, that if it had been a picket attacking a manager, the Press Gallery and Tory Benches would have been full and there would have been talk of violence and intimidation. Instead there has been silence on the attack on Mr. Marshall.

Mr. Waller *rose*——

Mr. Nellist: I shall move on now in order to allow the hon. Gentleman time to make his own contribution.

On Saturday 30 November, 5,000 people marched in support of the Silentnight work force. Many earlier demonstrations had taken place beginning with a demonstration of 1,000 workers on 27 July.

As has been said, during the dispute many unemployed workers in the area have apparently been told that their dole will be stopped if they turn down one of the 500 jobs now being classed as vacant at Silentnight. When the Minister replies, he should say whether that has Government approval. Are the jobcentres being turned into Government organisations for scab labour to break

official trade union disputes? If he were to say that, Labour Members would not be unduly surprised. That is precisely the role of the mass unemployment which the Government have planned over the past six years. It is a political weapon to cow the mood and morale of trade unionists in order to attempt to force them to accept drops in their living standards. Another reason why we would not be surprised is the clear link between the Government and the Tory management of the firm.

We have already heard how the chairman of the firm, Mr. Tom Clarke, when visited in 1983 by the Prime Minister, was described by her as "My Mr. Wonderful". I can imagine why that would be. Anybody who can amass a personal fortune of between £50 million and £60 million and then refuse to pay workers a decent pay rise would be described in that way by the Prime Minister. It is no surprise to hear that she said that Britain needs hundreds of Tom Clarkes. That is precisely the Victorian attitude that she tries to develop in Britain—screwing everything out of workers and being hell bent on attempting to smash trade unions. It is the old idea of the master sitting at the table and the workers begging at the gate.

That is the sort of attitude that the Prime Minister, the Government and Mr. Tom Clarke would like to bring back. Hon. Members may think that that is a little sharp or excessive, but why have the dividends remained at the £1·2 million which were distributed last year to the shareholders of Silentnight? More than half went to the company called Famco whose shareholders are Tom Clarke, with 766,255 shares; Joan Clarke, Tom's wife, with 349,000 shares; Peter Clarke, Tom's son, with 183,000 shares; John Clarke, Tom's son, with 174,000 shares; and Mrs. J. Burns, Tom's daughter, with 124,000 shares.

The total dividend, at £644,771, was three times the amount that it would have cost to honour the wage agreement that the parliamentary spokesman for the National Bedding Federation has assured the House was on offer to all the workers of Silentnight. One third of the family dividend would not only have made sure that the dispute would not have occurred, but would have given the workers what their parliamentary representative said was on offer to them.

Mrs. Peacock: If the hon. Gentleman will check in *Hansard* tomorrow the statement that I made, he will see that I said that the 1984 rise was 5·5 per cent., or £5·25 across the board, and that the dividends announced in February and July of this year applied to trading in 1984.

Mr. Nellist: That is right. The dividend announced in February of this year was £1·2 million, over half of which went to members of the Clarke family. As I said, one third of that would have paid all 700 workers at Silentnight the wage claim for 1985 of £5·25 that they had been told was on offer.

Another connection should be mentioned, and I appreciate that the hon. Member for the area, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) is in hospital. I understand from reports on television and in the *Daily Mirror* that he has 2,000 shares in the company. Perhaps through the columns of *Hansard* I may ask the same question that has been asked of all Conservative Members who have taken part in the debate: does the hon. Member for Pendle approve of the actions of the management of Silentnight? Does he intend to divest himself of those 2,000 shares, or does he intend to profit from the sacrifice and upset of the families of the workers at Silentnight?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Give the money back.

Mr. Nellist: The hon. Member for Pendle had a preface, as it were, to the dispute that we are discussing in that in 1979 he received a letter from the then joint group managing director of Silentnight. The management was asking the hon. Member for Pendle whether he would support the urgency of withdrawing payments from the families of strikers. The managing director said in a letter to the hon. Member for Pendle:

"The Conservative Government is bound to have some problems with the unions, if only out of bloody-mindedness, and a lack of finance available to the families of the moderates would help stiffen their resolve to get back to work and influence the militants. From a strategic point of view, this particular move could very well be taken earlier rather than later."

One should not be accused of being paranoic in thinking that perhaps the management of Silentnight, in conjunction with the local Tory MP, was planning in advance to attack the conditions of workers in that firm and was planning in advance for the financial and political support that it would need from the present Tory Government to make sure that penalising the workers on strike would be such that they would be forced through starvation back to work.

The hon. Member for Pendle replied that he thought that the management of Silentnight was "absolutely right" and added:

"We must get through our more controversial legislation in the early stages of this Parliament. My impression at the present time is that we are going very cautiously on the whole trade union front, but I take your point about withdrawal of payments to the families of strikers."

There was a clear implication there that the Tory management of the firm and the local Tory MP were for several years preparing to attack the work force of Silentnight, making sure that legislation to penalise the families of workers forced ....o such action went through.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Do I take it from my hon. Friend's remarks that the Conservative Member for the area is in receipt of 2,000 shares? If that Tory Member is a junior Minister, my hon. Friend is making an extremely serious accusation, one that will have to be looked into.

Mr. Nellist: I believe that it would be outside the bounds of order for me to comment on such an allegation; perhaps a breach of procedure would be involved. I understand that the hon. Gentleman in question has 2,000 shares in the company. That has been reported on television and a statement to that effect appeared in the *Daily Mirror* six weeks ago. He has not renounced either the shares or the accusation that he owns them.

I do not know what the benchmark or bottom line is in relation to recording those shares in the Register of Members' Interests. When I looked in the Library this evening, they were not mentioned in that document. Perhaps it is for the registrar of that register to contact the hon. Member concerned.

Mr. Watson: To clear the name of the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), it is perhaps necessary for me to point out that he indeed owns 2,000 shares in the company concerned but that he bought them personally, that he bought those shares before he became

[Mr. Watson]

the Member for the constituency concerned, that he was not given the shares, as has been implied, and that the implication of what the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is saying is that no Member of Parliament should ever hold shares in any constituency company, nor should he reply to any correspondence that he may receive from such companies.

Mr. Nellist: Being a relatively new entrant to this place, it was clearly not I who set the rules applying to Ministers and shareholdings. Those rules were set long before I got here. However, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) for confirming that the hon. Member for Pendle has 2,000 Silentnight shares, as was reported in the *Daily Mirror*.

The Silentnight strike is now official. It also has the backing of the TUC conference in September, and I look for increased support from TUC-affiliated unions to aid those workers. The management attitude is not only hardening the attitude of many Silentnight workers. I notice that 70 production workers at Lay E Zee, the firm in West Yorkshire to which reference has been made, a subsidiary of Silentnight — previously a non-union firm — have now joined the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union because of the attacks on their brothers and sisters at Silentnight.

Mrs. Peacock *rose*——

Mr. Nellist: I will not give way because I wish to complete my remarks.

Enormous support is being generated throughout the country as a result of strikers travelling to factories, trade union meetings generally and Labour party meetings. Rochdale Labour party raised £1,000 in the first three months of the dispute for Silentnight strikers and their families, and many thousands of pounds have been raised in collections elsewhere.

Crucially, this dispute is not just about money. I agreed wholeheartedly with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. Indeed, I had intended to spend the last few minutes of my contribution making a similar appeal for the collection of toys for the kids at Christmas and for clothes and money for the families of the strikers at Silentnight.

But, with respect to my hon. Friend — though I support him wholeheartedly—he will agree that all the mechanisms for keeping the strike going, honourable though they are, in the final analysis are less important than increased industrial support to end the strike as soon as possible with victory for the work force.

With that in mind, I am pleased to report that not only dockers at a number of ports, such as Hartlepool, are questioning the timber imports for Silentnight from Sweden, and not only are most drivers who have crossed the picket lines non-union—the company is spending a fortune hiring one-man operated hired vans from as far away as Aberdeen and Stevenage—but the strike is now affecting the share price of the company. A few weeks ago it went down to 29p.

With all the publicity in the past few weeks about that fellow T. Boone Pickens from across the water and the corporate raiders and sharks, it occurs to me that the lower the share price of Silentnight, the more attractive the company may become to some City financiers. They may say, "This bloke Clarke is running what would otherwise be a reasonably good company. Why do we not take advantage of the driving down of the share price, take the firm over, sack the scabs, re-employ the workers and return to the profits that the firm has made in the past?" That is a tempting proposition for some of the City sharks.

From February to August of this year the company has lost £820,000 compared with a profit of £1·1 million in a similar period last year. The Silentnight management is devastating the company.

The dispute will be won. I spoke of national support, but there is more than that. Manchester north-west region and the Royal Arsenal Co-op — the co-ops are the biggest customers of Silentnight—and most of the co-op associations have already blacked Silentnight beds. I hope that the many local Labour parties will contact their co-ops to ensure that similar resolutions are passed.

Discussions on the dispute take place not only nationally, but internationally. During the past 10 days, the Sri Lankan trade unions have been discussing the need to black the fibre essential for the production of Silentnight beds. Dockers in Sweden have agreed to black timber. Today, I heard that Bekaert, a major multinational in Belgium, following approaches from its trade union organisation, agreed during the weekend to stop supplying Silentnight with its important mattress ticking. The trade union movement is gearing up, not only nationally, but internationally. Workers are coming to the support of the families of Silentnight. The more effective the blacking, the sooner the strike will end.

I appeal to those listening and to those who will read the debate in the columns of *Hansard* not to allow to fail the sacrifice of the hundreds of families who are fighting a classic example of a Victorian stalwart employer. Adopt a family in the run-up to Christmas. Send money, clothes and toys. Crucially, trade union solidarity from the Transport and General Workers Union and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers is needed to bring this Tory-supporting gaffer, clone of Ian MacGregor, to his knees. Tom Clarke is not a fit steward to run a company such as Silentnight. He cares nothing for the workers of the company. For him, profit is god.

The workers of Silentnight have created the wealth in the company. The Clarke family converts that wealth into the dividends that they receive from their share ownership. The Clarkes are filching the wealth that the workers of Silentnight create. Labour unreservedly supports those workers in their struggle against that management.

9.2 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): It has been said that we should not be having this debate tonight, but I do not accept that. It is important that this issue should be debated again. I regret the fact that the matter needs to be debated, because I would have hoped that the Government would have taken action to try to get both sides together to resolve the dispute. Our main concern is the position of the 346 strikers and their families. We wish to see them back at work, reinstated, and an acceptable resolution of the dispute.

With Tom Clarke as chairman of the company, there will be no resolution of the dispute unless pressure is brought to bear and someone decides that action has to be taken. We do not accept that the Government cannot

intervene. We do not accept the view that they should not say to ACAS, "Try to get both sides together and resolve the dispute."

We must remember that one company within the group has received Government assistance. That highlights the fact that the Government will give financial assistance to companies without asking how those companies use it. A few weeks ago, the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told me:

"Information about some of the grants made by the Department is published quarterly in 'British Business'. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not the usual practice to give any further information about grants to particular companies. 'British Business' of 22 June 1983 recorded an offer of regional selective assistance of £350,000 to Lay E Zee Ltd., a subsidiary of Silentnight Holdings."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1985, Vol. 84, c. 462.]

The answer implies that that is not necessarily the entire picture and that other grants may have been paid to the company which the Minister is not prepared to disclose.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) mentioned an article in *7 Days*, which stated that the strikers claimed that there had been no problem before the union became involved——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Where is he now?

Mr. Pike: As my hon. Friend says, there is no Liberal or SDP Member in the Chamber. That is not unusual when important matters are being debated.

The article in *The Guardian* last Friday made it clear that a major reason for the growth of trade union membership was that there were problems before the trade union became involved. The workers at those factories could not take action to resolve those problems, and the membership increased rom 28 to 500 in 1984, when there was a two-week strike over that year's pay settlement. I know for a fact that there have been problems on that site for many years. Indeed, a common feature of each annual pay increase has been that part of the increase was immediately recouped by setting new piece rates and time rates. With many trade unionists, I believe that, if we accept pay rises, they should be consolidated and fully effective on all elements of pay settlements. When I have been involved in negotiations, I have never been happy about increasing some elements of pay but saying that the increase does not apply to others.

Whether the Minister likes it or not, the ballot slip showed clearly that it related to the 1985 pay settlement. Although management and the unions may have different views on that, it is clear that that is what the dispute is about.

Several initiatives have been taken to resolve the dispute. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition tried to involve ACAS through my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful. A few weeks ago, the trade union members at Silentnight met Labour Members, following which a letter was sent to the Prime Minister on 13 November asking her to meet a delegation of hon. Members to discuss the problem at Silentnight and hoping that she would recognise the problem, try to influence matters and get both sides together. It is remarkable that the only reply that they have received to date has been from the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary. It states:

"In the Prime Minister's absence from the office, I am writing on her behalf to acknowledge your letter of 13 November which I will bring to her attention as soon as possible."

That is disgraceful. We need some action to get matters resolved.

Mr. Waller: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that efforts made before this Government were elected to resolve disputes by calling in the parties to No. 10 Downing street proved notably successful, or does he accept that, since that policy was abandoned, we have had fewer disputes and they have been resolved far more quickly?

Mr. Pike: There have been fewer disputes under this Government because, since 1979, when the Tories defeated the Labour Government on a platform of returning to free collective bargaining and the removal of pay policies, they have used the worst possible weapon against the British working people—unemployment.

I was a trade unionist and I worked in a factory until 1983. I worked shifts, so I know what factory workers think and I appreciate their situation. At Silentnight, 346 workers are out on strike. The Opposition want to remedy that unacceptable situation.

In the Adjournment debate on 6 November, the Government chose the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) to reply. I do not know why they chose him as the matter seems to be within the brief of the Minister dealing with the matter today, who was in the House on that day and could presumably have replied to that debate. I can only assume that the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen was chosen to reply in an attempt to influence the political situation in north-east Lancashire —an attempt which failed, because the response from the Minister was appalling and the debate did not have the desired result. The Minister's reply to that debate was extremely provocative and in no way conciliatory. Reference has already been made to the comments about it in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* later that week.

A large part of the Minister's reply on that occasion was based on a Silentnight press release issued the previous week. The Minister denied that, but I had a copy with me and could have quoted word for word certain sections of his speech. The Minister was provoked at one stage to say that most of his information came from ACAS, but I am sure that ACAS would wish to dissociate itself from a large part of what he said.

In his reply to that debate the Minister said:

"I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Burnley said at the outset of his speech. It is with genuine sadness that I find he has raised this Adjournment debate at a time when my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who knows more about the background to the strike than the hon. Gentleman or the hon. Member for Blackburn will ever know, is in a hospital bed recovering from a serious operation."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 105.]

In opening that Adjournment debate, I extended my good wishes to the Minister in hospital. We all regret that he is still ill. We hope to see him back in the House soon, but in all honesty I must say that it is absolute nonsense to allow the fate of the Silentnight strikers to await his return. On that basis, I could argue that because my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is now in hospital recovering from a minor operation we should not have had the debate today as I know how much he would have wished to participate. North-east Lancashire seems to be a distress area for hon. Members, as the hon. Member for

[Mr. Pike]

Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) is also out of action. I am sure that the whole House hopes that all three hon. Members will soon return.

I cannot accept that the Under Secretary of State for Defence Procurement knows more than my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn or myself about the dispute. I am prepared to accept that he may know more about Silentnight's position in the dispute than either myself or my hon. Friend, but that would not be surprising as he is a shareholder in the company and has been a paid consultant for the industry in the House. If the hon. Gentleman was earning his money as consultant to the industry, it is only reasonable to assume that he would have had some knowledge of the industry. In my view, however, he has no idea whatever about the position of the trade union in the dispute. He has made no effort to meet the trade unionists or to do anything on their behalf. Very early in the dispute, he met Tom Clarke on behalf of the union, but when he came back he simply shrugged his shoulders and said that it was not possible to make any progress. If a member of the Conservative party who has a close relationship with the chairman of the company cannot make any progress, one realises the difficulties involved.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In many Conservative associations in the Lancashire area—especially in Bury, Bolton, Rossendale, Hyndburn, Accrington, Blackburn, Burnley, Todmorden and Sowerby — members are divided about the Government's attitude to the dispute. Many believe that the Government should intervene. They will be studying the *Hansard* report of today's debate because they were expecting condemnation from their Members of Parliament, some of whom are present, and from the Minister. The Minister may indeed already have expressed that condemnation in his earlier remarks.

Mr. Pike: I agree with my hon. Friend. Members of the trade union who were at Burnley town centre collecting for the strikers confirmed that many Conservatives had made donations. Conservatives are probably telling their local Members of Parliament they they are already likely to have great difficulty holding their seats at the next general election because Labour will almost certainly win Pendle, Hyndburn, Rossendale and the rest, but that if the Government do not change their line on the dispute and try to achieve a sensible solution it will be a waste of time to fight the next general election at all.

Even if the Government fail to take any action to resolve the dispute, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) and the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson), who was present earlier in the debate, could have approached Tom Clarke and tried to act as intermediaries if they were genuinely concerned about their constituents, who have now been on strike for nearly six months. During an extremely difficult strike at a factory in my constituency just after the general election in 1983 I was asked by the union to act as an intermediary. Although I clearly had some relationship with the trade union side, I was able to go back and forth between the two sides and within a week we achieved a compromise package. I do not deny that certain people on both sides were not fully satisfied with the agreement. Nevertheless, the package was accepted and the dispute was resolved. In the present dispute, the two Members of Parliament do not have that relationship with the trade union but they have a relationship with the management. If they were truly concerned about their constituents they would have tried to bring the two sides together to resolve the dispute.

We have been told on several occasions that to settle the pay claim in full would cost between £205,000 and £215,000 in a full year. Yet the family took £644,000 in dividends. The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) may say that that is irrelevant, but it is impossible to claim to trade unionists that their pay claim cannot be met when such massive dividends are taken by shareholders.

Mr. Nellist: The dividends taken by the family amount to three times the sum needed to settle the dispute. Yet the family, in the shape of Tom Clarke, claims that it cannot afford to meet the pay claim. Tom Clarke and his family have a personal fortune of between £50 million and £60 million. Is it not rather odd for a managing director to claim that he cannot afford to pay the workers when he has that amount of money himself?

Mr. Pike: That is exactly the point that I intended to make. We accept that Tom Clarke, his family and the family trust own 52 per cent. of the company as well as having massive capital wealth. It is amazing that they can say they cannot afford to pay out the full settlement that was claimed in this dispute.

We accept that the profits of the company, in the results published to May of this year, show a pre-tax profit of £2·233 million which was down on the previous year's figure of £5·239 million. I accept that, at the present, it is losing money but the management has to accept responsibility for its present position. The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon referred to the fact that dividends were not paid from 1945 to 1972. That is irrelevant and misleading, because the company's structure as it is now did not come into being until 1973. To judge whether the hon. Gentleman's statement is fair we would have to analyse what payments were made within a personal capacity prior to that date. We do not believe that the company paid £60 million since 1973—the money has been accumulated over many years. One cannot look at that factor in isolation.

Mr. Thurnham: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appearance on the Front Bench. If Opposition Members think they know how to run this company better than the present management why not help those out of work because of this dispute to start up on their own and do better?

Mr. Pike: I shall not waste my time responding to that point. I accept that this company was built up from small beginnings. It was started just after the war in Tom Clarke's back yard with his wartime gratuities. This does not give Mr. Clarke the right to go back to Victorian-style management — as if it were the 1880s rather than the 1980s—and follow a policy of scant regard towards his employees. We cannot accept that and I do not believe that the Government should do so, although I do fear that this type of management is epitomised by the policies of the present extremist Right-wing Government.

Tom Clarke has said — this has been referred to already—that he would rather see the factories close if he was unable to smash the unions. That is a different view from the trade unionists. Even now, after six months,

when one would expect the trade unionists to be bitter, they would like their jobs back and they would like to see those factories in full production.

The management may claim that it is getting many goods out of the factory. I was at the factory in October when there was a demonstration outside. There were vehicles going backwards and forwards and in the space of about 10 minutes it was made to look as though there were many goods coming out of the factory. The same vehicle passed us three times. In that time, it could not get around the corner and it certainly would not have had time to deliver anything.

The management may not wish to admit it, but it is getting a high percentage of return of goods produced at the present time. At the end of the day, the one thing that a customer wants when buying goods is quality as well as goods at the right price. If the management is prepared to send out sub-standard products then that company will not survive.

I wish to refer to some items that were in the company press briefing given out a few weeks ago. The first concerns the ballot.

The company said in its press release that the unions

"did not report to their members that the management had reviewed financial information with ACAS and the Union which showed the company was losing money."

The union conveyed as much information to its members as it was permitted to do. When it met the representatives of ACAS with the company's management, the trade unionists were told, "This information is confidential and you cannot convey it to your members. It is for your information only." They were able to divulge only a small amount of the information. More important is that, when the trade unionists received the information, it left them even more convinced than before the meeting began that the company was able to pay their wage claim. Far from proving that the company was losing money and was unable to meet the terms of the pay offer, it convinced the trade unionists that their demand was fair and reasonable.

The company claimed also in its press release that the

"Union did not spell out the position under current legislation that . . . if they were to be dismissed"—

that is, the workers—

"they would not be entitled to unemployment benefit, and were likely to have recourse to an Industrial Tribunal."

That follows on very much from the argument advanced by the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen, in the Adjournment debate on 6 November when he referred to the ballot. He said:

"the question on the ballot paper did not make it clear, as required by the Trades Union Act 1984, that the industrial action proposed to the membership would involve them in breaching their contracts of employment. Furthermore, the ballot paper referred generally to the 'action of the company in refusing to honour the 1985 pay award for the bedding trade' which is a highly partial account of what the strike action, which eventually followed, was about."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 104.]

The Minister's statement and that of the company highlight the folly of the Trades Union Act 1984. If the relevant question is put to trade unionists in the way that the Government suggest, it will be seen as biased and an attempt to produce the result that the Government want. That cannot be fair. The parallel is if the Tory party were required to face the next general election by declaring that if elected a Conservative Government would introduce further cuts in housing expenditure, increased prescription charges once more and many other measures that would generally be unpopular. Clearly that would be nonsensical.

The Tory party wants ballots only if they will produce the answer that it wants. It looks only for the right result from its point of view. Over the weekend, the Paymaster General referred to the Transport and General Workers Union and the way in which it appoints its national executive. It is a pity that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not refer to the other place and explain that its members are unelected.

The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen, alleged that violence had taken place on the picket line when he replied to the Adjournment debate on 6 November. I have visited the picket lines at both factories on a number of occasions. I have seen no evidence of violence on the part of the union. The Government and the management regret that the trade unionists who are involved are sound and sensible people who have put their case clearly, concisely and properly wherever they have been throughout the country. Their case has been well presented, and they have received tremendous support.

When I have been on the picket lines I have seen acts of confrontation on the part of some of the drivers of Silentnight vehicles who have been passing through the factory gates. Some of the drivers of the buses that have been bringing in the scab workers who are still there have been guilty of deliberate provocation. These drivers have provoked the strikers deliberately by stopping their buses in front of the strikers' hut. I have seen the police, especially at Barnoldswick, speaking to these drivers. I have heard them say, "Move on. You are trying deliberately to cause a disturbance."

Within the past few weeks a driver jumped out of a Silentnight vehicle, armed with a stick. Another man left the vehicle with a chain wrapped round his fist. They were moved on from the Barnoldswick factory almost as soon as they got out of their vehicles. They were not allowed to do anything. The position was not the same at Sutton-in-Craven, where a caravan which was used by the pickets was deliberately broken up. The police stood by and watched that happen. That is a fact. They refused to intervene. Another picket's house was broken into and all his windows were smashed by people who are currently working at the site. It took over 45 minutes for the police to respond.

I do not condone violence from any side. I never have done and I regret that violence. Let us make it clear that if there is violence at the moment all the signs of that violence are on the side of the people who are working, not the trade unions.

The debate today has been different from the Adjournment debate a couple of weeks ago. The significant difference is that Conservative Members who have spoken have been unable fully to justify the company position. I hope that the Government will recognise that the most important priority is to get the workers back to work. My fear is not only for the workers, who will be out of work for a long time unless something is done, but if the management win, it will be a clear signal that the Government take no action to try to resolve such disputes. It will be a clear sign to similar management throughout the country as a whole. The Government will be telling managers that they can act in that way and they will support them. I hope that, even now, the Government will

[Mr. Pike]

step back from that and use their powers to obtain a reasonable and acceptable settlement. We want both sides round the table and ACAS involved. I do not believe that the Government can wash their hands of the matter.

After the Adjournment debate, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* displayed the headline, which has been referred to on more than one occasion:

"This is not the way, Minister".

I hope that the reply given to the debate tonight does not allow the same comment to appear in the press again.

The amendment moved by the Government seems to put the dispute into the past tense. It calls it the "recent industrial dispute". It is the existing dispute. It is still there and it is not resolved. The Government's amendment does not recognise that. In all sincerity, I hope that the Government recognise that something must be done. The dispute must be sorted out. We want those workers back at work and a return to sanity and good trade union-management relations.

9.32 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I join the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) in sending our best wishes to those not among us who would have been here if illness had not kept them away. The hon. Gentleman mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). The hon. Gentleman is also right about trying to get people to reach agreements themselves. The Opposition have been split, between those who genuinely want settlements in such disputes——

Ms. Clare Short: Nonsense.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady says, "Nonsense." Some people would like to keep the dispute running so that they can continue to appeal nationally and internationally. When people read the speech of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), especially people in Barnoldswick, they will wonder whether he is on the side of conciliation all the way through or whether he prefers to exploit a situation that has had the tragic effect of some people going on strike and others losing their jobs.

Mr. Madden: The Minister represents a Department which, before the establishment of ACAS, had a proud record of mediating and resolving industrial disputes. I hope that he does not spoil that. What the Minister said earlier was in marked contrast to what was said by the then Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he spoke in reply to the Adjournment debate. We understand that the Minister cannot require ACAS to do anything. Will he give an undertaking that he will contact ACAS urgently and ask it to contact the parties to see whether terms can be agreed to get a settlement? Will the Minister give that undertaking here and now, and not spoil his earlier excellent contribution when he condemned the way in which the management of the company has conducted the dispute, particularly in its early stages?

Mr. Bottomley: I have not condemned the management, and I have not condemned the unions. I have tried to spell out some of the facts. The hon. Gentleman will be fully aware that it is not necessary for me to ask ACAS to see whether it can get agreed terms. If it helps, I shall say now to the House, and people on both sides of the recent dispute and in ACAS, who may be listening, that I hope that it is possible for people on both sides to come together and for ACAS even now to try to get a way forward that can be agreed. I hope that even if the dispute is a past dispute, some of the people who have lost their jobs will find employment.

I want to go a stage further. I want to ask the Opposition whether they are willing to accept the amendment tabled by the Government as a way of showing that they are not keen to take only one side, as their motion does. It states:

"That this House gives full support to the employees . . . who are on strike".

I know that the Labour party is split, but if hon. Members believe that it is better to try to create an atmosphere that allows people to start talking about the terms on which they would come together, I suggest that they have consultations during the next 25 minutes on whether they are willing to accept the Government's amendment, in order to give a freer field to those who might be able to bring the two sides together. I understand that the Labour party is split and that many hon. Members would have preferred it if the strike had not taken place. When it did, I am sure they would have preferred the union to take people back to work when they realised that the strike was not going to have the desired result. Even now people believe that creating the right atmosphere would be better than to go on with the motion which, by its own words, is totally one-sided.

Ms. Clare Short: We in the Labour party are proud to say that we support the workers in the dispute. The management has been absolutely intransigent. It has refused arbitration, yet the Minister says that he thinks that arbitration is desirable. We are saying that we want a settlement. The workers want their jobs back. If Mr. Clarke was a decent employer, he would negotiate. We are asking the hon. Gentleman, as a Minister representing the Tory Government, to pick up the phone, speak to his Tory friend and tell him to negotiate a settlement of the dispute.

Mr. Skinner: Go on. Do a Johnson Matthey and bail them out.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has made various references. I am tempted to go on with the Tea Room conversation and inform the House of some of our conversations in the Television Room during the Olympics before last. If the hon. Gentleman provoked me really far, we might discuss our behaviour in a car at Battersea power station on an occasion or two. It is just as relevant to the debate as what the hon. Gentleman is alluding to, but I might be able to keep quiet about it, unless I had his permission to speak in public. I return to the point that I was trying to share with the Opposition — *[Interruption.]* In parentheses, I should like to say that I do not think the hon. Gentleman needs to advertise either his services or mine.

The Labour party has said that it gives full support to the one side in the recent dispute. I want it to accept the Government's amendment. Unless Labour Members believe that there is no point in trying to help the employees and ex-employees, the management and the owners to come together under agreed terms of reference, they should drop their motion and accept the amendment. The hon. Member for Burnley is aware——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is not the "recent" dispute.

Mr. Bottomley: "Recent" could be interpreted as the start of the dispute, if that helps the hon. Gentleman.

If the hon. Member for Burnley wants to provide an atmosphere in which people can start talking about talking to each other, it helps to take the partisan nature out of the debate. My contributions to the debate follow those of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in the previous debate.

Various facts and differences of view were set out then, some of which have been repeated by Labour Members tonight. I have tried to do as the hon. Member for Blackburn requested, when he said that he wanted an even-handed approach — he has got it — to strikes and industrial relations law. He went on to call for strengthened conciliation and arbitration. The first part of the role of ACAS is advice, then there is conciliation and, finally, arbitration, if the parties agree to it. The hon. Member for Blackburn wanted a climate in which the use of such machinery was encouraged. The speeches of the hon. Members for Bolsover and for Coventry, South-East were not conducive to creating such an atmosphere. It might have been better if the parliamentary interests had been awake and started talking before July.

It is commonly accepted that at the time of the ballot just over 60 per cent. of those who voted were for strike action. I want to get the wording of the ballot paper absolutely right:

"Following the action of the Company, in refusing to honour the 1985 Wage Award for the Bedding Trade, it has been decided following pressure from the shop floor, through the Shop Stewards Committee to hold a Ballot to indicate the wishes of the membership whether or not to get involved in a course of Industrial Action.

Please answer the following question below, by putting a cross in the box of your choice.
Do you wish to take industrial action up to and including if necessary strike action?"

Ms. Clare Short: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Bottomley: If one wants to be precise, it does not provide the reminder about breaching the contract of employment.

After that ballot, when the vote went in favour of taking action up to and including strike action, my understanding is that the offer was made to meet the national award. I believe that is common ground.

Ms. Clare Short: After they had voted for a strike.

Mr. Bottomley: That is what I said. I am glad the hon. Lady is still with us in following through part of the dispute.

After the ballot and after the company had agreed to meet the national award, there was a dispute about whether the company should or would provide the follow-through so that the agreement applied to piece rates as well. When the company said that it would not, the strike continued. Many unions, and perhaps even members of the same union, would have considered very seriously at that stage whether or not a continued strike would be successful. The hon. Member for Burnley, with his experience, knows that there are times when continued action leads to a better result, times when it does not, and times when people have to make judgment about whether they should continue on strike.

Mr. Nellist: Does the Minister accept that in the summer the workers at Silentnight were being told that the company could not and would not carry through the pay negotiation because it could not afford it? At the same time the workers knew that the chairman of the company was worth £50 million. It is not surprising that the lads and lasses at Silentnight should say, "He can afford it, and we will have it." A company worth that amount of money says that it cannot afford the pay rise. It is the chairman of that company who is responsible for the action that occurred thereafter, not those who stuck by the decision of the union.

Mr. Bottomley: Where the hon. Gentleman misleads himself is that, although the workers may have said that they would have the pay rise, they did not get it and now some of them have not got their jobs. If he was one of those who advised them to stay on strike, he must take responsibility for the fact that people who would otherwise be working now are not. That is one of the points I have been trying to make.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East keeps referring to people being worth a lot of money. He has a choice. He can talk about someone who has built up a business that is worth a lot of money and employs many people, or he may talk about a pop star who is worth millions but employs nobody. If the pop star supports the Labour party and if the chairman of the company supports the Tory party, who is to say that one is doing better or worse than the other as regards employment?

Mr. Hoyle: The Minister must agree that pop stars are not under scrutiny here tonight. An anti-trade union company is under scrutiny. What is the Minister's view of the fact that the company will not go to arbitration although the union has said that it would go without pre-conditions? What will be the Minister's advice to the company and to that Conservative party supporter, Mr. Clarke?

Mr. Bottomley: The union is now willing to go to arbitration without preconditions because it is working uphill. The union may feel itself responsible for the fact that the strikers do not have their jobs. If the union had shown more interest in a solution or negotiation, we should not be discussing the dispute.

Reference has been made to someone being a Conservative party supporter.

Ms. Clare Short: At last.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) is vice-president of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs. He was elected after a contested ballot. I believe that 1·6 per cent. of the union's membership voted for him. I may have the figure wrong, and I shall be corrected if that is the case. He is a leading officer of a union which is affiliated to the Labour party. The union does not claim that more than 30 per cent. of its members pay the political levy. From the published figures, it seems that nine out of 10 of the union's members do not pay the political levy although the donation made to the Labour party is for 30 per cent. of its members.

Ms. Clare Short: How is that relevant?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady asks how that is relevant. It has the same relevance as saying that a company chairman is a supporter of a different political party. I suggest that the hon. Member for Warrington, North should give that matter some thought. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bolsover spoke about the condition in which the strikers and those who have

[Mr. Bottomley]

been dismissed now find themselves. He waxed fairly loudly about those people who might be starving and in need.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bottomley: Not at the moment.

All those involved in the dispute had a responsibility to give advice early in the dispute. When people strike, they are sometimes successful in forcing a business to pay more than it can afford. If that business fails and they all become redundant, they will not have champions in the House of Commons asking about the children, the wives and those who are unemployed, because the matter is dead. The Labour party is only having the debate because the business is surviving. It is doing a bad service——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: I shall not give way.

It is wrong for hon. Members to suggest that people should have their cases raised when the business survives, not when it fails.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: I shall not give way for the moment. Just because I am not shouting at the hon. Gentleman in the way that he shouts at us does not mean that I do not feel as strongly as he does.

It has been suggested that the past few years' industrial relations legislation has somehow caused the dispute. The only difference that industrial relations legislation has made to this dispute is that a ballot was held—it might have been held anyway—which gave a clear answer to the question on the ballot paper. That is important. Legislation passed since 1979 and that passed by the Labour Government has not required employers to settle for what a union has asked. Neither did previous legislation deny an employer the right to dismiss those who did not return to work. If the hon. Member for Burnley wishes to say that I am wrong on that, I shall willingly give way to him.

References have been made to the absence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier). I have not made a great song and dance about the absence of the shadow spokesman on employment, who presumably suggested this subject for debate, going, presumably, to Newcastle, and leaving it to others to speak for him.

During the debate we heard a good speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson), who raised the issue that the union — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is intolerable that the Minister should be subjected to a barrage from other hon. Members. He has a right to make his speech.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I agree with you completely. Why does the Minister not address himself to the subject of the debate, which is why the company is not prepared to go to arbitration?

Mr. Speaker: Every hon. Member has a right to make his speech in his own way.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon asked whether the union advised its members at the company that the management was bluffing. He asked what the union was saying to the employees when they were advised that, if they did not return to work, they would be dismissed.

There is also the question whether the people allegedly speaking on behalf of the workers talked or listened to the majority of the work force, which is still at work. Let us leave aside the question of those who may have filled some of the jobs that were previously held by the strikers, although I do not normally hear people referred to as scabs if they enter the House as Labour Members in the place of others who have failed the reselection test. That seems to be all right for members who are tribunes of the people, who can bawl and shout, but it is different for others. Perhaps the hon. Member for Burnley can speak for the workers who have stayed at work during the dispute and are still at work.

Mr. Pike: When the Minister gives a figure for the number of people at work, he must take account of the fact that they are not all production workers. A large number work in other areas, and they are in a completely different position. The pay issue under dispute is not applicable to those workers. For that reason, the figures are largely distorted. The purpose of the debate is to find out whether the Government recognise that there is a dispute. Their amendment seems to imply that they take the company view that the dispute is over. If the Government accept that there is a dispute — we can argue all night about the wording of the motion — are they prepared to help to resolve the dispute and get the people back to work?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is aware that if the debate is taking place on the basis that some people believe that there is still hope that discussions might help those involved, there is a great deal to be said for a little deliberate ambiguity. The use of the words "recent dispute" provides that cloak under which discussions might take place.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's speech in a moment, but I ask him to contain himself for a while.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) who put up with a great deal of normal good-natured abuse from Labour Members. She reminded us of financial facts. It is important that both the management and the unions see the importance of putting financial facts across at all times.

Mrs. Peacock: I hope that, in the time left to him, my hon. Friend will devote some moments to commenting on the Silentnight subsidiary companies, which have experienced no such problems, and the rest of the National Bedding Federation, which has accepted similar terms.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has provided me with the opportunity, as someone who has spoken neither to the company nor to the union because I would not speak to one without the other, to say that if Silentnight had been paying only the national minimum, there would not have been a dispute. If the company had agreed after the ballot to pay the minimum award, that would have been the end of the matter. The dispute continued only because the company was paying more than the basic minimum.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) talked about exploitation of the dispute. He mystified most

of us because he said that he would vote for the motion if it were not withdrawn, but started talking as though he regretted, as I do, the exploitation of those who are led to go on strike by those who, to use the word of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), "invaded" the town last weekend.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman used the word "invasion". Perhaps we can consult the *Official Report* together after the debate.

There used to be a series of articles in Labour publications devoted to explaining how it is exploitation of one person by another to build up a business in the way that this business was originally built up. For example, *Labour Weekly* used to be full of pages about how turning a wartime gratuity into a business that employed hundreds of people, paid taxes and national insurance contributions and exported was exploitation by one person of many others. Towards the back page, *Labour Weekly* also had an article on how to win £500,000 on the football pools, using *Labour Weekly* perm No. 46. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is wrong to build up a business that provides employment so that at least some Labour party members can criticise them? Is it not better to build up employment than to spend one's time pulling people out of jobs where they had the sort of work into which they now wish to return?

Mr. Skinner: Why does the hon. Gentleman not get round to the central question of the debate? On this issue, the Government are not prepared to intervene to settle a dispute in which families have been out for 26 weeks, whereas when Johnson Matthey plc ran into trouble—taking account of the fact that the Minister has relatives on the board of Johnson Matthey plc — they were prepared to move in with £100 million of taxpayers' money to bail out the company. Why are they not now prepared to look after these furniture workers, who have been hammered by one of their friends, Mr. Wonderful? Why does the Minister not turn his attention to that rather than talk about extraneous matters?

Mr. Bottomley: Is what I am saying extraneous when, as we were reminded in a report today, we need to create 1,200 jobs each day or 6,000 within five working days —roughly the rate at which we have been creating jobs in the past two years? For that, people need to find way of meeting customers' needs and of building up businesses in the way that this business grew. Unions need to be rather better at judging whether continued strikes lead to better terms and conditions or fewer jobs.

The sad truth in this dispute is that where there is political exploitation — which is what the motion is about — there is a smaller chance of getting the two sides back together. Speeches such as those that we have heard from the hon. Members for Bolsover and for Coventry, South-East, are not about conditions and opportunities for those who have been working in a company. I prefer the attitude of the hon. Member for Burnley.

I repeat what I said at the beginning. I hope that it is possible for those involved in the dispute to come together and to avoid such disputes in the future, and for politics not to come into future disputes.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 167, Noes 262.

Division No. 16] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis

Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombe, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Question on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes with regret the recent industrial dispute at Silentnight plc.

National Film Finance Corporation

10.13 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): I beg to move,

That the draft National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motion:

That the draft National Film Finance Corporation (Transfer of Assets and Liabilities) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be possible at this stage, before the Minister deals with these instruments, to inquire whether, in view of the fact that the British film industry is now the subject of takeover rumours, it would be more appropriate for the Minister, far from moving the orders, to withdraw them so that matters which are totally contingent for the realisation of these orders can be resolved first?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. We frequently debate rumours in this House.

Mr. Pattie: The draft orders provide for the transfer of the assets and liabilities of the National Film Finance Corporation to its private sector successor, the British Screen Finance Consortium, and for the dissolution of the NFFC once that transfer has taken place.

When the Films Bill debates were taking place earlier this year we envisaged that there would be a straightforward dissolution of the NFFC, with BSFC becoming operational immediately afterwards. It subsequently became apparent that, if that route were followed, NFFC's accumulated tax losses, a valuable means of increasing the sums available to BSFC, would be lost. However, if it were possible to transfer NFFC's assets and liabilities to a subsidiary company — BSFC Limited — in advance of the corporation's dissolution, the tax losses would also pass to BSFC as long as there was no major change in the nature or conduct of the business within three years. This does not mean that BSFC would be receiving special tax treatment. Those arrangements are frequently used by companies in the public and private sectors. However, it would mean that BSFC would have the benefit of an NFFC asset, which would not be available to it if a straightforward dissolution took place.

We were keen to maximise the funds available for film production through the new company and decided that this was the route we would take. Unfortunately, that has considerably increased the documentation necessary to effect the transition from NFFC to BSFC and also the complexity of the transaction. In particular, six separate items of documentation relating to the arrangements had to be prepared; copies of each have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. All the documents have been signed by the various parties, but their completion is dependent on the two draft orders being approved.

It might be helpful if I described briefly the various documents and the sequence of events that is envisaged.

The first document is a hive-down agreement, operative on 23 December, by which NFFC's assets and liabilities at that date will be transferred to BSFC. In return, NFFC will receive shares in BSFC and a sum of money sufficient to cover dissolution costs and the total funds not committed to film project by NFFC. Those funds are destined for the British Film Fund Agency for distribution to film producers under the normal Eady rules. The sum of money will not be paid at this stage; it will be left outstanding on loan account to be paid on demand later.

On dissolution day, scheduled for 30 December, the loan account and shares in BSFC will pass to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State and BSFC will complete an agreement, under which BSFC will transfer the portfolio of film rights, received on the transfer of NFFC's assets and liabilities, to the Secretary of State in return for a licence to operate the portfolio, upon certain conditions. The purpose of the agreement is to protect the assets contained in the portfolio and to ensure that the licence may, if necessary, be terminated, and the portfolio returned to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will also at this stage, demand and receive from BSFC repayment of the loan account moneys which I mentioned earlier, for appropriate disbursement. The financing agreement, by which the Secretary of State agrees to provide £1·5 million a year for five years to BSFC on appropriate conditions, will come into operation. The Secretary of State, under a separate agreement, will exercise his option to transfer the shares held by him in BSFC to the consortium members. The agreement between the consortium members and the Secretary of State, by which they commit themselves to fund BSFC, will become effective. This agreement has been expressed in the form of a finance letter so that it can be altered more readily when—as we hope and expect—more investors join the original members.

Finally, as a measure of protection for the funds available to BSFC, the Secretary of State has agreed to indemnify the company in respect of acts, omissions and liabilities of NFFC which were incurred before the corporation's assets were transferred to the company.

The arrangements should be completed by 2 January and BSFC should be fully operational from that date.

It is also intended that BSFC will operate the Government's project development scheme, which will provide finance of £500,000 a year for five years for the earliest stages of film production and for short films. The detail of this contract is still under discussion between the Secretary of State and BSFC, but I can assure the House that it will fairly reflect the assurances contained in the memorandum of understanding which my hon. Friend the present Minister of State for Defence Procurement placed in the Libraries of both Houses during the Films Bill debates earlier this year.

I would like now to update the House on BSFC. Hon. Members will recall that the memorandum of understanding stated that there would be four participants in the consortium: Channel Four Television providing £300,000 for five years, Thorn-EMI Screen Entertainment Ltd providing £300,000 for three years, Rank Group Holdings Ltd providing £250,000 for three years and members of the British Videogram Association also providing £250,000 for three years. The current position is that Channel Four Television, Rank and TESE have contracted to meet their commitments. Unfortunately, however, not all of the appropriate commitments from member companies of the BVA have yet been secured. That is disappointing, but I have no reason to believe that it is anything more than a temporary setback caused by the nature of this participant's structure and the number of interests

[Mr. Pattie]

involved. As regards TESE, I am pleased to tell the House that all three of the companies which appear to be leading bidders have given assurances that they will take on TESE's commitment to the consortium. Therefore, whatever the outcome of developments with regard to TESE's future ownership, on which I am sure hon. Members will wish to comment during the debate, we are following closely proceedings to ensure that there will be no adverse impact on the consortium.

Mr. Gorst: Can my hon. Friend assure the House that, if there is a change in the ownership of TESE, the Secretary of State would be concerned to find that the British company was no longer a British company? Under the statutory instrument for the transfer of assets, the Secretary of State must satisfy himself to that effect. If the company that takes over TESE is American-owned, would that undermine the arrangements that are being made?

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend knows the procedures that will be followed in the event of a transaction during the next few days. The Office of Fair Trading would immediately set its machinery in progress and would submit advice to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend's point would be considered by my right hon. Friend at that time.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I am interested in the Minister's answer. Do I understand from what he said that the question of whether BSFC remains a British company is not a matter of statutory definition but would fall within the more general considerations to be taken ino account by the Office of Fair Trading and would be relevant only in that sense?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman must have misunderstood me. We are not talking about whether BSFC would be a British company. Unless I have misunderstood my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), I believe that his intervention was triggered by speculation, whether well-founded or ill-founded, in the newspapers about the ownership of one member of the consortium that will fund BSFC. I had addressed that point.

Mr. Gorst: May I clarify the matter for my hon. Friend? The draft statutory instrument uses the words, "whereas the Secretary of State is satisfied that the Company is and will remain a British company."
It will not remain a British company in the moral sense, whatever may be the legal sense, if one quarter of it is American-owned. What my hon. Friend said in reply was that that would be for the Office of Fair Trading to consider, whereas the draft statutory instrument says that it is for the Secretary of State to decide. I do not understand his reply.

Mr. Pattie: I was simply dealing with the sequence of events should TESE be sold. I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's reaction to the advice that he might receive. I am seeking to make clear what the Government want to see happen.

A moment ago I said that the three companies which are currently involved and have given commitments, Channel Four television, Thorn-EMI Screen Entertainment Limited and Rank Group Holdings, have each given undertakings with specific figures and times to the BSFC. The Government have taken soundings from the three bodies involved in the current negotiations with TESE to ascertain whether they would be prepared to take on the liability, and they have all confirmed their commitment to do so.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Pattie: I do not want to give way at the moment. I hope to have the opportunity to reply to the debate, but it would be helpful if I could proceed at this stage.

The internal structure of BSFC will be a board consisting of a chairman, a chief executive and representatives of each of the contributing organisations, including a Government nominated director.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that Lord Barnett has accepted the post of BSFC chairman. Lord Barnett is well known in this House and the other place and I need say little about the personal qualities that he will bring to the post. BSFC participants consider that his paticular skills and expertise will complement those of their chief executive, Mr. Simon Relph, about whom I shall say more in a moment.

I am sure that hon. Members will also wish to know that Mr. David Berriman has been invited to be the Government nominated director to the BSFC board. Mr. Berriman is a non-executive director of Guinness Mahon and Co. merchant bankers, with a special interest in film finance. He holds a non-executive directorship in Cable and Wireless plc and was chairman of Satellite Television plc from its formation in 1981 until earlier this year. He is also a governor of the National Film and Television School and a member of the British Screen Advisory Council.

The BSFC board will lay down broad parameters for the company's operations — set out in guidelines for the chief executive — which must be approved by the Secretary of State. The board will not have an active involvement in individual investment decisions. These will be left to the chief executive, who will have responsibility for the management and efficiency of the organisation.

As hon. Members will be aware, Mr. Simon Relph was appointed BSFC chief executive earlier this year. Mr. Relph is an experienced independent film producer with an impressive catalogue of films to his credit and he follows a long and successful family tradition of involvement in the film industry. I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet Mr. Relph recently and was impressed with his plans for the consortium and the drive and enthusiasm that I believe he will bring to the post. I understand that he is already considering film projects and hopes to make BSFC's first commitments early in the new year.

The intention is that Mr. Relph will use the BSFC's funds selectively, providing "front" money to encourage others to invest or "end" money, which is often the hardest to find, to enable part-financed projects to go into production. Thus BSFC's funds will be used to maximum effect, increasing the number of low and medium budget British films available for audiences to enjoy. As I have said previously, the decision on which projects to support will be his, although the approval of the independent chairman, Lord Barnett, will be required if he wishes to invest more than £500,000 in any one film.

I hope that it will remove any lingering doubts about the manner in which BSFC will operate if I briefly outline

some of the guidelines presently laid down by the board for the chief executive's use. These include the requirement that he should aim to foster the development of British films and film makers. As well as trying to secure a return on the funds put up by participants, the chief executive will aim to invest in films which provide opportunities for new creative talent or where the film makers may find it difficult to raise the whole of the funds required from other sources. He is also specifically charged with endeavouring to foster the availability of finance from other quarters. Finally, the chief executive will ensure that, subject to the objectives of the company being met, BSFC will act consistently with the long-term interests and well-being of the film industry in the United Kingdom.

I should like to take this opportunity to refer to developments in the industry since film matters were last considered by the House earlier this year. It is just over six months since the Films Act received the Royal Assent. Since that time, the Eady levy has been abolished and the quota and licensing requirements have also ended. These steps have been widely welcomed by the industry.

I am sure we have all been greatly cheered by the evidence of a continuing marked upturn in cinema admissions during this time. I think that most would agree that the British Film Year initiative has significantly contributed to the increase in cinema attendances and has been largely responsible for the higher profile that the industry has enjoyed this year. As hon. Members will be aware, the Government contributed £250,000 for BFY domestic events, including its most successful regional road show and the valuable film educational material that it has produced and made available to secondary schools. In addition, we were pleased to give £75,000 towards its overseas activities and I very much expect and look forward to a substantial BFY presence at the Cannes film festival next year.

Also encouraging has been the enthusiasm of the cinema sector in introducing experiments in pricing into a variety of locations and the large scale investment in the refurbishment of existing stock which is being carried out. The new development of multi-screen cinemas is another positive step for the future and I am sure that we shall all look with interest at the fortunes of the first of these developments, the recently opened 10-screen cinema in Milton Keynes.

I believe that the advent of BSFC will assist the production sector of the industry to sustain its recent success, and I invite the House to support the two orders.

10.31 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Behind the two orders, as I believe that the Minister admitted, lies a web of complexity far greater than many of us envisaged when we debated these matters during the passage of Films Bill. I welcome the Minister for Information Technology to these debates, but it is perhaps regrettable that the Minister who piloted the Films Bill through the House, who is present in the Chamber, was not at the Dispatch Box to introduce the orders.

The Minister for Information Technology will have been informed by his colleagues, especially those who took part in the Committee on the Films Bill, that the proposals to which the orders gave effect were strongly opposed in the Committee not only by the Opposition but by many Conservative Members, especially those with a particular interest in and affection for the film industry. Furthermore, the proposals were specifically and vehemently opposed by every organisation with a claim to speak for the industry. That is the background against which we must consider the order today.

It is right that I should begin by paying tribute to the National Film Finance Corporation. Tributes were paid during the Committee stage of the Films Bill when it first became clear that the Government were intent on doing away with the corporation, but I repeat them today because the purport of one of the orders is to bring about the dissolution of the NFFC.

Many people, including some of our leading producers, have made it clear that in their own personal careers they owe a great debt to the NFFC. Many people also agree that the British film industry as a whole is in the debt of the corporation, especially in view of the meagre resources with which it has had to contend in recent years.

The real problem, however, is not just the demise of the NFFC but the nature, role and function of the institution proposed to replace it. That problem in turn arises from a fundamental, almost philosophical difference between the Government and those who perhaps most persuasively claim to speak for the film industry. The latter group argued throughout the passage of the Films Bill, and would do so tonight, that the importance of film as an industry transcends its commercial significance.

Film is an important expression of British cultural life and it cannot be left to the vagaries of the market place and the pressures of commercial forces. We and many beyond our ranks have argued it is important that the Government and British society should recognise the continuing contribution of film and should express an interest in the survival and future expansion of the industry. That can be done only through a publicly financed and supported institution, such as the NFFC.

The Government's proposal is familiar. It does not appear in its usual guise, but it is privatisation. Privatisation is to be achieved by a slightly convoluted procedure, a side wind. The Government believe that the future of the film industry can be safely entrusted to commercial forces. That immediately focuses attention on a number of matters of concern which the Ministers' opening remarks did not allay.

We made it clear in Committee that there is an absence in the Film Act 1985 of anything approaching a statutory obligation imposed upon the successor body to pay attention to the continued good health of the British film industry. We are left with the frailty of a commercial contract, the difficulties of interpretation, enforcement and, as the Minister rightly concedes, the difficulties of parties to the contract changing identity by virtue of commercial reorganisations.

We are left with an unequal contract. I leave aside the point which I attempted to emphasise in Committee, that the participant companies are required, in return for the derived advantages, to do something which they would do anyway, if they are concerned about the future of the British film industry, and that is to produce British films.

That is the extent of the consideration which they are required to offer under this arrangement. The problem is that the commercial commitment is to last for three years. The Government, oddly enough, have agreed to maintain their commitment for five years.

The question which has occurred to us and other critics of this arrangement is what happens at the end of the three

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

years if the British Screen Finance Consortium says that it gave it its best shot but the industry is in a parlous state, a terminal condition, and that nothing can be done to save it. If it withdrew and did not renew the arrangement, who will pick up the bits? Who is there to step into the breach that is left as a consequence of the demise of the only public institution capable of fulfilling its functions? Nothing we have heard tonight or on previous occasions has answered that question satisfactorily.

Mr. Brinton: The hon. Gentleman has talked about a possible three or five years, but in a sense are we not thrusting out into the dark? My calculations tell me that, in spite of the Minister's pious hope that things will go all right, if two of the major parties were to merge in the form of a takeover and the present partners were ruled out of court because of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and British Videogram Association not coming to an agreement with its members, the NFFC would be left with one partner, Channel Four Television.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is right. He addresses a problem which I shall take up later. In the financing agreement, which we were invited to consider, there is a yawning gap. There are three parties only and not the four that we were told would be involved. The Minister has explained that there are difficulties in getting the British Videogram Association into a position in which it can fulfil what I assume were undertakings. However, many months have passed. We were told that £1·1 million would be made available over at least the three-year period, but his contracting partners have come forward with only £85,000.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Does my hon. Friend recall that during our discussions in Committee on the Films Bill, as it then was, the British Videogram Association suggested to the Government and the Committee that it would not be prepared to make any contribution if there were a danger of a levy being placed on blank tapes? Will he press the Minister on whether there is any remnant of that discussion in the present reluctance of the association to come up with the goods?

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His excellent memory is correct. We put the issue to the Minister in Committee and he denied that any such thought was in anyone's mind. We watch with interest the reports that are starting to appear in the daily press to the effect that perhaps the Government are having second thoughts on a levy on blank tape. I wonder whether that is what the British Videogram Association is waiting for. I invite the Minister in his reply to comment upon that.

As I understand it, there are other peculiarities about the financial arrangements. Will the Minister confirm that the £1·5 million per year which the Government are committed to providing will be taxable in the hands of the recipients? Is that why the deal to write off the tax losses of the NFFC is so important? Will he confirm that that deal will last for only three years whereas the Government's commitment to pay £1·5 million will last for five years? Are we to assume that that sum will be taxable for the remaining two years and will be worth much less than would appear at first sight? Perhaps the Minister will comment on the £500,000 that is to be made available to the national film development fund. It may be that that money can be used for any given film, but that will be for only two thirds of development costs. If that is so, there has been a significant change in practice. It will mean that, far from the fund being able to absolve film producers from the difficult business of raising finance for development, they will still have to turn to private sources for finance, with all the attendant difficulties. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us that that is not the position.

Our objection in principle to what is provided in the orders remains as strong as ever. Our difficulties with unresolved problems also subsist. However, there has been in the past few days a major new development. One of the parties to the BSFC — Thorn — EMI Screen Entertainment Limited — is in danger of being taken over. Perhaps "in danger" is the wrong term because Thorn —EMI seems extremely keen to sell. We must assume that the deal will go ahead with some purchaser.

The House will see that the timing of the development is extremely unfortunate for the Government. It underlines, highlights and emphasises all the doubts and difficulties that we felt about handing over the future of the film industry to commercial forces. These forces are subject to all the usual market pressures and the difficulties of maintaining commercial viability, and they change identity in unpredictable ways. The Minister must take account of the fact that TESE is vital to the British film industry. In some respects, it is half of the British industry as a distributor, exhibitor, a producer of films and the owner of a major film studio, a major film archive and an extensive film and video library.

The problem is compounded when we look at the list of potential bidders and realise that the leading contender, certainly the contender that has offered the most money, is an American company — Cannon. It is based in America, owned by two Israelis and operates internationally. It has no record of commitment to the British film industry. That is the relevance of the question of the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst). Is the British Screen Finance Consortium, in which a major participant will be Cannon, a British company for the purpose of the orders? We need to know the Minister's answer, not that of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Gorst: The problem is even more worrying than the hon. Gentleman has presented. If a takeover or a sale took place along the lines that the hon. Gentleman and I have been concerned about, it would not only be a question of British film making and whether it would be taking place at the level promised by the Government, but whether the cinemas would continue to exist. Even if the motives of the Cannon group are to remain in the cinema exhibiting side of the business, there is no guarantee that it will not close some of the cinemas which are in parallel with the people that it has taken over.

Mr. Gould: I hope to consider a little later in my remarks precisely the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. I agree with the concern that he has expressed.

For the moment, I want to concentrate on Cannon as a British film producer, having taken over TESE, as one assumes it might. On its record one is bound to conclude that although occasionally it might, for straightforward commercial reasons, depending on exchange rates and other factors, choose to use British technicians and

facilities for the making of films, that is a different concept from the business of making British films. We made it clear in Committee that by "British films" we mean films that reflect British life and British themes and are a true manifestation of British culture. I would defy the Minister or any other hon. Member, looking at Cannon's record, to express any confidence that Cannon, having taken over such a large chunk of the British film industry, would be in a position to maintain, or would even wish to maintain, that concept of British films.

Mr. Gorst: I shall interrupt just once more because I think that my point is relevant. It was reported in the *Daily Mail* two days ago that the next film of one of the partners in that operation will be a

"modern version of 'King Lear' with a script by Norman Mailer and set in America, with Lee Marvin as the King who runs a conglomerate and Woody Allen as the Fool, his accountant."

If that is British in its content, I do not know what "British" means any longer.

Mr. Gould: I hesitate to offer any judgment on the value of such a project, but, however meritorious it is, as the hon. Gentleman says, it cannot be regarded as an expression of the British film industry.

Many interventions from both sides of the House have made it clear that the proposed takeover raises wider issues. For example, there is the well-founded fear, which has been the case in many recent takeovers, that part of the purchase price will be obtained through asset stripping. Perhaps the obvious asset to be stripped in this case is the Elstree studio. That would be an immense loss to the British film production industry. There is the matter of the destination of the extremely valuable film archive. Perhaps potentially the most worrying aspect arising from the deal would be the reinforcement of the distribution duopoly from which we thought we might have been escaping.

Without making too much fuss about it, Cannon has moved into second place already through its takeover of the Star cinema chain. The merger between Cannon and TESE would give the new body 57 per cent. of British cinema screens. On monopoly and merger grounds alone, that is sufficient to begin a large number of alarm bells ringing. That is what has happened. The industry has reacted to the prospect with horror. David Puttnam has described the proposed takeover as a disaster for the British film industry——

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): And Richard Attenborough.

Mr. Gould: Indeed.

The Film Industry Council of Great Britain, the membership of which reads like a roll of honour, has too. All the bodies that claim to speak for the industry have called upon the Secretary of State and the Director General of Fair Trading to make sure that the bid is referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The British Screen Advisory Council fears, as it says in its letter to the Director General, if the takeover takes place, the

"elimination of anything which could be called the British film industry."

I am sure that the Secretary of State will be aware of this. I draw the Minister's attention to the MMC report on film distribution in 1983, which said paragraph in 8.57:

"It appears to us unlikely that EMI or Rank"—

then the two major film distributors—

"would seek to acquire cinemas, with the result that they increased their market shares in exhibition. But in the eventuality that they did, we believe that it would be detrimental to the public interest."

The report was describing an increase in market share by either of the then two leading operators. We are now considering the prospect of a much greater concentration of cinema ownership than anything contemplated by the MMC at that point, but which, even at its much lesser degree, it condemned as being detrimental to the public interest.

Therefore, I hope that the Minister will accept — perhaps he will say tonight that he does—that any bid by Cannon to take over TESE would cry out for reference to the MMC. I hope that that would happened.

It is conceivable, as the hon. Member for Hendon, North said, that, having taken over TESE, if permitted to do so, Cannon would seek to deal with the problem of excessive market share simply by closing down capacity. That might be one of the consequences, but it would be almost equally detrimental to the future of the British film industry. I hope that the Minister will not allow that to happen, or accept it with equanimity.

The proposed sale of TESE has arisen perhaps fortuitously for those of us who have criticised the Government's proposals, and perhaps unluckily in its timing for the Government. It is no doubt embarrassing to the Government to discover that the rock of the British Screen Finance Consortium on which they propose to build the future of the British film industry is quicksand. In another sense it is poetic—not to say filmic—justice. Having deliberately handed over the future of the British film industry exclusively to commercial forces, the Government are now compelled to live with the consequences. But we the critics of the Government are entitled to say not only, "We told you so," but that it is now the Government's responsibility not just to live with the consequences, but to ensure that the British film industry, particularly in British Film Year, does not have to die with the consequences.

Now, many of the Government's assumptions have turned out to be false. The British film industry is facing developments of an unpredictable nature and its very survival is at stake. Therefore, tonight is the wrong moment for the Government to propose the orders. I urge them to accept that some time should be given to see what happens to one of the major elements in the industry. We need to see the future shape of the British film industry; we need to know who the participants and the contracting parties to the arrangements will be.

For those reasons, I urge the Government at least to wait until the dust has settled. I urge the Minister to withdraw the orders. I believe that I do so with the support of many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

10.54 pm

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): I start by echoing the words of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The more one considers the scene of these few days, the more one doubts the wisdom of the two orders being passed by the House tonight. It seems to be the wrong moment in every way.

Before I continue, I must, as is traditional, declare my interests which conflict slightly with each other. I am the part-time chairman of Airtime Publicity (Newsflash) Limited, which has as one of its many clients Thorn-EMI;

[Mr. Tim Brinton]

on the other side I am a member of the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, and Equity, who seek employment in films. When the parent legislation was being considered, I was also a consultant for the British Videogram Association Limited, but I am no longer because I suspect that it did not like my views about a levy on films being shown on television. So I am free to express my views without any taint in that direction.

I started my contribution to the long debate on the British film industry about a year ago with a question—do the Government want a British film production industry? That question has still not been satisfactorily answered. We have had a compromise. I understand entirely the suggestion of the hon. Member for Dagenham that the British film industry should be publicly supported if it is to survive, but I do not go entirely along that line.

There was another method — of saying to the television authorities which show feature films that a levy should be paid. After all, it is not taxpayers' money; it is money raised by licence or by commercials on television. That levy should go as a contribution not necessarily to distributors or exhibitors but to film producers.

The proposed partners in the curious marriage of four produce as well as distribute and exhibit. But the main concerns of the two major partners—Ranks and Thorn-EMI, in my estimation—are the cinemas, distribution and exhibition. If we go back to the history of the Eady levy, we find that it was originated to help the film producer, but it tends to get syphoned away from the creative end of the market.

The position has been eloquently described by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) and by the hon. Member for Dagenham. There is doubt as to whether there will be any partners within a week or two. I support the views put forward about the concept of the Cannon company coming in and buying up Thorn-EMI. Like many of my colleagues, I received a postcard today from David Puttnam. On the front of it, with some pictures, was written the word "Bodyline". I thought that was a description of what the Government were about to do to the British film industry, but it turned out to be an advertisement for his latest film.

The whole British film industry — trade unions, actors, producers, exhibitors and distributors—is fearful that this arrangement, far from just not working, may pull the whole castle down. If Cannon does buy Thorn-EMI, I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will reassure us that that must go to the Office of Fair Trading straight away.

I should like my hon. Friend to answer another question. What happens if the Rank organisation buys Thorn-EMI? Am I right in suggesting that if the British Videogram Association does not reach agreement, that strange financing unit will be left merely with Channel 4? That seems sad. Ironically there is one virtue about it; the level of funding suggested by the Government is so low that that is the size of product which the Government are thinking of supporting, not the true feature film.

10.59 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): The case against these orders has been eloquently made by almost all hon. Members but perhaps most eloquently by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The orders manage to create a structure beset with uncertainties and contradictions which will do little to foster the British film industry. It must have been noticed that no part of the British film industry welcomes them.

The orders are part of the central Government belief that everything goes better if it is private. It is clear that in this case that is an ill-considered belief. They fail to recognise any Government responsibility towards the industry.

The French Government have given £9 million to their film industry. The Minister's pride at having pulled £500,000 from the Treasury compares pretty pathetically with that.

Two sets of questions must be asked about the new body — finance and structure. The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) mentioned the postcard that he had received from David Puttnam about "Bodyline". The Minister has six slips and a gully in the box beside him, but he has not been well served. The hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) asked him about the nationality of the bidder. We might have thought that we would have had a promise that if it turns out to be non-British the orders will be withdrawn.

The Government input was described as taking the place of the abolished Eady money. They continue to claim that they are giving about twice the inadequate money that Eady gave. When considering that contribution we are forced to return to the point that we reached over and over again in Committee, which is that given that Eady was largely abolished because it was so inadequate, to double the amount does not make it adequate.

The claim should be examined more closely. There are a number of aspects to be examined—the tax incentives and the business expansion scheme, about which we heard so much. It would be interesting to know how many films have been made with business expansion scheme money. What representations has the Minister received about the rules governing the length of time for which the money must be committed and the number of interests that the company can have under the scheme. It appeared during the passage of the Films Bill—the Under-Secretary of State for Employment said that he would consider the points — that the business expansion scheme was irrelevant given the special nature of the film industry. I hope that the Minister can tell us about that.

The point has been made that the Government's contribution is subject to tax. The Government have said that they will put £1 million to £1·5 million into the new body for five years. By Government standards, if not by those of the industry, that may sound reasonably generous. The belief in the industry is that the amounts will be subject to tax. It seems insane to give money with one hand and take it away with the other. It also seems to be mean because it reduces the amount by nearly one third.

I should also like a reply to the question that the industry is asking—is the amount a loan rather than a grant? Section 5 of the Films Act 1985 provides that the Secretary of State may provide the money by loan, grant or guarantee. However, the document sent from the Minister of State's office which contains the agreement between his Department and the four contributors' solicitors specifies a loan. It states:

"The Secretary of State proposes to make available to the consortium funds of £1·5 million each year for a period of five years. This is presently intended to be in the form of a loan."

That document is dated February 1985. The House needs clarification of that point. Why is the money to be a loan rather than a grant? Does that not undermine whatever confidence the industry might have had in the Government's commitment? It would be fair to announce the conditions of repayment. Why has the money always been described as a grant? Why should Britain be the only major country whose Govenment give no solid financial support to the film industry?

It is also fair to point out that the Government are misleading themselves about what can be achieved with the money. There is the point about basing the contributions on the pathetic Eady money. They may be misleading themselves that many films can be made with the money available because the BFFC has been active recently on a small budget. If the Minister studies the matter, he will realise that success has been achieved by saving its money for several years.

As many hon. Members wish to speak, I shall close with the possible take over of Thorn-EMI by Cannon. It is extraordinarily important to consider that from the point of view of both nationality and monopoly, and to remember that Cannon has shown no commitment whatsoever to the British film industry. It has not even given money to British Film Year, and it has no record of making good artistic films. There is a case for the take over to be referred on grounds of cinema share, which would rise to nearly 60 per cent. of the total, and the consequent impact on distribution practices, which have already been described by the commission as dubious.

As I have asked for the withdrawal of the orders, it would only be right for the House to compliment the Minister on his choice of Lord Barnett, whom we all respect and admire, and to welcome Mr. Simon Relph, a second generation film maker, who is equally acceptable. In view of our representations, I ask the Minister to think most carefully about withdrawing the orders now for the time being, if not for ever.

11.6 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I have not heard a word in the speeches after that of the Minister with which I disagree. I agree with them so much that I can cut my speech short. Every speech has been hitting the target. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear that in mind in his reply.

Nevertheless, I endorse the tribute paid to the NFFC's work over the years by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Indeed, I pay tribute to the reputation of those whom the Minister has selected as part of the upper echelons of the structure. However, I echo the hon. Gentleman when I say that the structure will be on shifting sands. I agree with all that he said about Cannon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) mentioned the possibility of a monopoly, but the third threat, of which not much has been made, is that about 60 per cent. of what is being sold by Thorn-EMI Screen Entertainment is library material. Other bidders —they have been referred to in press reports—will be extremely hungry to acquire the other assets, and will have no commitment to cinemas per se, or to making British films. That is another cause for anxiety, even if the concerns about a monopoly or foreign buyers do not arise. I hope that if the time comes, the Minister will consider that seriously. The major weakness of the structure is that it is being formed on a basis of which at least one quarter is up for auction before the operation starts.

I wish to drive it home to the Minister that in discussing the two orders we are doing worse than putting the cart before the horse. We are asking the cart and the horse to travel along a road which has not yet been decided, down a route and in a direction that we do not know, and without their having even the necessary sustenance with which to make the journey. This plodding, pleading and over long-suffering beast is the British film industry, which is now facing a botched up future, worse than anything predicted during the debates on the Films Act.

Mr. Freud: The horse and cart do not even have a valid tax disc.

Mr. Gorst: Perhaps it is in such a state that it cannot afford to buy one.

The House will recall that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) scrutinised the film industry, and disappeared. He evaporated before the Bill ever came before the House. His position was then taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), who piloted and enacted the proposals that he had inherited. He then moved on to procure the defence of the realm.

Now we have my hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie), who picks up the shreds and remnants of what they left behind them. One wonders whether he will be here in a year's time to give us further answers to the questions on which he will be replying tonight. I hope that he will be here, because I hope that he will give us satisfactory answers to the points that we are making. If he does he will deserve to be here to answer our subsequent questions and receive our thanks.

The important questions are those of monopoly, asset stripping and foreign ownership. My hon. Friend the Minister owes us answers on these points because they are absolutely central to whether the orders are approved or not. Today's statistics, like yesterday's promises and tomorrow's predictions on the film industry, will have to be good to take in those who have witnessed the Government's continued retreats throughout the past few years. There cannot be any secret about this. The only satisfactory immediate step would be a re-examination of the financing of British film making, and these orders are only a paltry aspect of that.

Although my hon. Friend the Minister made much of the small trivialities—for which small mercies we must be thankful—they are trivialities in relation to what is required. Some of my hon. Friends and Labour Members will remember that during the debates on the Act I said that what was being proffered to the film industry was less than the price of a tank. With his early experience in the Ministry of Defence, my hon. Friend will know that we need many tanks to have an army, and many films to have a film industry.

I hope that my hon. Friend will candidly admit that events are overtaking these orders. If he admits that, he will also appreciate that they belong to a situation for which they were never an answer, and, if approved, will come into effect to meet a situation that no longer obtains.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to what his predecessor said to the House. In answer to me and the hon. Member for Dagenham, the Minister said:

[Mr. Gorst]

"I recognised the legitimacy of the point . . . about wanting to be assured that this was not just a commercial organisation but a body which would have regard to the cultural aspects of film making and would be a force towards underpinning that important aspect of our cultural life."

I remind my hon. Friend of the quotation from the *Daily Mail* that I read out during the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham. Although one does not want to pre-judge the Cannon organisation and its plans, if it has any, for the British industry, the portent of that quotation will need to be carefully taken note of by any Minister.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames also said:

"If anything went wrong with the consortium, or if we felt that it was not doing what was in the interests of the British film industry, the Government would be able to retrieve the assets." —[*Official Report*, 5 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 806-7.]

I put it to my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology that that does not have to arise in the future; it has arisen now.

11.15 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I cannot echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) about putting the cart before the horse. Given the nature of the Minister for Information Technology's speech, the Government are putting the cart before the hearse. Another nail is being driven into the coffin of the British film industry. It is going out not with a bang but with an ideological whimper. We are confronted with the spectacle of yet another Minister being in the job long enough to throw a few more shovelfuls of dirt into the grave of the British film industry before he moves on to another portfolio.

The orders are a sad postscript to the Films Act 1985. It was a botched-up job even then. It has been made even messier by the transmutation of Thorn-EMI into a bottomless hole into which it is desperate to shovel money at any cost. The original mistake was that this Government assumed that the British film industry, which reflects our national life and our national character, can survive without the financial help that is given by Governments to the film industries of nearly every other advanced country. It could easily become a production outhouse for the American film industry, producing a mid-Atlantic culture that represents nothing.

The British film industry could become a production facility for films such as "Star Wars." Britain cannot have a film industry that reflects our stupidities, complexities and claustrophobia without Government help. The Minister boasted of providing £1½ million per annum over five years. It contrasts sadly with the £1 million per annum that was provided by the Labour Government in 1948 when the National Film Finance Corporation was established.

The new body is to produce films for television. This category excludes the industry's most recent and major successes. "Another Country" was financed by the existing body, as were "The Dresser", "A Private Function", "Local Hero", "Nineteen Eighty-Four", "The Company of Wolves", "Chariots of Fire", "The Killing Fields" and "Gandhi". If the British film industry is to concentrate on television films — which ought to be financed by television—it will not be doing the job that it ought to do.

I do not object to privatisation. I do not mind gratifying the Government's prejudices if they will provide financial support for the industry. However, privatisation raises problems about the life of a private company, because of the possibility of a takeover and the portability of the private company, with control going overseas. The real problem is the provision of finance for a viable, healthy national industry. The Government offer no solution to that problem.

To all that has to be added the problem of Thorn-EMI. This company must have some kind of financial death wish. It demonstrated real incompetence by taking a major stake in a major commercial television contract and turning it into a financial disaster. It is desperately dredging around for money. It would have sold off the Thames Television contract if the Independent Broadcasting Authority had allowed it to do so. It has tried to raise money from the film libraries of both Thames Television and Thorn-EMI. These have become a profitable source of investment. That was demonstrated by Rupert Murdoch's takeover of Twentieth Century Fox in the United States.

There is a rich pot of gold there for exploitation which is now up for grabs, along with selling off the cinema activities for property development.

We have seen the growing crisis in Thorn-EMI, characterised by the comment of a Thames executive, "It did not actually want to sell Thames, but even your grandmother has a price." That is a reflection on its attitude towards the company. It must be emphasised that this takeover bid, and particularly the Cannon bid, poses real problems. While Thorn-EMI might have a death wish, all that Cannon has to offer is the death wish of gratifying the psychological prejudices of Michael Winner.

It is essentially a foreign company. It is not really a production house but a body of financial manipulators which sells the rights to films before it produces them. The takeover of the Star chain means that Thorn-EMI's screen share of 33 per cent. of audiences plus Cannon Classic's 24 per cent. makes a total share of 57 per cent. of audiences. In other words, the company, if merged, would be two and a half times the nearest competitor, which is Rank.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said in his powerful opening speech, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission warned in 1983 that it would be detrimental to the public interest to have such a concentration of audiences. It would be detrimental not only in terms of cinemas but in video distribution, where Thorn-EMI has 15 or 16 per cent. of the audience, and detrimental to the British film industry.

The new company, Cannon, is essentially an American-controlled company with no loyalty to the indigenous British film industry. It will remain what it is now, an American-based international group controlled by two Israeli citizens. There is a strong probability — because it will concentrate on its production base in California — that it will sell Elstree studios, the one remaining pride of the British film industry, to raise money for its other activities.

This bid for Thorn-EMI must be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which, if its words of 1983 mean anything, will almost certainly refuse it. It cannot consistently accept such a concentration of power in the British film industry. The orders should be held up, otherwise the only appropriate words tonight will be some

lines on the funeral of Sir John Moore at Corunna, words that are indeed appropriate, given the contribution of another John Moore to the death of the British film industry in his refusal to make the tax concessions that the industry needs:

"Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried."

There has been a sound tonight. It has been the sound of a united protest from hon. Members about what is being proposed by the Government. That sound should be heard.

11.23 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): As a Light Infantryman, I welcome words concerning Sir John Moore being quoted to the House. Having listened to five hon. Members in what I would describe as a well-balanced Chamber speak against the Minister, I rise with some trepidation to advise him to stick with it.

While accepting the greater knowledge of my hon. Friends the Members for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) and for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), I come to the debate, having served on the Committee which dealth with the main legislation, as a newcomer to the industry. While, therefore, I may see it without knowledge, at least I see it through unbiased eyes and not through rose-coloured spectacles. In that sense, I hope that, in his new role, the Minister will see through the smooth transition from the National Film Finance Corporation to the British Screen Finance Consortium.

While hon. Members on both sides have welcomed the appointment of Lord Barnett, who was a Member here before I was privileged to join the House, it sometimes causes me despair that it should be difficult for my party, when in government, to find those of its own philosophy to hold these allocations to quangos. But I am sure that Lord Barnett will prove me wrong. I wish him well.

In Committee on the Films Bill, my hon. Friend the former Minister for Information Technology—the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Lamont)—was very supportive of the film industry. He had no qualms about saying in Committee that the Government wanted a successful British film industry. They did not want just an industry, but an industry that was part of our British culture, with films made in British studios about the British way of life. In that respect, my hon. Friend the Minister said tonight that the BSFC would project the well-being of the film industry in the United Kingdom. The NFFC provided start-up and last part finance, and I have heard nothing from hon. Members who oppose the orders to suggest that the BSFC will do anything different.

Mr. Gorst: Does my hon. Friend know the difference between crumbs and a square meal?

Mr. Conway: Indeed, but my girth is not expanding as rapidly as my hon. Friend's. No doubt I shall work on that as I spend more years in this place.

Hon. Members have been less than generous to the Government and, more importantly, to those who finance the Government—taxpayers and viewers—when dealing with their contribution to the film industry. But this move to privatise, albeit with substantial Government incentives, will still encourage the industry to raise funds.

On 11 December—it hardly seems a year ago that we were listening to some interesting but long-winded speeches as we approached the Christmas recess—my hon. Friend the former Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), who steered the Films Bill through Committee, said that the private sector contribution to BSFC was estimated at £1·1 million. He went on to say — the fact has not been disputed tonight — that the Government's contribution would be more than £1·5 million, with an additional £500,000 for the project development scheme of the National Film Development fund. That, in addition to the assured external funding, comes to rather more than some hon. Members have suggested.

Mr. Brinton: Is my hon. Friend aware that the total figure about which he is talking would not get near to completing one feature film, let alone fund 20?

Mr. Conway: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but the NFFC was involved in start-up and last part financing, and the BSFC will presumably do the same. The assured external funding, especially from Channel Four Television, which the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) suggested was for three years, but which we both know is for five years, and the three-year contributions from Thorn EMI and from Rank, are subject to some controversy. But we must not forget——

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman said earlier that the figure of £1·1 million to be raised and contributed by the participants in the consortium was not disputed. But if he adds up the contributions of the three participants whom he has mentioned, they come to £850,000.

Mr. Conway: Yes, but we have not reached the end of the calculation, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman will bide his time. Then we have the generated internal income from the repayment of loans for previous film production. The NFFC's external funding since 1980 of £1·5 million will compare interestingly with the BSFC funding, which will be twice that, plus the NFFC's film portfolio of 800 films made since the 1940s, which, at its last estimate, was worth £200,000 per annum. But those who served on the Committee will recall that, taking into account repayments for the first three years at least, that would bring up to £600,000 per annum.

We are getting down to the nitty gritty of the financing. Although my hon. Friends were scathing about the amount of Government funding available, the fact is that more than twice the amount of help towards start-up and final part financing is now available.

The vagaries of day-to-day business are not appropriate to tonight's debate because the Secretary of State will still have the licensing power that will give the House the necessary safeguard.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) spoke of the concentration of audiences. It is a changing industry. Those of us who try to project into the future are not always right. Fallibility is not the prerogative of those who serve in this House. I hope that some of my hon. Friends, including the Minister, will have seen the programme on BBC 2 on Sunday, when Mr. Stafford, the managing director of ABC cinemas, was interviewed. He has managed to turn a dreadful loss into a substantial profit by responding to the demands of the consumer who wants to see the British culture that I hope we are here to support —not the demands of those with a vested interest in the industry or those out for more Government cash.

[Mr. Conway]

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will stick with that and that the order will be supported by the House tonight.

11.30 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): In Committee on the Bill, many hon. Members on both sides of the House voiced a number of major worries about what would succeed the National Film Finance Corporation. Those worries have not been eased by what the Minister has said tonight, and they have certainly not been eased by developments during the past few weeks on the future of Thorn-EMI.

One worry that we expressed was the sheer lack of good funding for the future of the British film industry and the promotion of new films. Even if all four partners come together, even if the Government's contribution is at the top end of their prediction, the money available will be only £2·5 million in one year—compared with the £12 million that goes each year to Covent garden and the £29 million that goes to the four major artistic institutions in this country. I do not wish to remove a single penny from the amount that goes to those institutions, but it is a strange ordering of priorities when the entire funding for the promotion of new films and talent within the British film industry is only £2·5 million a year.

Secondly, hon. Members voiced a major concern that the time limit placed on the guarantees given by the four partners in the supposed agreement of the consortium was three years. That worry has not been removed by anything that the Minister has said tonight.

Thirdly, hon. Members expressed concern about the impact of the domination of the two major distribution outlets for films—Thorn-EMI and Rank. They would be dominant in the consortium involved in the promotion of new films, and especially in the promotion of small-scale, independent productions with a non-commercial flavour. The immediate conflict between the commercial interests of the distributors and the non-commercial interests of the film makers has not been resolved or lessened by anything that we have heard tonight.

Most important of all, we voiced our concern about the need to have a specifically British flavour in the British film industry. We wanted to remove our film industry from the domination not of American money but of north American culture. We want the British film industry to be a voice for the people and the cultural heritage of Britain. We now hear news of the possible takeover of Thorn-EMI by an American company. Thorn-EMI will have a leading role in the consortium if the order is approved. We cannot but express our concern about the future and nature of the British film industry in the light of those discussions.

It serves to underline the major point, made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), that the promotion of new film, new initiatives and new talent within the film industry should not be subject to the vagaries of commercialism. Public interest is not being served by the orders or by the Government's action in bringing them forward.

11.35 pm

Mr. Pattie: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. In coming to the Dispatch Box in this role, I have felt all the warmth of greeting of a Hammer films spectacular. None the less, hon. Members have trotted out the various objections that they expressed in Committee on the Films Bill. Among the more bizarre contributions was that of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who seemed to think that the BSFC would produce filss only for television. I must inform the House that the BSFC will have considerably more funds than its predecessor, the NFFC.

In case the House has forgotten that the NFFC has produced or has been the agent in producing an impressive catalogue of low and medium budget British films, I mention just three low budget films, all made for less than £1 million, which are currently achieving very good cinema audiences—"Letter to Brezhnev", "Supergrass", and "My Beautiful Laundrette". I understand that the latter was originally conceived as a television film, but is now the fifth most popular cinema feature in London.

The House and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) may have forgotten, too, that the original legislation on the NFFC was the National Film Finance Corporation Act 1981 which expires on 31 December 1985. The NFFC then ceases to trade, so there is no question of the orders being withdrawn. Unless the BSFC is in existence, no support will be provided for the industry on New Year's day 1986. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dagenham would not wish that to happen.

Mr. Gould: The demise of the NFFC is a direct consequence of the Government's failure to renew its life as happened on previous occasions. Even with the earlier deadline of 23 December on which the orders are to take effect, the Minister still has a matter of weeks in which to try to resolve two questions—the continuing unwillingness of the British Videogram Association to play its part in the BSFC, and the precarious situation of Thorn-EMI, with the question mark over its participation in the BSFC. I put it to the Minister in good faith that it would be in the interests of the British film industry to withdraw the orders today to give the House time to see what is likely to happen to the future structure of the industry.

Mr. Pattie: I will not agree to do that, although I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's good faith in the matter. As I told the House in my opening remarks, the three members of the consortium have undertaken certain sums for certain periods and all the bidders currently interested in TESE have undertaken to take over the liabilities.

Hon. Members seem to be assuming that a particular purchaser will be successful. There are two other possible outcomes — a management buy-out by the present company or purchase by Rank. Hon. Members have leapt to the conclusion that the third party will be successful. As the House would expect, the Government are watching the matter with extreme care and expect to receive advice and submissions from the Office of Fair Trading if a deal is struck. The Government will of course, consider that advice urgently and take action accordingly. The House need be in no doubt whatever about our commitment to the future well-being of the British film industry.

In their comments today and in their belief that the BSFC will be unable to do its job in raising finance the Opposition seem to have ignored that fact that the whole thrust of finance will be on a partnership basis. There will be Government finance in all good faith of £1·5 million per year for five years and the consortium will be able to raise additional finance itself. I am glad that the

appointment of Lord Barnett has been welcomed. If he were in any doubt as to his and Simon Relph's ability and that of their fellow directors and members of the consortium to raise that independent finance, he would presumably not have accepted the appointment. I have a very high regard for Lord Barnett's capabilities and he is not the kind of person to be casting around for extra activities.

Mr. Gould: I happily concur in the Minister's welcome for the appointment of Lord Barnett, but will he confirm that Lord Barnett agreed to take on this onerous task long before it became clear that one of the major constituents was in the process of being taken over? I understood the Minister to say that he expected there to be a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the case of the bid by Cannon and one assumes that the same would apply to a bid by Rank. If that is the implication of his remarks, it reinforces the fact that Lord Barnett's inheritance is an extremely dubious and confused one. Is not that a further reason for withdrawing the orders today?

Mr. Pattie: No, it is not. The hon. Gentleman is a past master, if not a genius, at attributing to me things that I have not said. I said that the Office of Fair Trading would consider any deal that was made and give us advice which we would consider, as the hon. Gentleman would expect.

I welcomed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway)—I was glad to have some light infantry solidarity in the debate. My hon. Friend has been a shining light of perspicacity in seeing that what is needed for the well-being of the British film industry is that the House should accept the orders and that the BSFC should be established on 2 January. We look forward to that eventuality.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.

NATIONAL FILM FINANCE CORPORATION

Resolved,

That the draft National Film Finance Corporation (Transfer of Assets and Liabilities) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Basildon Hospital (Perinatal Services)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): For many people there is no experience quite so marvellous as witnessing the miracle of life. It is a fairly modern practice to allow dads to see the birth of their children—something that I was privileged to see some 18 months ago when my first son, David James, was born and four months ago when my daughter, Katherine Louise, was born. I well remember how excited I was and how glad that I was not in my wife's position as in every respect it was aptly called hard labour.

My wife and I could not speak more highly of the excellent care at every level administered to our children and to her during their stay at Basildon hospital. We found a high degree of professionalism combined with a warm and friendly atmosphere — a view shared by the overwhelming majority of my constituents — and the hospital therefore has a special place in our hearts. Indeed, it is never really out of our vision as our house backs on to its grounds. My horror can be imagined when, some weeks ago, I was informed by Basildon and Thurrock health authority that it was proposing that Basildon hospital should lose its obstetrics, gynaecological, paediatric and special baby-care services.

These proposals were greeted by a storm of protests and anger by many of my constituents—a reaction which I share. At a time when so much good was happening in Basildon—unemployment over the past 12 months has fallen by 5·8 per cent. — the announcement was shattering. The authority's report recommends the centralising of services, which I am fundamentally against. In an ideal world I should like the status quo to be maintained, with two units and Orsett hospital brought up to the same standard as Basildon hospital in the provisions of services. Strong arguments have been advanced which show that that is not possible.

A special baby-care unit cannot be supported at Orsett because there are not enough deliveries to justify its existence. Babies are delivered at Basildon and Orsett hospitals and the paediatric department is based at Basildon hospital with minimum input to Orsett hospital. If a baby that is delivered at Orsett hospital gets into unexpected difficulties, there is unlikely to be a paediatrician nearby to give immediate help. High-risk babies are delivered at Basildon, but it is not always possible to predict problems.

The situation could be overcome by the provision of a 24-hour paediatric service at Orsett. That would require the appointment of at least two more paediatricians at Orsett hospital to provide cover. That is not possible because for a considerable time, there has been a complete embargo on new posts of this kind. The work load for two doctors at Orsett would amount to about one hour a day. They would have nothing to do for most of the time. No self-respecting doctor would apply for such a job. The Royal College of Physicians would not recognise such a post for professional training purposes, which would make it even less attractive.

Obstetric staffing is in a parlous state because of the lack of junior staff. The Short report, in chapter III, section 84, states:

"We regard the creation of a universally high standard of intrapartum care throughout the country as one of the major

[Mr. David Amess]

contributions to lowering perinatal and neonatal mortality. We agree with the planning guidelines proposed by the West Midlands RHA for improving their perinatal services, which are particularly relevant to the maintenance of good intrapartum care. We recommend, in accordance with these proposals, that as soon as possible every delivery suite should be provided with a minimum of 24-hour cover in obstetrics, anaesthetics and paediatrics, immediate access to a suitable operating theatre and proper facilities for the care of sick babies on site."

The Minister may wonder why I am detaining him to respond to the debate. The health authority has given us until 21 December to respond to its proposals. It will meet in January to reconsider its proposals in the light of comments that it has receieved. If it decides to go ahead with its proposals, we shall have to appeal to the Minister. I fully accept that there is little that my hon. Friend can do now, but I want clearly to establish in his mind and that of the Department the case for Basildon. It is both irresistible and overpowering.

Basildon hospital was built strategically in the centre of the district health authority and it is not yet 10 years old. It stands on an excellent picturesque site and is well placed. The hospital is especially accessible to all modes of transport. Basildon is the main centre of concentration of population in the district. Being a new town, there are many women of child-bearing age. In 1986, there will be 39,150 women in Basildon in the 15 to 44 age group. In Thurrock the number is much lower—27,200. By 1986, the population of Basildon will be 165,950; in Thurrock it will be only 125,600. Over 60 per cent. of the babies born in the area are to mothers who live in my constituency. Basildon's population is still increasing, but that is not the position in other parts of the district.

As a special baby-care unit has always been at Basildon, people from throughout the district have accepted that fact and are used to travelling to it. Any suggestion that the child development centre at Basildon should be moved will meet strong opposition. It is only two years old, and it was built with private money. Over £55,000 was raised, and half of that was raised by the Basildon Hospital League of Friends, to which I pay tribute.

The recruitment of special baby-care nurses and midwives is far easier in Basildon than elsewhere. I have it on good authority that few of the present staff at Basildon would be prepared to move to Orsett. The recruitment of professional staff at Orsett is known to be quite difficult.

The building of a skilled team to care for sick babies takes many years, and we would have to start virtually from scratch. The intensive care services for premature infants would virtually cease in the district and new-born babies with other than minor problems would have to be transferred to centres in London.

There can be little argument with the view that it is far easier to build at Basildon than elsewhere. We could build on top of the existing site or on the land to the south, which would easily provide scope for the expansion which would be needed in any reorganisation.

Any move must involve a building of some sort and at Basildon, from the point of view of hospital layout, there is less risk of any architectural damage. Money would be saved because of the extra theatres that are available at Basildon rather than at Orsett. The balance is six to four in Basildon's favour. We all appreciate how expensive it is to build and staff any new hospital theatre. When considering these matters it would be as well to remember that all antenatal facilities would continue at Orsett, apart from the inpatient service.

The only travelling involved would be on the few occasions in any woman's life when she delivers her baby. I take issue immediately with the suggestion in the health authority's report that hospital services should be sited on the basis of car ownership. That is no way to run a hospital. If transport is the problem, public transport will have to be improved. Buses could be run quite easily to help overcome the difficulty.

It is important to add that reorganisation would not prejudice the status of Orsett hospital in any respect as an acute hospital. It would be nonsense for anyone to suggest otherwise. The report advances a curious argument about the number of severely deprived in Orsett and the surrounding areas. That is an extraordinary statement. I represent the area with the greatest number of single-parent families in the south of England. Until the success that we have enjoyed over the past 12 months, I represented also the constituency with the highest number of people wishing to work who did not have jobs in the south.

The report talks about difficult access for the severely deprived, which is just not true. What is true is that my constituents would have a more difficult and longer journey to Orsett hospital. Is it right that the overwhelmingly majority of patients must travel from Basildon to Orsett because the people of Orsett are deprived?

In spite of Orsett's deprivation, 84 per cent. of people from Orsett get to the hospital by motor car and only 16 per cent. rely on public transport. In Basildon, 80 per cent. use cars and 20 per cent. use public transport. The people who are visiting will usually be husbands, after their wives have had their babies. If it is not the first child, the stay in hospital will be a short one.

A further point in the report that is worth mentioning is that part of the equation of centralisation at Orsett would be the sale of St. Andrew's. I have good reason to believe that the figure of £2·7 million that has been mooted is wildly optimistic. I apologise if I have given the impression that it is a "them and us" situation — Basildon versus Orsett. It is not like that. Basildon and Orsett are fine hospitals. I hope that I have demonstrated how completely unacceptable it would be to remove from Basildon the services that I have mentioned. It would be wrong to involve it in the jigsaw that the health authority presents.

The problems of the burns unit at Basildon are regrettable. I have had several letters on that subject from colleagues in neighbouring constituencies in Essex. The burns unit is a regional service supplying a facility to a wide area. Its site is not of the same significance as that of the maternity services. I hope that none of my constituents has to have treatment for burns, whereas I hope, and know, that mums in Basildon will continue to have babies.

I have been inundated with letters, telephone calls, petitions and lobbying from my constituents. If I had the time I would read out a selection of the letters, but suffice it to say that many have been deeply moving. Many mothers have said that they had their first baby in Basildon —we all know the anxiety that a first delivery can bring —and wish to have future babies at the same hospital.

My constituents have responded to the proposals with controlled anger and in a responsible fashion. I have tabled early-day motion 100, and I hope that many hon. Members will sign it.

I pay tribute to the committee of KOMPASS which has worked with great dedication to keep the services at Basildon hospital. At 11 am on Monday 9 December a human chain of mums, babies and children — the children and babies will all have been born at Basildon hospital—will be formed from the town centre to link arms up to the hospital. A model of a baby will be passed from the town centre to the hospital as a symbol of our intent for the hospital to continue delivering babies. In just six weeks 25,000 signatures have been gathered for our petition — and Queen Victoria's name did not appear once. Next week I shall present a small sample of the petition to the House.

My final words to the Minister are, for humanity's sake, for pity's sake and for Basildon's sake, if intervention is necessary, please keep the services at Basildon maternity hospital.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on choosing this subject for his Adjournment debate and on the personal as well as constituency interest that he spoke of in such moving and powerful terms. Clearly, the issue is of great concern to him and his constituents. I readily acknowledge the care and diligence with which my hon. Friend represents the views of his constituents on the matter, which is of considerable local importance.

I shall try to explain to my hon. Friend the present position in my brief reply, but if I find when I read the full text of his speech in *Hansard* that there are some further points with which I can deal, I shall write to him about them.

My hon. Friend made it clear that he understood very well that the proposal that has been put out for consultation — one emphasises that it is for consultation — to centralise maternity in-patient services on to one site in Basildon and Thurrock is part of a package of measures. If the community health council, which formally represents the views of the community, objects to the proposal, and if the regional health authority then supports the plans, it will come to me for a final decision.

My hon. Friend was kind enough to acknowledge this as well, because he well understands the procedures that have been established by the House for dealing with such important matters that arouse so much local interest and concern. It would not be appropriate for me to pronounce at this stage on the validity of the arguments either for or against the proposal that has been put out for consultation by the district health authority.

My hon. Friend concentrated on maternity services provision, but it should also be borne in mind that that is only one facet of the proposed reorganisation, which also involves gynaecology, paediatrics, plastic surgery, burns and geriatric services. My hon. Friend referred to the burns unit, to which I shall refer. The reorganisation also involves several hospitals and the closure of one hospital in Billericay. Therefore, the proposals are a wide-ranging package. My hon. Friend was entitled to concentrate on the elements of the package that are of particular interest and concern to his constituents. I take no exception to this. However, he will also recognise that the proposals intermesh and are largely interdependent one upon the other. In considering them, therefore, I hope that all concerned will look at the overall interests and needs of the many different patients, which must be kept in mind in trying to reach a balanced and sensible judgment on the package as a whole.

Central to my hon. Friend's remarks is one issue that is not unique to Basildon and Thurrock or indeed to the North East Thames regional health authority. It is recognised by people who follow debates on the subject and arguments across the country—the familiar question of where best to locate services in a district with several large population centres. All facilities cannot be provided willy-nilly in all the towns. That proposition is widely recognised in principle, although I fully understand that in practice objections will arise when a town is chosen for a closure or change in provision, which is seen to be disadvantageous. All facilities cannot be provided in all towns. That would not make economic or medical sense. Difficult decisions have to be taken and the proper balance struck.

The maternity services proposal was the main thrust of my hon. Friend's concern. He knows, and I hope understands, my position on the proposed changes. The proposal is out for consultation. Comments are required by 21 December. My hon. Friend has indicated that he will be presenting a petition to the House. The comments, the petition and all the other relevant factors will have to be considered by the district health authority. It will have to take account of all the points and the representations of my hon. Friend, of the committee which has been organising support for the hospital's maternity services and of the many others who will wish their point of view to be considered.

If the community health council objects but the district health authority and the regional health authority decide to proceed with the proposals, they will come to Ministers. As I said a moment ago, until that happens it is not appropriate for me to comment. I am left in the difficult position, which my hon. Friend fully understands, that I cannot respond in favour of or against the proposition that he has put to me. I rather suspect that he did not think the miracle would occur that I would agree with him tonight, but that he was using very properly the procedures of the House through an Adjournment debate to make clear his deep interest in the matter.

I understand that the district health authority believes that mothers in the district will receive a better inpatient service if they and their babies are looked after in a hospital where there is adequate paediatric cover. My hon. Friend argues that it would be better if that were done at Basildon rather than at the alternative site of Orsett, if a choice has to be made between the two. I took my hon. Friend's point that he would much prefer no choice but the maintenance of the present facilities. The proposals keep outpatient clinics at both Orsett and Basildon for ante and post natal services. I am advised that there are genuinely problems for the district in providing sufficient obstetric and gynaecological staff at more than one hospital. That is a basic resource problem. A difficult and careful judgment must be made. It would not be right for me to preempt at this stage the decision which will have to be made by Ministers.

Perhaps I should add that centralisation of facilities and staff is not necessarily due to any lack of money. All services cannot be provided at every hospital; waste of

[Mr. Barney Hayhoe]

resources dilutes the experience needed to develop good expertise. No doubt my hon. Friend and I are totally at one in wanting a proper balanced judgment which will ensure efficient use of resources to the benefit of everyone concerned.

When the results of consultation are received, the health authority will weigh up all the factors to see what is best for the overall interests of all the patients. My hon. Friend referred to travel, an important factor which must be taken into account when one is trying to decide upon the location of any centralised inpatient maternity unit. The consultation process is taking place. The time for ministerial decision is not yet here and there is no absolute certainty that it will arrive. My hon. Friend has deployed his constituency case with the skill, passion and concern that I would expect from him. I can assure him that full account will be taken of that matter. He also spoke about the proposal to relocate the regional plastic surgery and burns unit at Basildon hospital. That is another proposal that has aroused considerable local anxiety and one upon which it would not be appropriate for me to comment in detail at this stage. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) is also interested in that aspect of the matter.

I understand that the health authority plans to phase out old and inefficient hospital accommodation. It believes that the move to Basildon will improve facilities for burns and plastic surgery patients by rehousing them in modern buildings more suitable for the practice of modern medicine.

The health authority recognises that some patients will have to travel slightly further to attend the regional unit. It also appreciates that local people, who recently contributed towards improving facilities to make the unit what it is today, may have great difficulty in accepting an overall strategy which proposes a move.

I have no doubt that the health authority will consider the weight and strength of local opinion when reaching a decision on all those matters.

I can only repeat that my hon. Friend has deployed his case with force and skill. I assure him that full account will be taken of what he has said.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR (NO. 2) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR (NO. 3) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Listed Buildings

1. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers of buildings which have been listed as of architectural or historic interest.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): A total of 360,590 buildings in England had been listed by the end of September this year.

Mr. Chapman: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment and wish him well. Will he confirm that the objective of listing buildings is to conserve architectural excellence rather than just to preserve architectural mediocrity? Does he agree that it would be wrong to increase the numbers just for the sake of it, for example, to the round figure of 500,000?

Mr. Tracey: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's congratulation. I recognise his experience in these matters. My right hon. Friend is satisfied with the strict criteria adopted by the supervision of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission and considers it a matter of some pride that, when completed, the resurvey of England will represent the most comprehensive record of buildings of architectural and historic importance in Europe.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the commission have enough skilled staff to do the listing?

Mr. Tracey: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend recall the case of Monkspath Hall in the west midlands, a listed building which quite by chance was demolished one Sunday afternoon about four years ago by an Irish bulldozer driver to make way for an industrial estate? Does my hon. Friend agree that the penalties for accidentally demolishing listed buildings should be increased substantially to take account of replacement costs, and will he have discussions with the Home Secretary about the matter?

Mr. Tracey: I accept what my hon. Friend says. He will be interested to know that 217 listed buildings were demolished in the year ending 31 March 1985, of which 214 were in grade 2. No grade 1 listed building was lost.

Rate Support Grant

2. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for the environment when he proposes announcing the final details of the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I hope to make an announcement before Christmas.

Mr. Fisher: The House hopes so, too. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this rate support grant, when it is announced — and it will surely be cut for the fifth consecutive year — will look even more inadequate in the light of his Department's survey of housing defects, which showed a need for £18·8 billion to be spent? What advice and help will the right hon. Gentleman give to councils which are trying to tackle their housing problems, considering that their rate support grant will inevitably be cut?

Mr. Baker: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await my announcement. The grant percentage for next year will work out at about the same as this year, after allowing for holdback. We have already announced the provisional GREs for the hon. Gentleman's city, and he will know that the GRE for Stoke has gone up by 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Charles Morrison: While being fully aware of the needs of inner cities, which are emphasised time and again, may I ask my right hon. Friend, when he makes his announcement, please to take full account of the situation facing low-spending shire counties, and in particular Government commitments to them in the past about rate support grant?

Mr. Baker: Yes. After the abolition of targets, penalties and holdbacks, we shall introduce a system of caps to ensure that the transition is smooth.

Mr. Alton: When the Secretary of State or his officials discussed with Phillips and Drew the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 for the city of Liverpool, what concessions did he make, or what concessions were made by the council, so that the books could be balanced for 1986-87?

Mr. Baker: The rate support settlement was not discussed by Phillips and Drew or by the bankers. They approached my Department only to ascertain whether the deferred purchase agreement was legal. I answered this question yesterday. The Government have not given a penny more to Liverpool to balance the budget.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend doing everything possible to ensure that adequate safety nets are being constructed so that prudent local authorities do not suffer excessive grant cuts?

Mr. Baker: We are introducing a system of caps and safety nets to ensure that the progression from the existing system to the new system is phased.

Mr. Benn: When the Government draw up their grants for the coming year, will they take account of the report that has just been published by the Church of England? It represents two or three years of serious work and appears to show that there has been a major failure by the Government to meet the pressing needs of some of the inner city areas.

Mr. Baker: I refute completely the right hon. Gentleman's allegation of failure by central Government. During the lat six years we have provided substantial additional resources to the inner cities. I shall make this clear in the Government's response to this report and to other reports about the problems that face the inner cities. The rate support grant system and the grant related expenditure assessments recognise the needs of the inner cities. They recognise that they are areas of social deprivation and that grants should flow to them to deal with these problems.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of his right hon. and hon. Friends welcome the appointment of a Secretary of State who has a sense of realism and compassion about the problems that face such cities as Birmingham? Will he use that goodwill to ensure that cities which face great problems in their inner areas get not just a fair crack of the whip but justice?

Mr. Baker: When I was in Birmingham about 10 days ago I met Dick Knowles, the Labour leader. The leaders of the councils whom I meet at this time of the year always produce the most horrific stories about the likely rates increase: that it will be 40 per cent., 50 per cent., 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. Dick Knowles said 60 per cent. I do not believe that, after I have made my announcement, it will be necessary for Birmingham to levy a rate increase of that kind. Birmingham is a very good example of what the Government have done by means of inner city aid. I went round the houses in Handsworth and round Lozells road, where I saw the results of enveloping and of bringing back into use as a result of direct subsidy property that was built 50 or 60 years ago in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Chris Smith: In view of the Prime Minister's constantly reiterated claim that the Government are spending more money on the inner cities, and in view also of the powerful evidence that has been produced by, among others, the Church of England, does the Secretary of State intend to provide additional money for the inner city areas in the forthcoming financial year through the rate support grant settlement? Does he intend to restore any of the major cuts that have been made in the last five years?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman knows how the rate-capping system operates, because of the rate capping of his own borough of Islington. He knows, therefore, that one of the results of rate capping this year was a flow back of grant to Islington. As Islington will be rate capped next year, there will also be a flow back of grant to Islington next year. The hon. Gentleman's council leader, Mrs. Hodge, said a year ago that 1,000 jobs would be lost in Islington through rate capping. Not one job has been lost in Islington. Since then the press relations officers have resigned from Islington because, they said, they were told to lie during the campaign.

Mr. Maples: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the rate support grant settlement that he is to announce for London, when coupled with a revised London rate equalisation scheme, will ensure that no London boroughs' ratepayers are financially disadvantaged as a result of the GLC's abolition?

Mr. Baker: The effect upon the ratepayers of London will depend decisively upon the decisions taken by the respective borough councils. That will be clear when I make the rate support grant settlement. Those who budget prudently and run their affairs efficiently will, I think, be pleased.

Dr. Cunningham: Does the Secretary of State's original answer mean that he is confirming the statement by his predecessor in July of this year that next year the rate support grant will be at the same cash level as this year? If so, is he not announcing a real cut of about £700 million in resources for local authorities?

In the face of the report "Faith in the City", the last in a long line of reports on the problems — the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry, the Department's own investigation, the CBI's "Change to Succeed", an inquiry into British housing—is it not scandalous that this will be the sixth successive year in which the Government have cut the rate support grant and made the problems of all local authorities much worse?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will know, because he understands the complexity of the matter, that, as a result of abolishing targets, holdback and penalties, about £300 million to £400 million more in grant will be in the system next year. Local authorities already know that the provisional GREAs which were announced six weeks ago show a shift towards the towns and cities principally because the GREAs now recognise more fully the real demands for concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled and for social work.

London Residuary Body

3. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the London Residuary Body; and what was discussed.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend met the chairman on 27 November to discuss matters relevant to the Residuary Body's functions under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Banks: I was hoping that the engine driver would answer my question.

Is it true that the Secretary of State said that he wanted to see County Hall taken apart brick by brick? If so, is that not an insult to Londoners? When the hon. Gentleman next speaks to the chairman of the London Residuary Body, will he ensure that County Hall is not sold off as a hotel? If it is sold off as a hotel, will he guarantee the safety of the war memorial on the principal floor?

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman has not changed his spots. He will presumably know that County Hall is a listed building. The London Residuary Body will be aiming to sell County Hall as soon as possible. In order to do that it will be necessary for ILEA to make alternative

arrangements for accommodation, and I understand that negotiations between the LRB and ILEA have already begun.

Mr. Marlow: Can my hon. Friend confirm that any cash that is left over from the GLC will go to the London Residuary Body? What action is he taking to prevent Mr. Livingstone from buying himself a parliamentary seat in North London with bribes?

Mr. Tracey: I can assure my hon. Friend that any balances which are left over—I understand that they will be considerable—will go to the London Residuary Body for distribution to the boroughs. I see that the Leader of the GLC has been named "Santa Ken" by some of our newspapers.

Mr. John Fraser: Is the Minister aware of the recommendation in the report "Faith in the City" that there should be an expanded public housing programme of new building and improvement? Instead of describing the report as negative, as the Secretary of State did, can the hon. Gentleman be positive and give an assurance that the pot of gold of around £30 million of capital receipts held by the GLC will be used for house building and improvement in London, that the GLC house improvement teams which have done such splendid work in London, particularly in rundown estates, will not be broken up, and that the housing research function for London will be preserved? Will he, unlike the Secretary of State, not attack the Church, but say something positive about what can be done for housing in London?

Mr. Tracey: I had not noticed that my right hon. Friend had attacked the Church. I would ask that when such reports are written, some figures should be put on the assessments made by the critics. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that any of the balances that are left over will go to the Residuary Body and be distributed to the boroughs. The hon. Gentleman mentioned property, and I shall be looking into that.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

4. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue for consultation a Green Paper on the spending of capital receipts from council house sales; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): My right hon. Friend announced in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on 20 November, at column 246, that the prescribed proportion of capital receipts will remain unchanged next year. My right hon. Friend hopes to publish proposals for reform of the local authority capital control system in a Green Paper early in the new year.

Mr. Hayes: Now that a wooden stake has been driven through sterling M3, will my hon. Friend assist in making a shallow grave for the policy that allows £6·3 billion of capital receipts from council house sales to lie idly in local authority bank accounts, earning interest that is used by profligate authorities in revenue spending?

Mr. Patten: The money is not lying idle. A substantial proportion of the cash from receipts has already been spent on the repaying of debt and also on repairs and maintenance. Councils are committed to spending a reasonable proportion of their capital receipts and, when they spend that money on housing, it must be replaced by further borrowing, which therefore drives up the local authority borrowing requirement, and that in turn drives up the public sector borrowing requirement, stake and all.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister confirm that the much vaunted so-called increase of £200 million achieved by the Secretary of State in his Cabinet discussions was, when examined, found to be a net decrease of money? It was only because of an increase in housing receipts that extra money was to be available from council house sales. The Department of the Environment's budget for next year shows a cut in money for local authority housing—not a success at all. The Secretary of State's first battle was a loss to housing, not a victory.

Mr. Patten: That question is uncharacteristic of the hon. Gentleman. There is more money there, and more money will be spent. There is more money because of the allocations and the receipts plus the head room that is necessary to account for the considerable overspending —alas—that local councils are indulging in this year.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that his reply will be disappointing to some Conservative Members, particularly those who represent boroughs which have been highly responsible and prudent and have acquired those capital receipts in response to Government requests and Government policy? Will he therefore review the matter, bearing in mind that those councils have planned their expenditure for the future based on capital receipts, and not based on borrowing and upping the rates?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is doing exactly that. He is reviewing the system and will be bringing forward a Green Paper early in the new year. I pay tribute to the prudence of my hon. Friend's borough council and I remind him and all other right hon. and hon. Members that, for some reason, many councils seem to ignore the opportunities given to them to spend up to 100 per cent. of capital receipts on schemes to promote low-cost home ownership. That is a pity.

Mr. Heffer: Has not the Government's housing policy been an absolute disaster? If the Minister wants proof of that, I suggest that he reads "Faith in the City". I have a copy, but I think that most Conservative Members have not been prepared to spend £7·50 to obtain a copy. I suggest that they read the serious points in the section on housing and recognise that the policy it puts forward, which is not entirely the policy of the Labour party, would begin to deal with the problems of housing—unlike the Government's policy, which does not.

Mr. Patten: The Secretary of State has said that we are considering the report and will consider it further.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my hon. Friend aware that his answer will cause some disquiet to smaller authorities whose council house sales are less than £1 million per annum? Will he therefore consider excluding those smaller authorities from that ceiling?

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the problems for smaller authorities to which my hon. Friend refers. We are considering exactly that point in the Green Paper which is to be published early in the new year.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Minister confirm that of the "extra" £220 million of cash made available, only £160

million will be used on revenue, and that some of that will be used, not on construction, but to pay loan charges because of higher interest rates than those forecast? Is it not the case that Ministers do not know how much of capital receipt money is spent on housing? They have no information about the amount that local authorities use for housing. People outside cannot understand why £6·3 billion is in the bank when it could be spent on improvement grants for owner-occupiers, as well as putting right public sector stock.

Mr. Patten: Other adjustments are made to try to take care of the first point made by the hon. Gentleman. As to the second point, there is not £6·3 billion in the bank. A substantial amount of that cash has already been spent on repaying debt and on capitalisation of repairs and maintenance.

Derelict Land

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of derelict land grants disbursed in the last 12 months for which statistics are available.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In the year to September 1985, £65 million was paid in derelict land grant to local authorities and other bodies. I have increased the resources available this year to £82 million. I shall shortly issue a circular on reclaiming derelict land—it is an essential tool for urban regeneration.

Mr. Freeman: Will my right hon. Friend write today to the Archbishop of Canterbury and remind him that many Christians are also Conservatives who agree that the derelict land grant programme is a sensible way of helping inner cities, unlike the Archbishop's commission's proposals, which amount to worn-out Socialist dogma of spending an extra £4 billion of public money?

Mr. Baker: I should be happy to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury to discuss the problems of the inner cities with him. I would draw to his attention—some parts of the report recognise it—the considerable resources that are applied to dealing with the inner city problems. The increase in derelict land grant has been from some £23 million when we came to office to £82 million this year — well in excess of the rate of inflation and a substantial increase in real terms. I think that the money is very well spent in dealing with many of the problems mentioned by the report—housing, enterprise workshops and regenerating our inner cities. I should like the country to recognise the enormous amount that we are doing.

Mr. Litherland: With one quarter of the industrial sites in Manchester now lying vacant, what assistance will the Government give for demolition and the refurbishment of those sites in the north-east of Manchester?

Mr. Baker: I am well aware of the problems of the decline of some of the industrial base of Manchester. We provide extra assistance through derelict land grant. I have seen several projects in the city, some of which are part of the urban programme, which are revitalising the centre, particularly the old central railway station, which I hope will become a magnet for exhibitions and so on. That programme will continue. This year I am concentrating the urban programme more on the cities and towns with the greatest need.

Mr. Hickmet: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how important these grants are in my constituency? Is he aware that last year his Department gave a derelict land grant of £1·4 million to the Normanby park steelworks site, and that currently the local authorities have put in an application for more than £16 million? Will my right hon. Friend consider that application sympathetically?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend has been to see me twice about those matters. I was glad to approve a grant of £1·4 million for private derelict land recovery of the old Normanby steelworks. My hon. Friend is right in saying that a substantial application is before me and my Department. It emphasises the importance of that spend. We have to bring that derelict land back into effective use.

Mr. Foot: When the right hon. Gentleman meets the Archbishop of Canterbury, will he tender a collective apology on behalf of all Cabinet members, or on behalf of only a few of them? Will he pass on to the Archbishop the message from the chairman of the Conservative party that he is now praying for the Church of England?

Mr. Baker: I speak for the Government in these matters. There was some talk that the report had been leaked before the weekend, when it had been intended for publication on Tuesday. However, I understand that it was on sale on Saturday morning in Dillon's bookshop.

Voluntary Organisations

6. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received since his statement on 19 November, *Official Report*, column 148, about future grants for countrywide voluntary organisations currently funded by the metropolitan counties and the Greater London council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): My noble Friend the Minister of State discussed this and other matters with representatives of the London voluntary sector last week, but there have been no written representations on the matter of countrywide organisations.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Minister aware that there has been a disappointing response from his Department to the transitional bids made by local authorities, with only a low percentage of bids being accepted? In view of that, of what value are the promises made in this House and in another place last year during the debates on abolition?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman said that local authorities were disappointed with the allocations. However, we announced some time ago that we would help with £20 million worth of transitional projects. Indeed, a few weeks ago we announced allocations for projects of exactly that value. That is additional money to the rate support grant and other resources.

I am encouraged by the progress being made on the transitional arrangements for voluntary sector projects in the areas affected by abolition.

Mr. Dickens: Is my hon. Friend aware that many constituents are writing to Members of Parliament who represent areas within the metropolitan county councils that are covered by voluntary organisations? Those organisations wonder whether they will still receive the grants that they currently receive, and whether the money that is recycled by the metropolitan county councils will

still find its way to them. Can my hon. Friend clarify that? The Greater Manchester council is the authority involved in my area.

Sir George Young: As a Member who represents just such an area, I am well aware of the correspondence to which my hon. Friend has referred.

The Government have set up two schemes. One is the section 48 scheme for organisations that cover more than one district. Progress with that scheme is quite encouraging. The other scheme is the one referred to by the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis). As I told him, an extra £20 million is being made available to help that scheme. In addition, all the rate support grant that currently goes to the metropolitan county councils will be available to the successor bodies, and that will provide additional help.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that many excellent voluntary organisations in Yorkshire, currently in receipt of grant, are concerned about their future? Will the hon. Gentleman go beyond the block amount available and tell the House what process there is for evaluating projects to decide whether they are worth funding in future? That is the question to which most voluntary organisations want an answer.

Sir George Young: That decision rests with the local authorities. My Department has indicated the provisional amount of money available to local authorities for transitional projects. It is for local authorities to decide which projects to fund with transitional help and which to take on board themselves.

Mr. Boyes: The Minister's answers simply are not good enough. They reveal a lack of knowledge of the magnitude of the problems that will face voluntary organisations, which have told me that the transitional grants are not sufficient. The additional spending power of boroughs on a county-wide basis under section 48 is not good enough. Why did the Minister not consider the solution offered by a number of organisations—that the section 137 2p rate should be increased to 4p for borough councils?

Sir George Young: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his first intervention from the Dispatch Box. As he knows, we debated these matters at length when the abolition Bill passed through the House earlier this year. I am satisfied that the Government have done all they can to ensure that worthwhile voluntary projects are not out of pocket as a result of abolition.

Derelict Land

7. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of derelict land owned by public bodies were sold during the last 12 months.

Mr. John Patten: In the 12 months ended 31 October 1985, 6,300 acres of unused or underused land on the land registers have been sold. A further 3,500 acres have been removed from the registers because their owners have brought them back into use.

Mr. Thurnham: I welcome pressure on councils to dispose of surplus derelict land, but may I ask my hon. Friend to assure the House that he does not expect councils willy-nilly to sell off public parks and open spaces, such as the amenity land in front of Eagley Bank infants school in my constituency?

Mr. Patten: As it happens, I can reply to my hon. Friend with some degree of authority, for I have recently visited Bolton twice in his company. The issue to which he refers is twofold. First, there is a piece of vacant land, which has been vacant and unused for a long time, which needs to be disposed of. Secondly, the problems of the after-use of that land can be dealth with by the borough council through the normal planning process. It is the borough council's task and responsibility.

Mr. Tony Banks: How much derelict land is owned by Government Departments? What pressure does the Minister put on his colleagues to dispose of surplus Government land? In particular, what pressure does he put on the Secretary of State for Defence to dispose of derelict land that is surplus to requirements?

Mr. Patten: It is certainly true that Governemnt Departments own derelict land. I am not able to give the exact figure as I do not have it to hand, but I shall write and let the hon. Gentleman know the result. Just as Government Departments have surplus land—and we are making major efforts to get them to dispose of it as quickly as possible—so, too, besides local councils, do nationalised industries, and they need to get rid of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who is to lead our disposal drive in 1986, will be after the nationalised industries.

Mr. David Howell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about nationalised industries hanging on to unnecessary land. A great deal has been done to squeeze out surplus land from public authorities and utilities, but a good deal of land that nationalised industries call operational is sometimes not operational at all. Will my hon. Friend assure us that he and his colleagues will press other Departments and public utilities to get this surplus land, which is often derelict, back into housing or green and leisure facilities?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend is, of course, absolutely right. Large public bodies, such as British Rail, or, for that matter, water authorities, sometimes own substantial amounts of land, which they should dispose of for re-use. We hear a great deal about the need for more investment in sewers. If water authorities got rid of more of their unused land, they could invest the proceeds in capital infrastructure.

Dr. David Clark: The Minister mentioned that he was going to encourage water authorities to sell off unused land. On much of that land there is access for walkers. Will the Minister give the assurance that, de facto, not de jure, access will be enshrined in any deals to sell off such land?

Mr. Patten: We recognise the important amenity value of land which is held by water authorities and of the water itself, which provides important amenities. Water authorities will be looking carefully at their legal duties to preserve access where that is appropriate.

Mr. Robert Atkins: How much derelict land is there in inner city areas controlled by the Labour party? In view of the comments about inner cities made recently by those in another place and elsewhere, is my hon. Friend aware that about six members of the commission are also members of the Labour party? Is there any correlation between those two facts?

Mr. Patten: I was aware of some of the facts to which my hon. Friend has referred. When I visit councils which complain about their housing—understandably—such as Hull, which has been under Labour party control for 38 of the last 40 years, and look at the land register, I find it hard to understand why they have just under 1,000 acres of unused, unsold land.

Maryport Harbour

8. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the improvement, reclamation and development of Maryport harbour.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Allerdale district council and English Estates are jointly preparing proposals to redevelop Maryport harbour. English Estates is to decide in the new year whether or not to go ahead with development. My Department has agreed in principle to provide derelict land grant for a good reclamation scheme leading to new investment and new jobs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister join me in expressing the view that a development of Maryport harbour is crucial to the development of Maryport as a whole? Does he recognise that the construction of a road bridge linking the town to the harbour's infrastructure developments would spark off all sorts of private sector involvement? Can we look to the Government to provide us with the money to secure those infrastructure works?

Mr. Waldegrave: A good scheme would have the effect described by the hon. Gentleman, and I recognise the importance of a bridge to a good scheme. If a proposal is made to us, we shall consider it sympathetically.

Urban Development Corporations

9. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to make orders under section 134 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 setting up any further urban development corporations.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: None at the moment.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of us believe that these corporations could bring speedy, effective and non-bureaucratic action to tackle inner city deprivation? Will he look at this matter again, because, apart from anything else, such corporations would attract substantial private sector money?

Mr. Baker: I am examining this matter, because my hon. Friend is right. The London Docklands Development Corporation is conducting the most successful recovery of a derelict part of an inner city, and we have every right to be proud of it. So far it has attracted over £1 billion of private investment into the area. There is another development on Merseyside. This year I am providing resources of £95 million for the two corporations.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Secretary of State accept that while everything that the two development corporations have done is not all bad, their greatest flaw is that there is no democratic accountability? Will he confirm what he said on the "London Programme" on Friday—that where there is very little derelict land, the structure of urban development corporations would be highly inappropriate? Surely what is needed is confirmation by the Government of faith in the inner city, and faith in local government. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that he needs to support local government in tackling the problems of other deprived areas rather than giving such problems to appointees of his Department, who are not accountable?

Mr. Baker: Our faith in the inner cities is demonstrated by our commitment to them. Since we have been in office, we have put £2·5 billion into the inner cities through the urban programme, derelict land grants and urban development corporations. That is a substantial commitment, and there is no doubt that the development corporations have been a success. I reiterate what I said on the programme. The corporations have been particularly effective in the areas where there is much dereliction and where a great job has to be done. That job is now being done. Before the LDDC was set up in the east end of London, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the councils could not agree, the GLC could not agree and there was nothing. The record speaks for itself.

Mr. Squire: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the achievements of the LDDC, which he rightly extols, have been effected in the face of a persistent and consistent campaign by the Left in those areas against everything that the corporation is trying to do? Will he comment on that aspect, given the rather quiet attitude of the Labour party?

Mr. Baker: One of the councils supportive of the LDDC has already come out in favour of the Canary wharf development. Some elements have constantly criticised, but such criticism is against the interests of the area. There is real regeneration in east London, and we should be proud of that.

Mr. Spearing: Irrespective of the merits of any one development, does the Secretary of State agree that one of the so-called popularities of the development corporations is that they have the unique power of selling public land together with planning permission, in certain cases without the normal safeguards of a public inquiry? Does he now agree that, irrespective of its merits, the Canary wharf development in the West India docks could and probably would have an enormous strategic impact on Greater London in general, and east London in particular? Why will he not permit a public inquiry?

Mr. Baker: I have already decided not to call in that development. In making that decision I had to consider all the various factors. We are talking about the creation of a new financial centre and mobile investment. If it is not to be built in the docklands area, it will not be built in another part of London. Instead, it will go to Frankfurt, Brussels, Amsterdam or elsewhere. The project is the largest civil investment programme for many years. It is a £1·5 billion programme that will provide 10 million sq ft of space and probably 40,000 to 50,000 jobs. I cannot take the risk of losing that sort of opportunity.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lesson of London docklands is that the urban development corporations have put the emphasis on urban development, not on party politics? Is that not an example that we should repeat in other inner city areas throughout the country?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right. The corporations have been extremely good instruments, and we are assessing their effectiveness. It may be that we can use

other forms of agency, such as private trusts, for the rehabilitation of certain derelict sites or areas in other parts of our cities. I am sure that the entire country and all political parties have a great deal to learn from the success that we are experiencing with the two corporations.

Dr. John Cunningham: Whatever the successes or otherwise of the corporations, how does the Secretary of State expect local authorities to tackle the problems in their areas when, for example, the Government have reduced housing investment by 69 per cent. since they came to office? How does he expect local authorities to tackle the problems that face them when there has been a persistent reduction in rate support grant, which cumulatively exceeds about £16 billion? Why have the Government been able to find more than £22 billion in tax reductions for higher rate taxpayers since they came to office, while persistently withdrawing resources from inner cities?

Mr. Baker: If, as I believe, the hon. Gentleman is saying that the problems of the inner cities can be resolved by throwing more resources at them, I must ask him to consider the record of the 1960s and 1970s, when vast sums were literally thrown at the inner cities. It was during that period that the slums and the problems with which we are now dealing were built. That is generally agreed as an analysis. We must target moneys much more effectively, and that is the process in which I am engaged. We must find ways of introducing private sector money more effectively. That is another important element.

Local Authority Housing

10. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long he estimates it will take to complete all the repairs identified in the report of the inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock in England on the basis of existing public expenditure plans.

18. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the estimated amount of repair and modernisation work needed to council owned residential accommodation.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Members to the replies given on 12 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle).

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Minister accept the Audit Commission's assessment that an extra £900 million will have to be added to the outstanding repair bill for council housing every year? Does he deny that at the present rate of spending it will take about 90 years to clear the nearly £19 billion-worth of defects which were revealed in the Department's report, which was published only recently? What hope can he give to the hundreds of thousands of families who are condemned to live in cold, damp, condensation-ridden substandard council housing?

Mr. Patten: I hope the hon. Gentleman recognises that the Government are the first Administration to go into this matter comprehensively and to publish a complete report. That was done as a result of the initiative of my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I take this opportunity of paying tribute to him for what he did as Minister for Housing and Construction.

I hope the hon. Gentleman also recognises that the net sums available have been increased this year. Furthermore, the net amount that is being spent on repairing the public sector housing stock is about £1·25 billion this year from the current account and about £1·25 billion from the capital account. That is, I think, a record level of expenditure, and substantially more than the £500 million from the capital account that was being spent in 1979, for example.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister recognise that the vast amount of work that has to be done is largely the Government's responsibility because HIP allocations in the past few years have been entirely inadequate for local authorities either to repair or modernise on the scale required, and certainly inadequate to allow them to build? Is he aware that local authorities should have the financial means to allow them to carry out the work that is necessary so that they do not have to hand over estates to private property speculators and spivs?

Mr. Patten: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has some difficult estates in his constituency, such as the Rosehill estate. That is why we sent the urban housing renewal unit to visit it on 22 November. Councils have to make their own priorities in housing expenditure. Surely their first task is to rehabilitate houses which they have in their ownership. They should have been doing that for many years. It is because of underspending by councils for decades that many housing estates have got into such an awful condition. They are now being renovated with the help of private sector money, which should be welcomed in a non-ideological way by the hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the worst local authority housing was built in the 1960s, which was the last occasion on which we tried to build our way out of the problem? Does he further agree that the best thing to do now is to say never again to proposals to build large-scale, windswept council estates, in which we merely condemn people to misery, to sell off as many houses as we can and to make effective repairs to those that are left?

Mr. Patten: Large-scale solutions do not seem to have helped in the past. The right to buy is certainly helping now. I wish that councils which complain the loudest, like Southwark, which has a reported £24 million of uncollected rents, would collect their rents so that they might spend the money on keeping their housing stock in the state in which it should be kept.

Mr. Favell: Does not the abysmal state of so much local authority housing stock make a case for actively discouraging the building of any more local authority houses?

Mr. Patten: It is the first duty of councils to manage properly and to repair and rehabilitate their stock so that tenants are properly treated. The forthcoming housing and planning Bill will contain provisions to make sure that the voice of tenants is better heard, as it was in Thamesmead, where the tenants voted to leave council control because they were dissatisfied with it. That is characteristic of the GLC.

Mr. John Fraser: The Minister is talking absolute rubbish in accusing local authorities of underspending, when his Government have cut HIP allocations to local authorities by almost 70 per cent. over the last six years. We want to hear from the Minister within what time scale he will give permission for local authorities to raise money

or spend their own money to deal with the appalling backlog of housing which has been highlighted by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and confirmed by his own Government's report. Why does he not allow them to go to the market to get money, if they want to, or to spend their own money on this essential purpose?

Mr. Patten: There was widescale agreement by all the local authority associations represented at the housing consultative council meeting last week about the fact that more work needed to be done and about the priority to be accorded to work that should be carried out before proper timetabling could be organised. While we are talking about the AMA, which speaks loudly about the need for more money, I wonder why it is spending on plush new headquarters in central London the sum of £7 million raised from its own ratepayers.

Ancient Monuments

11. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on current levels of expenditure upon the upkeep of ancient monuments and list those voluntary bodies which receive support from the Government in that work.

Mr. Tracey: In the current financial year the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission will spend £13 million on monuments in its care—an increase of 25 per cent. over the previous year—and over £7 million on grants to owners of other monuments. My Department will spend over £18 million on the upkeep of monuments in the Royal and Crown Estates. My right hon. Friend recognises the important contributions of voluntary bodies in this field and offered grants of over £250,000 towards their administrative expenses.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Can he reassure us that he considers that we are getting good value for money from voluntary organisations? Does he think that we are getting the balance right between access to and protection of historic sites?

Mr. Tracey: I think that we are getting very good value for money. In this country we have some of the finest examples of ancient monuments. This is recognised throughout the world and is evidenced by the number of visitors to them. As to granting public access to monuments, the HBMC weighs all the necessary factors in determining the strategy for each monument.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that we have 20,000 ancient monuments in Coventry, 1,000 of them unfit for human habitation, 6,000 without hot and cold running water, baths, showers or inside toilets, and 14,000 requiring repairs of over £5,000 to make them fit for people to live in? How many more years under the Tory Government will working-class families in the centre of Coventry have to live in ancient monuments of houses over 100 years old that are unfit for human habitation?

Mr. Tracey: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman has addressed that question to the wrong Minister. Our inspectorate would certainly find it difficult to agree with him.

Local Authority Housing

12. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage co-operative housing associations and trusts in the regeneration of housing estates.

Sir George Young: Tenant management co-operatives, housing associations and trusts have an important potential for the regeneration of rundown council estates, providing better management and giving tenants a bigger say in how their estates are run. The forthcoming housing and planning Bill will enable local authorities to delegate their housing management functions to a range of other bodies. The Department's urban housing renewal unit is encouraging local authorities to consider the scope for innovative solutions of this kind. The unit is also examining the best way to provide start-up and training resources for new tenant co-operatives.

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the recent decision democratically reached by Thamesmead tenants shows that local authority tenants would rather be masters of their own destiny than servants of the GLC? Does he further agree that the forthcoming Building Societies Bill will enable responsible and prudent private sector capital to be made available through the building society movement, pension funds and other institutions to liberalise the situation and to ensure that estates are given a breath of fresh air and a new personality?

Sir George Young: I applaud the decision of Thamesmead residents in October to reject the cosy solution of life with the local authority and to take the bold step of taking their future in their own hands. One reason for that decision was that it would give them access to private sector capital so that Thamesmead could be completed at a faster rate. My hon. Friend is quite right. There may be a message there for other parts of the country.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister agree that it would be a good idea if in the forthcoming housing and planning Bill, instead of delegating authority to local authorities, the Government followed Labour party policy and gave local authority tenants the statutory right to decide whether they wish to run their own estates, rather than leave it to public landlords? Is he aware that giving tenants the right to organise their own estates is fully in line with Labour party policy and that we are happy to support that, but that we will not support a Government who give power to local authorities to kick tenants out so that the houses can be done up and sold off?

Sir George Young: If the hon. Gentleman tables an amendment to that effect, it may well receive support from the Government. Anything which gives tenants greater rights is entirely in line with our tenants' charter, which seeks to give tenants greater independence from sometimes remote local authorities.

National Parks

13. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the national parks.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy is one of firm support, represented by the necessary financial and statutory backing.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that the splendour of our national parks is regularly spoilt by a selfish minority scattering litter wholesale? Will he give strong support to the Keep Britain Tidy campaign and encourage the national parks to provide more facilities for the disposal of litter?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly support what my hon. Friend has said. The Department gives considerable support to the Keep Britain Tidy group, and we intend to continue that support. There has also been increased support in real terms for the Countryside Commission and in the national parks supplementary grant in recent years.

Dr. David Clark: After Okehampton, the Minister's assurances about national parks have a somewhat hollow ring. As the Bill which effectively creates a national park in Norfolk has been declared hybrid, will the Government provide time for the introduction of that Bill, which will have the support of the House?

Mr. Waldegrave: After Okehampton—in fact, that Bill is still being debated in another place—I draw entirely the opposite conclusion. The care that both Houses have taken over that matter shows that no decision affecting a national park can be taken lightly.

With regard to the Broads Bill, the problem is not so much that the Bill has been declared hybrid, as that it has been found to contain too much public matter for a private Bill. Discussions about the future of that Bill continue.

Falkland Islands

14. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the conditions of the civilian workers on the Falkland Islands; and if he has any evidence that the excessive consumption of drugs and alcohol is affecting the efficiency with which they are carrying out work under Government contracts.

Sir George Young: The civilian workers employed in the Falkland Islands on contracts let by my Department occupy good living accommodation close to the sites at which they work, where a wide range of sporting and other facilities are also provided. General allegations of drunkenness and drug abuse are without foundation. The work force regularly works a 70-hour, seven-day week and its efficiency can be judged by its excellent performance and productivity in maintaining the tight timetable for the construction of the major airport and associated Army facilities.

Mr. Dalyell: If press reports about drugs and whacky-baccy parties are without foundation, should they not be challenged?

Sir George Young: Although the hon. Gentleman and I attended the same school, that particular form of entertainment did not take place when I was there.

Anglo-Irish Agreement (Secretary of State's Speech)

3.30 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make a statement on his speech in Brussels yesterday and its effects on the implementation of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I spoke yesterday at a lunch given jointly by the Brussels Chamber of Commerce, the British Chamber of Commerce in Belgium and the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board. After speaking first in support of the investment opportunities in Northern Ireland, I referred also to the Anglo-Irish agreement. I expressed my firm belief that, because the principle of consent had been accepted by both Governments so that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority, such a change would not occur. I recognise that the way that I expressed this indicated that I considered this also to be the view of Dr. FitzGerald. I of course accept that this is not the case, and I regret that my words should have given that impression. I am grateful for this opportunity to make the position clear.

In respect of the Anglo-Irish agreement, we stand fully by our commitment to its implementation.

Mr. Archer: I thank the Secretary of State for clarifying what he said, but will he clarify it a little further by confirming expressly that he stands by article 1(c) of the agreement, and that when he assented to that article it was not his view that it was wholly artificial and unrealistic? Does he appreciate that the Opposition supported the Government in giving the agreement a chance to work precisely because it did not commit anyone to any specific position on the ultimate destiny of Ireland, did not require anyone to accept or resile from any aspiration, and does not represent winning or losing for either side? We assume that both Governments meant what they said. Does the Secretary of State appreciate that, although the House is always sympathetic with someone who admits to a slip of the tongue, it is usually wiser to confess frankly that that is what it was than to put a gloss on it?

Mr. King: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will concede that I said that I regretted that the words I used gave that impression, and I wish to make that absolutely clear. I also wish to make it absolutely clear that we stand fully by the agreement in all its particulars. I gave my firm belief in my speech in Brussels, as I have elsewhere, that the principle of consent means that a change requires the consent of the majority, and that I believe that the majority will wish to remain part of the United Kingdom. It is my fervent wish that that should be so, and I make no apology for that. I hope and believe that through the agreement we shall develop relations in such a way that both the majority and the minority—it is part of our objective that the views of the minority can be properly considered—will wish to remain under the Government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he said in Brussels. Does he agree that, while it has been hard enough trying to govern the Province against the wishes of many of the minority, to attempt to govern it against the wishes of the majority and Sinn Fein would be to attempt the impossible? I hope that he will stick firmly to what he said in Brussels and in no way go back on it.

Mr. King: I thank my right hon. Friend. I stick firmly by my own beliefs—*[Interruption.]*—and I wish to make that absolutely clear. The regret that I expressed, I repeat, was that the phrases I used could have implied that others accepted them. Of course, we understand the ambitions and aspirations of the Government of the Republic, but my personal view is that the view of the majority will not change.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I, too, express my disappointment at the Secretary of State's choice of words, though I understand his explanation today. He well knows that interpretations will be put on his words on both sides of the border, so that he must be careful about what he says on these issues on all occasions. Is he aware that under the 1973 Act he can order a border poll at 10-year intervals? He might care to think about that in this case.

Mr. King: I am more than aware of what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question, and the events of the last 24 hours have brought that home to me clearly. I am aware of the provision to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I see no requirement for it at the moment. I am not aware that that issue is in doubt as to what the will of the majority would be.

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): Does my right hon. Friend accept that if his initial remarks had correctly represented the situation a great many of us would have found it much easier to support the agreement in the Division last week?

Mr. King: I am aware of my hon. Friend's view on that.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is not the real problem that to get the agreement the Government had to hint to Dr. FitzGerald that there might be a prospect of reunification, that they had to indicate that to Washington to win President Reagan's support and that they had to make statements at the same time designed to defuse loyalist opposition? Does not the real problem result from the Government having had to face two or three ways to get the agreement? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that an agreement founded on such duplicity cannot solve the problems of Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I suppose one might have expected the right hon. Gentleman to seek to find such sinister implications in it. The agreement stands quite clearly. I was expressing my observations on Northern Ireland of what the outcome would be likely to be of the consent of the majority, and I hope that I have made that absolutely clear.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of us feel that in his short time at the Northern Ireland Office he has been pursuing this agreement with great determination and vision, and we wish him well? Will he also accept that the principle which we have accepted—that the majority in Northern Ireland should choose—has been followed for some time by this Government?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I was seeking, as I am seeking, to be understanding of the communities in Northern Ireland. Article 1 represents much more secure protection of their position than many of their political leaders are prepared to recognise. I stand by that. The acceptance by both Governments that any change in the status would come about only with the consent of the majority is a very important safeguard indeed.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that in future it would be wiser to allow the Irish Government to speak for themselves, which they are certainly able to do without any assistance from him? Is he aware that we have the strong impression—whether or not it is fair to have that impression I do not know—that the person who occupies the position of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland usually has accepted the post with great reluctance and comes to the position with little understanding and knowledge of Irish problems or Irish history?

Mr. King: I have made my views clear. I was expressing my own believe in the matter. I accept entirely, as I made clear in my statement, that the way in which I expressed those remarks implied that the statement that I was making, as it were, expressed the Taoiseach's views as well, and I have made it clear that I do not speak for him.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the agreement will have the best chance of succeeding if he tells the truth, speaks in accordance with his conscience and is not hide-bound by public opinion in either the South or the North?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is extraordinary that certain unionist leaders have criticised my belief that there will not be a change in the majority view about their wish to remain part of the United Kingdom. I have expressed that view strongly, and I am surprised that they feel unable to support it.

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he will have to learn that the spoken word is like a sped arrow—it cannot be recalled? The Taoiseach must be suffering from a succession of blows. The first was, "Out, out, out" by the Prime Minister. Now we have heard "Never a united Ireland" from the right hon. Gentleman. What does he have to say about co-operation now with the south? Is he aware that he has shattered the accord before the ink is dry on the agreement? What does he have to say about that to those who supported him last week in the Lobby?

Mr. King: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to make those remarks. I very much believe that they will not prove to be justified. We stand fully by the agreement and will seek to implement it, with the co-operation of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the agreement states that there will be no change in the position in Northern Ireland unless the majority wish it and that there is no expectation that such a change will take place in the immediate future?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is absolutely correct. I was seeking to emphasise again the importance that I and, I believe, the majority of the community in Northern Ireland attach to article 1.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): As the words of article 1 are being questioned, may I bring to the notice of the Secretary of State that wise old Ulster adage which was put into a poem by Seamus Heaney: "Whatever you say, say nothing."

Mr. King: That has been repeated to me every day since I arrived in Northern Ireland. I am aware of that poem.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Will my right hon. Friend accept that those right hon. and hon. Members who take a different view from him about the likely long-term wishes of the people of Northern Ireland respect entirely his right to express his opinions, acknowledge that they are widely held and regret very much the damage that the action of the Opposition today is likely to do to the agreement?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have expressed sincerely my views about the significance of article 1. I stand by them and I think that they will prove to be well founded.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Does the Secretary of State recall that when the Prime Minister outlined the accord I asked her why the Irish Government signed it. Has not the right hon. Gentleman expressed in clear terms the position of Her Majesty's Government all the way through: that at no time has it been suggested that there will be a united Ireland? There will never be a long-term solution to the problems of Ireland until the border goes and there is a united Ireland.

Mr. King: One issue upon which the Taoiseach and I are in absolute agreement is that there is no question of the removal of the border against the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. The Taoiseach has made that clear on a number of occasions. The hon. Gentleman's solution would be singularly disastrous.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Does not the incident illustrate the defective nature of the agreement in both law and in politics in that it is possible for one party to take one view of it whereas the other party takes a completely opposite view of it?

Mr. King: The agreement is clear. The question is what is the likely forecast of what will happen. I was making it clear in my speech that I believe that the consent of a majority for any change in the status will not be forthcoming. That is my forecast. I know that there are others who hold different views, but I believe that I am entitled, on behalf of the Government, to express that view.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Nobody is objecting to the right hon. Gentleman expressing his view, which may or may not be the Government's view. The point that we are concerned about is not a mere slip of the tongue but his putting into the mouth of the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic words which would be politically damaging to any leader of any political party in the Republic. He has sought to act as a mouthpiece for the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland. Would not it be an idea, with his problems, that when he makes statements in future he should say whether he is speaking for himself, the Government, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, or just his own Back Benchers?

Mr. King: I sought to make it clear in my opening statement that I regretted the way in which I had phrased the remarks that I made which gave that impression.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Private notice questions are merely an extension of Question Time, and we have had 15 minutes on this one.

Mr. Archer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Since the Secretary of State expressed from the Government Front Bench a view which he said was his personal view, should not he make it clear to the House that it is a view which he shares with the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: The Secretary of State has made his view clear.

Scottish Teachers (Pay Review)

3.46 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the failure of the Secretary of State for Scotland to set up an independent pay review for Scottish teachers and the resultant crisis in Scottish education which will mean the closure of virtually all Scottish schools tomorrow."

It is now about 16 months since the Scottish teachers first put in a demand for an independent pay review, a legitimate demand which was backed by irrefutable evidence that the Scottish teachers would need an increase of about 40 per cent. to restore the place in the earnings table which they had following the major review of teachers' salaries by Houghton in 1974.

However, the Secretary of State's intransigent attitude has led to a prolonged dispute, a dispute which has gone on even longer than the recent miners' strike. Because of the Government's inaction, members of the Educational Insitute of Scotland, the largest Scottish teachers' union, have resorted to working to contract, which means that there is no curriculum development, no extra-curricular activities, non-co-operation with the examination board and other action.

There has also been selective strike action, which means that many pupils, including many from my constituency, have recently been put on a two-day school week rather than a five-day school week. Tomorrow the EIS is to be supported by other teachers' unions, which will mean that virtually all Scottish schools will be closed tomorrow, affecting almost 1 million school pupils in Scotland.

Therefore, I submit that the matter is important enough to deserve urgent consideration by the House. Practically every family in Scotland is affected by the deplorable failure of the Secretary of State for Scotland to ensure a fair deal for Scottish teachers, which in turn will help to safeguard the educational opportunities of young people in our schools.

The Secretary of State must bear responsibility for that situation, which is the gravest crisis in the history of Scottish education. In view of the inaction of the Secretary of State, it is up to us to apply parliamentary pressure on him. We owe it to the teachers, to the parents, and, above all, to the young people in our schools.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the failure of the Secretary of State for Scotland to set up an independent pay review for Scottish teachers and the resultant crisis in Scottish education which will mean the closure of virtually all Scottish schools tomorrow."

I do not underestimate the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should be grateful for advice on how I should deal with what I consider to be a serious abuse by a Minister. He has released to the press confidential correspondence between me and one of my constituents.

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, an argument has been going on for some time between the Minister of State, Home Office and several Opposition Members since he alleged, when he lost control of himself at Question Time, that Opposition Members had been abusing their powers as Members of Parliament to make representations in immigration cases. Since then, the Home Secretary has climbed down and called it only a misuse of power.

We have received a letter from the Minister requesting us to release our correspondence, saying that he simply wants examples of the problems that we face. We responded by saying that we would give permission for the correspondence to be released, without the names, only if we could debate the issue so that our side of the case could be put fairly.

Since that time, without communicating with me, the Minister has released one of those letters to the *Daily Telegraph*. It was referred to yesterday and part of it was printed. That must be wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I should like your help in making sure that the Minister is appropriately reprimanded.

Mr. Speaker: It is not my function to reprimand Ministers, or to advise the hon. Lady on parliamentary tactics, but there are opportunities to deal with the matter. She might try to obtain an Adjournment debate or raise the matter during business questions tomorrow.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The main business for today is the Bill dealing with the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community. That arises out of the treaty of Rome. We understand that there were discussions in Luxembourg yesterday dealing with the treaty of Rome that suggested small or large amendments to the treaty. We have not had a statement from the Front Bench. There is no copy of the communiqué in the Library and no copy of it will be made available tomorrow. The treaty could change the relationship between Britain and the Community, or Spain and Portugal and the Community. How can we debate the issue of Spain and Portugal joining the Community unless we know what they are about to join?

I beseech you, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of democrats in the House, so that we can consider the subject properly, that today's business should be delayed until we have the fundamental and basic information that we need.

Mr. Speaker: I had expected a point of order from the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on this matter. Does he wish to say something about it?

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I wish to speak about it, Mr. Speaker, because it is directly related to today's business and I regard it as a serious matter.

We are aware that what appears to be an important agreement was made in Luxembourg last night, to make decisions on the extension of majority voting and to make changes in the treaty of Rome. We cannot discuss the merits of those proposals on a point of order, but I feel that the rights of Back Benchers are affected by the text of the agreement not being available to hon. Members, while members of the press have apparently been fully briefed on what is happening in Luxembourg.

When I telephoned the Foreign Office this morning, I was advised that it had only a text in French and was unwilling to take the responsibility of translating it. I also contacted the London office of the European Communities Commission and was told that it did not have a copy and did not know when one would arrive. The House of Commons Library, in its conscientious way, was in touch with the Government first thing this morning saying that it had been unable to secure any text. Surely we are entitled to at least the same information as representatives of the press on vital issues affecting the rights of the House of Commons. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, as protector of Back Benchers, to make inquiries and to ensure that information on such important agreements is made available.

Finally, is it proper and fair to Back Benchers that we should be asked to proceed with a Bill to extend the membership of the Common Market by two nations when we have no information on the agreement that has already been made to extend the rights of majority voting? Obviously, as we do not know the details, we cannot say to what extent it will affect the Bill or our consideration of it. Surely it is grossly improper for us not to have the text that is directly relevant to the Bill when the agreement has been made and when the text is available to others.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that the matter that she raised could be dealt with in an Adjournment debate. With the greatest respect, will you give further thought to what she said? As I understand it, correspondence that we have with Ministers concerning constituents must be confidential. If such information is disclosed to the press without our permission, it must be a matter of concern to the House. The only way that we can raise it is with you, Mr. Speaker.

If the position stated by my hon. Friend is true, as it must be, surely the Minister should be asked to explain how he has disclosed information to the press concerning an hon. Member and her dealings with a constituent. I do not believe that it can be left purely and simply to my hon. Friend to raise the matter in an Adjournment debate; it is a House of Commons matter.

Mr. Speaker: I was seeking, perhaps unwisely, to be helpful to the hon. Lady by advising her on tactics. If the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is alleging that it is a matter of privilege, he should draw it to my attention in the usual way.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We cannot let the matter stand as it now is. This is a very grave incident indeed. I cannot recall any occasion when hon. Members' private correspondence has been released without their permission to members of the press. I should have thought that, as the Leader of the House was present throughout these exchanges, he would take on board the suggestion that the Minister of State should make a statement to the House tomorrow about his conduct.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I suggest

[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]

a compromise, which may attract you as defender of our rights? I suggest that you make private representations that the Prime Minister should address the House on the matter, because all of us wish to know whether it is her opinion that the addition of two members to the EEC will make for more efficient and more cohesive considerations in the EEC, and whether there has been a complete muddle over the past two days, with nothing but eyewash coming out at the end. If that is her view the House may not wish to agree to the treaty. I hope that you will have a private word, Mr. Speaker, and, when you have done so, will consider delaying the proceedings until we have heard the Prime Minister's view.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not misunderstand me when I say that I do not buy that helpful suggestion. I have sympathy with what the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, but, of course, it is a matter for the Government whether papers and translations are made available. Perhaps the Minister will be able to say something about it in his speech.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose——*

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: No. I shall take the point of order of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of your sympathetic and kind reply, would it be in order for you to invite the Leader of the House to make a statement, as it is a matter of only 24 or 48 hours, postponing consideration of the European Communities (Spanish and Protuguese Accession) Bill for only a day or two so that we can get the text of the agreement, which fundamentally affects the Bill?

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are certain areas of policy over which the Government and the Council of Ministers have a veto. We have power over Ministers as Parliament. According to today's press, the Government have considered doing away with the veto on certain areas of their responsibility. That means that Parliament possibly will lose some of its powers. If Parliament loses some of its powers, that is a matter for primary consideration before we look at the business before the House today. I must reinforce the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The Leader of the House should carry out his suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the House is present. It is not for me to comment on that.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is rather strange that you, Mr. Speaker, have been tolerating points of order about a text from over the water. We are concerned about the texts of letters bandied about in the press, when hon. Members believed that the Minister would use them only in general terms.

The Leader of the House and you, Mr. Speaker, should discuss this matter with a view to finding an appropriate way of ensuring that justice is done. When my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was perverting the course of justice, was turned out of the Chamber for doing so, within 10 days almost every man and his dog in the nation were saying, "Mr. Sedgemore got it right".

The complaint of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has been dismissed as though it were of no importance. The matter is important and should be dealt with by you, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the House. The Minister must explain himself at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Speaker: I did not suggest to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that the matter was not important. That was not what she asked me. She asked whether I could give her some advice on the matter, and I did.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I say a few words about the two issues raised in the points of order.

On the matter raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), I am not sure whether the implication is that there is a breach of privilege. If that is her view, the remedy available is well known. I take note of your comments, Mr. Speaker, that the subject might be raised on next week's business. I realise the feeling that is invested in the topic, and I shall treat it seriously.

Regarding the issue raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), I appreciate that it would be to the advantage of the House to have available the text relating to the recent European Council meeting. I am assured by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that it will be available shortly.

However, we live in a less than ideal world. Today we are to discuss but the Second Reading of the legislation and I would have thought that we could at least proceed with our present knowledge, and with the assurance that the document will be available for subsequent stages.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The reply of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was unsatisfactory. On Second Reading we vote on the principle of the Bill. We are being asked to extend to the Governments of Spain and Portugal certain rights that affect Britain regarding the end of majority voting, but we do not know what they are. That fundamental point will not be met by the publication of the document after the debate.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

BILLS PRESENTED

DISABLED PERSONS (SERVICES, CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION)

Mr. Tom Clarke, supported by Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Albert McQuarrie, Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. Jack Ashley, Ms Harriet Harman and Mr. Dennis Canavan, presented a Bill to provide for the improvement of the effectiveness of, and the co-ordination of resources in, the provision of services for people with mental or physical

handicap and for people with mental illness; to make further provision for the assessment of the needs of such people; to establish further consultative processes and representational rights for such people; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 January and to be printed. [Bill 20.]

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc) (Amendment)

Mr. Churchill, supported by Mr. Jack Ashley, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mrs Virginia Bottomley, Mr. Mark Carlisle, Mr. Michael Cocks, Mr. Mark Fisher, Mr. Douglas Hogg, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. David Lambie, Sir Ian Percival and Mr. Cyril Smith, presented a Bill to amend section 1 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 by removing the exemption of television and sound broadcasting and by making further provision with regard to the test of obscenity in the case of an article published in a place to which persons under eighteen years of age have access or an article disseminated through the medium of television or sound broadcasting; and to make a consequential provision: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 January and to be printed. [Bill 21.]

Children and Young Persons (Amendment)

Mr. Dennis Walters, supported by Sir Edward Gardner, Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Charles Morrison, Mr. Robert Rhodes James, Mr. Nicholas Baker, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, Ms Clare Short and Mr. Douglas Hogg, presented a Bill to amend the law in relation to children and young persons in care and to proceedings connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 31 January and to be printed. [Bill 22.]

Safety at Sea

Mr. Albert McQuarrie, supported by Mr. Alexander Pollock, Mr. Gerald Malone, Sir Walter Clegg, Sir Hector Monro, Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn, Mr. David Harris, Mr. Donald Stewart, Mrs Anna McCurley, Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. James Wallace and Dr. Norman A. Godman, presented a Bill to promote the safety of fishing and other vessels at sea and the persons in them; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 February and to be printed. [Bill 23.]

Surcharge and Disqualification of Councillors (Abolition)

Mr. Eddie Loyden, supported by Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Stuart Holland, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Robert Parry, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Miss Joan Maynard, Mr. Terry Fields and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, presented a Bill to abolish the system of surcharge and disqualification as it applies to members of local authorities; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 February and to be printed. [Bill 24.]

Civil Protection in Peacetime

Sir Nicholas Bonsor, supported by Mr. Neil Thorne, Dr. John Gilbert, Sir Antony Buck, Mr. Robert Banks, Mr. Stephen Ross, Mr. Gerald Bowden, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Nicholas Soames and Mr. Richard Shepherd, presented a Bill to enable local authorities to use their civil defence resources in connection with emergencies and disasters unconnected with any form of hostile attack by a foreign power: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 February and to be printed. [Bill 25.]

Criminal Records

Mr. Patrick Cormack, supported by Mr. Robert C. Brown, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Charles Morrison, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Ray Powell, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. John Hunt, Mr. Michael Cocks, Mr. Bryan Gould and Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, presented a Bill to protect children and vulnerable adults from physical, sexual or economic abuse by permitting local authorities to have access to the criminal records of any person who seeks employment with, or offers his services to, any person or organisation providing care: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 January and to be printed. [Bill 26.]

Crown Immunity

Mr. Richard Shepherd, supported by Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. Steve Norris, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and Mr. Teddy Taylor, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to Crown Immunity: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 February and to be printed. [Bill 27.]

Unborn Children (Protection)

Mr. Ken Hargreaves, supported by Mr. David Amess, Mr. A. J. Beith, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Peter Bruinvels, Mr. Ian Campbell, Mr. David Evennett, Mr. Michael Hancock, Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. James White and Mrs. Ann Winterton, presented a Bill to make provision relating to human embryos produced by *in vitro* fertilisation; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 January and to be printed. [Bill 28.]

New Towns (Access to Information) (Scotland)

Mr. Robin Cook, supported by Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. Willie W. Hamilton, Mr. David Lambie, Dr. M. S. Miller, Sir Russell Johnston, Mr. Tom Clarke and Mr Robin Squire, presented a Bill to provide for greater public access to Scottish New Town Development Corporation meetings, reports and documents subject to specified confidentiality provisions: to give Scottish New Town Development Corporations duties to publish certain information; and for related purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 January and to be printed. [Bill 29.]

Protection of Military Remains

Mr. Michael Mates, supported by Mr. Robert Atkins, Mr. Nicholas Soames, Mr. Neil Thorne, Mr. John Stokes and Sir Nicholas Bonsor, presented a Bill to secure the protection from unauthorised interference of the remains of military aircraft and vessels that have crashed, sunk or been stranded and of associated human remains: and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 31 January and to be printed. [Bill 30.]

Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction)

Mr. John Horne Robertson, supported by Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Clement Freud, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. George Foulkes, Mrs. Anna McCurley, Dr. M. S. Miller, Mr. Laurie Pavitt, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Frank Dobson and Mr. Jeremy Hanley, presented a Bill to amend the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 to make it an offence to sell any tobacco or tobacco product to persons under the age of sixteen; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 31 January and to be printed. [Bill 31.]

Redundancy Payments (Reciprocity with Northern Ireland) (Amendment)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell, supported by Mr. Roy Beggs, Sir John Biggs-Davison, Mr. Ron Lewis, Mr. James Molyneaux, Mr. Ivor Stanbrook and Rev. Martin Smyth, presented a Bill to amend the provisions governing redundancy payments so as to secure greater reciprocity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in respect of qualifying service: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 February and to be printed. [Bill 32.]

Road Traffic Regulation (Parking)

Mr. Kevin McNamara presented a Bill to amend the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 in relation to parking: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 January and to be printed. [Bill 33.]

Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons)

Sir Gerard Vaughan, supported by Mr. Alex Fletcher, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Fred Silvester, Mr. Patrick Nicholls, Dr. Ian Twinn, Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Peter Bruinvels, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Gerald Howarth, Mr. Kenneth Hind and Mr. John Heddle, presented a Bill to make provision for reducing drainage rates in respect of premises used by disabled persons and invalids: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 February and to be printed. [Bill 34.]

Horticultural Produce

Sir John Wells, supported by Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Mark Hughes, Mr. Richard Body, Sir David Price, Mr. Stephen Ross, Mr. Robert Atkins, Mr. Ken Weetch and Mr. David Crouch, presented a Bill to confer on authorised officers (within the meaning of Part III of the Agriculture and Horticulture Act 1964) powers in relation to the movement of horticultural produce; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 January and to be printed. [Bill 35.]

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension)

Dr. Brian Mawhinney, supported by Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Frank Field and Mr. Simon Hughes, presented a Bill to extend the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to Joint Consultative Committees: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 31 January and to be printed. [Bill 36.]

Industrial Training

Sir William Clark, supported by Sir Edward du Cann, Sir Peter Hordern, Sir Philip Holland, Sir Walter Clegg, Mr. T. H. H. Skeet, Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark and Mr. Jonathan Aitken, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to the functions of industrial training boards: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 January and to be printed. [Bill 37.]

Corneal Tissue

Mr. John Hannam, supported by Sir David Price, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Tim Yeo, Mr. Clement Freud, Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, and Mr. Jeremy Hanley, presented a Bill to permit the removal of eyes or parts of eyes for research for therapeutic purposes by certain specified persons who are not medically qualified subject to appropriate safeguards: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 January and to be printed. [Bill 38.]

Consumer Safety (Amendment)

Mr. Conal Gregory, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier, Mr. Kevin Barron, Mr. Tony Blair, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Graham Bright and Mr. David Sumberg, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to the safety of consumers and others: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 February and to be printed. [Bill 39.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I heard the observations of several of my hon. Friends about the timing of the Second Reading in relation to the conclusion early this morning of the European Council meeting, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister over the past two days. My right hon. Friend will make a statement to the House tomorrow about the outcome of the meeting. I shall arrange for the conclusions of the Council to be placed in the Library in the usual way. If those conclusions require the presentation to the House of amendments to any of the existing treaties, there will be further opportunity for debate and consideration.

This afternoon I shall address myself to the principle implicit in the Second Reading of the Bill. Six months ago I had the privilege of attending the ceremonies that took place on the same day in Lisbon and Madrid on 12 June for the purpose of signing the treaties that provided for accession to the European Community. All those present realised that we were taking part in an event of historic significance, not only for Spain and Portugal, but for Europe as a whole. That day was the culmination of eight long years of negotiation that began with the Portuguese application in March 1977 and the Spanish application in July 1977.

The House will recall that following the restoration of democracy in both their countries, Spain and Portugal looked immediately to the Community as the best guardian of their new freedom. Accession, they felt, would end their isolation from the mainstream of European developments. That certainly was the message that came through with great clarity at the ceremonies on 12 June.

Mario Soares, then the Prime Minister of Portugal, described it as

"a coming in from the cold".

Felipe Gonzalez, the Prime Minister of Spain, said it was

"completing the unity of our old continent and overcoming the centuries-old isolation of Spain".

For the United Kingdom and for Europe, that indeed was, and is, the principal significance of enlargement. That has long been recognised in all parts of the House. I acknowledge the interest of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, which visited Madrid last month.

The accession of Spain and Portugal will reinforce the Community, which stands internationally for progress, liberty and democracy. Twelve democracies — whose fortunes have been linked for centuries, sometimes in alliance, sometimes in conflict — are dedicating themselves to work in future in a new and enlarged partnership towards the common goals set out in the preamble to the Treaty of Rome, which are to:

"strengthen peace and liberty . . . ensure economic and social progress . . . lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe".

Accession will serve, too, to enhance our bilateral relations with Spain and Portugal. Next year we shall celebrate the 600th anniversary of our unbroken alliance with Portugal—the Treaty of Windsor dates from 9 May 1386. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Was the right hon. and learned Gentleman there?"]—I claim no responsibility for the treaty. However, earlier this year I was privileged to attend Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh on their memorably successful royal visit to Portugal.

Our links with Spain date from the Confederation of Toledo in 1254, although they have been interrupted from time to time since then. This year, 1985, is the 10th anniversary of the enthronement of the King of Spain. I am sure that the whole House will share my pleasure at the fact that in 1986, the year of Spain's accession, we shall be receiving the King and Queen of Spain on a state visit to this country.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that it is compatible with the admission of Spain to the European Community that that country should retain restrictions on the use of Gibraltar airfield by British military aircraft? What purpose do those restrictions serve, when Spain is supposed to be a friend and an ally?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend knows, those restrictions have been in place for some time. The discussion of the future of those restrictions was one of the things that flowed from the Brussels and Geneva agreements entered into earlier this year. Of course, the fact that both Spain and the United Kingdom are now members of the European Community will facilitate a discussion on differences of that nature.

It is clear, of course, that the Community of Twelve will be very different from the original Community of Six. Enlargement has acted as a catalyst for reform. It has forced the Community to take a long, hard look at its aims, its international role, its procedures, the way decisions are taken and the way that it spends its resources. Much of the drive for yesterday's successful summit meeting in Luxembourg was inspired in that way.

Once, it was only the United Kingdom that argued for reform. Now — and, indeed, yesterday — there is a general readiness to grapple with the Community's problems and a recognition of the need to do more to promote the right conditions for our industries, which will help create jobs. There is still a great deal to be done, but, largely at our instigation, work has been set in hand.

We need to promote the right conditions for our industries, and we are doing just that. A programme is under way for the urgent completion of the Common Market. The bureaucratic obstacle to the movement of goods is being dismantled. Under the Fontainebleau agreement we have dealt with the problem of budget imbalances, so that the United Kingdom will pay only 7 per cent. net at most of any additional expenditure.

In high technology, we have begun to build better prospects for the Community of tomorrow. Esprit, a five-year research programme in information technology, is under way. The Eureka concept, which will help us the better to compete with the United States and Japan, is developing quite well.

With Europe, too, we are successfully contending for the future of the open trading system, which is crucial for

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

prosperity and jobs. Only last week, the Community, with our help, played a major role in bringing about agreement in Geneva on the launch of a new GATT round.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the Eureka project was developing quite well. However, there have been numerous reports in the press of hitches, difficulties and snags. Are those reports without foundation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that there is almost nothing in human existence that is not the subject of such reports. What I said is true. The project is working and developing increasingly well. However, like every other project or programme, differences are bound to arise from time to time.

A different topic, which is not the scene of universal tranquillity, is that of agricultural surpluses. They are being brought under control, but it is a difficult process, not just in the Community or just in Britain, but in the United States and other countries as well. Milk production quotas have been put in place in the Community, and a reformed wine regime has been agreed. We shall continue to fight, as we must, for a restrictive price policy to bring Community prices more into line with those in the outside world.

These are worthwhile achievements, and they must take their place alongside the striking Community success that we are marking today—the conclusion of the complex negotiations for the entry of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that the accession of two countries which are much more dependent upon agriculture than are the existing members of the Community will make the reform of the CAP easier, or more difficult, to achieve?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I suspect that it will make the management of the problem—which extends far beyond the frontiers of the Community — of the surplus generating capacity of an increasingly technological industry easier, rather than more difficult. I say that because many people speak as though the Community has created the problems, whereas its existence will help to solve them. The problems of surpluses affect agriculture in every country, with the exception of the Soviet Union. I do not believe that the enlargement of the Community will make the problems more difficult to solve.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose——*

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall not give way. I shall listen to my hon. Friend's speech with great interest, as I always do when I have that opportunity.

There is a long way to go if the enlarged Community is to make the most of its potential. Already the shape of the agenda for the enlarged Community is clear. It is designed to meet the needs of the people of the enlarged Community, not only for this decade, but to the end of the century. It concentrates on technology, on getting value for money, and on creating real prospects for jobs. Success in meeting those challenges will be the best welcome that we can give to Spain and Portugal and their peoples. That is the purpose of the Bill before the House.

The Bill will incorporate into the law of this country the terms of the accession treaty. When ratified, it will permit the entry into effect of the revised own resources decision.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke of the importance of this legislation for relations between this country and Spain. He said nothing about the important issue of the pensions that will be payable to Spaniards who worked in Gibraltar up to the time when the frontier was closed. He must know that it is an issue of the first importance to the Government of Gibraltar. It could cost them £7 million a year for the next 15 years. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman give them any sort of assurance before he concludes his speech?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman was right to raise that question. It is clear that the financing of those obligations is a matter of interest. The Government will make a significant contribution for the first year from the date of Spain's accession to assist Gibraltar to meet its obligations while negotiations continue about future years. I shall say something more about Gibraltar later.

I come now to the central points of the Bill. Many members of the existing Community were worried about the difficulties which Spanish and Portuguese accession might cause for one or other sector of their economies, but we all recognised the political importance of success in the main negotiations and the political consequences of failure. Our common aim was to negotiate terms which gave time for the necessary adaptation, and which established a fair balance between the interests of the existing Community and those of the acceding member states. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House, the terms

"are very satisfactory for the United Kingdom".—[*Official Report*, 2 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1063.]

I believe that they are also good for Spain and Portugal.

There were, of course, special problems to be considered. Trade in industrial products is one example. For at least 200 years, and perhaps for even longer than that, there has been a history of problems of one kind or another in our trade with Spain. Successive attempts at treaties of commerce have not been able to solve the problem. The barriers have not been all one way. Now, with Spain a member of the Community, those barriers will at last come down. The high tariffs that were allowed under the 1970 agreement between the Community and Spain are to be cut by more than half after the end of only three years' transition, and phased out altogether by the end of seven years. Special arrangements have been made for car exports to Spain, and Portugal's tariffs, which are in any case lower, will be progressively reduced over the same seven-year period. Spain has already passed legislation to introduce value added tax from the date of accession. Portugal is properly allowed a derogation.

The opening of this new market of 50 million domestic consumers offers major opportunities to our exporters. They claim that they should not wait until the end of the relatively short transitional period. If they do not act now, I have no doubt that their competitors will do so. I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in urging our business community to make the most of this new opportunity.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned VAT. He will be aware that the Greeks have

recently been allowed to postpone yet again their introduction of VAT, even though they entered the Community in 1981. Is my right hon. and learned Friend any more confident that Spain, and more particularly Portugal, will be able to hold to their programme and timetable better than the Greeks have done since 1981? Can he give us some expression of his confidence in this matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Spain has already agreed to do this from the date of accession and, indeed, has already passed legislation to that effect. Portugal has been allowed a derogation for three or four years from now. I think that my hon. Friend will know that derogations of that kind are not usual, and that in most cases the timetable set is fulfilled. I do not think that any country is innocent of having failed to hit such target dates from time to time.

Agriculture was, of course, one of the most difficult parts of the negotiations. Spain is highly competitive in some sectors, and existing member states were worried about the effect of competition on their own producers. In the result, the transitional arrangements for the most sensitive products, such as fruit and vegetables, are to last for 10 years. That gives the fullest possible protecion to Community horticultural producers, including our own. On the other side of the account, both Spain and Portugal are deficit producers for milk, beef and cereals, so that should offer attractive opportunities to exporters in this country as tariffs are phased out.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that many of us have strong constituency interests in horticulture. There are fears about the viability of some enterprises because of the import of tomatoes in particular. If, during the transition period, the problems of our tomato growers become increasingly apparent, given the unfair competition from the Dutch sector, can my right hon. and learned Friend assure us that the Government will consider providing further financial support to enable our growers to switch to other horticultural products and to compensate them for the much lower heating costs that obtain in the Iberian peninsula?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises a rather different and wider question, which has been considered from time to time by Governments in different contexts. At this stage, all I can say is that the additional transitional period of 10 years was chosen specifically to allow problems of this kind to be considered.

I was dealing with the opportunities available to British agriculture exporters. Special arrangements have been made to help Portugal adjust to the common agricultural policy, and she will receive significant aid to help her develop the necessary agricultural infrastructure.

I reported to the House on 28 November that the Foreign Affairs Council had agreed a mandate for negotiations to ensure that the agricultural trade flows of the Community's Mediterranean partners were maintained.

We have been able to preserve the balance of fishing opportunities under the common fisheries policy. Spain and Portugal are incorporated into the common fisheries policy for its duration. With certain limited exceptions, Spanish and Portuguese access to Community waters is limited to those areas and species to which they currently have access. The number of Spanish and Portuguese vessels fishing in Community waters will continue to be strictly controlled and subject to strict monitoring and reporting requirements. Effective fishing opportunities for United Kingdom fishermen remain undiminished.

Spain and Portugal will build up agricultural receipts only gradually. To ensure that during the first few years of membership Spain should be in rough budgetary balance and Portugal a modest net beneficiary, the Community agreed that both countries should be refunded, at a rate diminishing progressively over the transitional period, a substantial percentage of their contributions—the same treatment as Greece received in the equivalent years after her accession.

It was always the case that enlargement would entail at least some cost to the Community, including the United Kingdom. But, as the House knows, the arrangements negotiated at Fontainebleau by the Government ensure that the United Kingdom will pay only 7 per cent. net of any additional costs.

The Commission estimates that at the end of transition the costs of enlargement may be about 0·1 per cent. of the Community's VAT base. On 1986 figures, this would be equivalent to 1,800 mecu, or about £1,080 million per annum. Under the Fontainebleau arrangement, this means that there will be a United Kingdom contribution of roughly £75 million a year at the end of transition.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) asked about one aspect of Gibraltar. I said earlier that that was one area in which Spanish accession would bring a new dimension to our relations with Spain. Indeed, a new era began a year ago when I announced the Brussels agreement to the House. On 5 February of this year the Lisbon agreement was finally implemented, and Spain opened the frontier with Gibraltar. Gibraltar and Spain both instituted in advance certain reciprocal Community arrangements. Since then, Gibraltar has been able to judge for herself what the impact of Spanish accession will be.

The impact of the Franco era is not easily forgotten, but, happily, some of the old fears and hostility are receding before the policies of Senor Gonzalez' Government. Certainly the Gibraltar economy has received a major shot in the arm.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I wish to return to the point raised by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on the payment of pensions to those workers from Spain who formerly worked in Gibraltar. My understanding is that the Spanish Government, when they closed the border, effectively ensured that these people could no longer work. Despite that, Gibraltarians are expected to pay for the pensions of those people. As the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said, it is some £7 million per annum over a period of about 15 years. That is a substantial sum—£105 million in total. For the 30,000 people of Gibraltar to carry that burden is clearly unfair. Although my right hon. and learned Friend said that a substantial portion of that sum would be made up by Her Majesty's Government, I think that the Gibraltarian Government are looking for a rather better deal than that from us.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This is a long and complicated story. It cannot be denied that over the years the Government and the people of Gibraltar have received

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

substantial help from this country, and rightly so, and the future pattern in that regard is always open to consideration.

With regard to pensions, it must be remembered that the workers in question contributed to the Gibraltar pension scheme for a number of years and, like other workers who contributed in the same period, are entitled to benefits which match those payable to people who live in Gibraltar. That is the pattern with which we are dealing, and I have nothing to add to what I said earlier about this topic.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify the matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid not at this stage. I do not want to get into a long debate about this aspect of Gibraltar in the context of the wider subject with which we are dealing.

The Gibraltar Government have already completed all stages of their Bill to give effect to Spanish and Portuguese accession. I have no need, in this or any other context, to remind the House of our commitment to respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar as enshrined in the preamble to the Gibraltar Constitution Order 1969. We look forward to continued fruitful collaboration between Gibraltar and her neighbours in the campo.

Enlargement has helped the Community address its own future and to decide on the steps needed to enable us collectively to play our full role internationally, politically and economically. The enlarged Community will be the largest trading entity the world has known. It will therefore be well placed to defend the interests of the open trading system, on which our economic future depends, against the current wave of protectionist pressures.

Enlargement marks the arrival of democratic Spain and democratic Portugal as our partners in Europe in the widest sense, in the Community and NATO as well, where we hope that Spain, like Portugal, will assume her full place. It represents a commitment by nations with a shared history, which have suffered from the devastation of successive wars, to build together a new Europe in which the conflicts of the past are no longer possible. It represents, in the words of the Treaty of Rome, a commitment to common action to eliminate the barriers that divide Europe and for the pooling of resources to strengthen peace and liberty. I have every confidence in commending the Bill to the House, and that I shall be able to tell Senor Ordonez, my Spanish colleague, when I see him in Madrid tomorrow, that the House joins me in giving a very warm welcome to Spain and Portugal.

4.31 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The official Opposition have always made clear our support for the accession of both Spain and Portugal to the European Community. Therefore, we are glad to support the Second Reading of the Bill. Accession of these two countries, bringing the Community's membership to 12, makes it more truly European and complete. It will also give reinforcement to the democratic systems in both nations, which have recently escaped the grip of Right-wing totalitarianism. Neither country has the maturity, economically or politically, that other members of the Community share, and we have an obligation as their neighbours and friends, as well as those who encouraged the end of Fascism, to assist with their full integration into western European society.

Both countries have, against substantial pressures, tightened the democratic grip, but we who preach the merits of political choice over dictatorship must also mean it when we have a chance to help those who need it in keeping to the democratic road. Rhetoric will not protect democracy, but a proper recognition of what we can do to assist these nations will be of inestimable value.

Mr. Forth: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely, and I am aware that one of the principal arguments in favour of the accession of Spain and Portugal is that of democracy. However, has the Labour party made any estimates of the cost in jobs, taxes or moneys lost to the British citizens of this protection of democracy? Will he be giving us a bill for the marvellous benefit that he is setting out?

Mr. Robertson: I shall be coming to the hon. Gentleman's special interest—the cost of accession—and I shall be making my own criticism, but that does not negate the welcome that I and my hon. Friends give to the fact that Spain and Portugal will be joining the European Community. There is no price, whether it is measured in terms of money or cost, to be set against the fact that countries under the grip of totalitarianism are now in a pluralist democracy again.

Accession will have profound implications for the European Community and direct effects on this country, and we would be wise to give careful thought and attention to that instead of generally welcoming the new members and the new trade that such a move might bring us. Accession is already having an effect on the routine but damaging prices in the Community budget. It will have a dramatic and so far uncalculated effect on the agricultural policy of the EEC, and it will increase the agricultural bias already too obvious within the Community.

In bringing in two much poorer nations, accession will change the balance in priorities and will yet again move the Community's centre of gravity from the northern industrialised states to the agriculture-dominated Mediterranean south of Europe. The effects on the regional and social policies of the Community will, in many cases, directly affect this country for the worst, and the impact of accession on the budget will also have an effect on our domestic programme. All these issues have been insufficiently debated and discussed in the Community and have not been debated fully in the House.

Those factors make it doubly unsatisfactory that we find that this important and indeed historic debate is squeezed into a three-hour period. It is an inadequate and contemptuous way in which to treat such a crucial and, for this country, far-reaching issue. The European Community may not be the most stimulating and exciting of the affairs debated in the House, and it may attract fewer hon. Members than most subjects, but we have a duty to examine, in adequate time, issues that will have such an important effect on us and on our trading relationships.

The most important aspect of accession will be the effect on agricultural policy and, as this policy dominates the European Community, there is no doubt that this will have a most penetrating effect on the way in which the Community is run.

The provisions for Spain and Portugal in the draft 1986 budget are clearly inadequate. The first draft from the

Council of Ministers had no provision for the accession of Spain and Portugal. The latest version still seems to be incapable of delivering on the assurances and guarantees given to Spain and Portugal during the negotiations, which regarded them as being net beneficiaries in their initial years. Either this is to be an additional commitment superimposed on the already overstrained budget, which may at the moment be being thrown out by the European Parliament in Strasbourg, or the commitments that have been made will be reneged on. If they are, the two poorest nations in the Community will find themselves net contributors. Although a merry-go-round of Treasury Ministers have represented us in the Community budget negotiations, not one, as they have paraded in and out of the European Community, has been able to shed any more light on the bizarre intricacies that the Budget Council imposes on the Community.

On top of all this, the agricultural consequences of accession are still unresolved. In protocol 25 of the treaty, the 10 nations recognise that an increase in Portuguese agricultural activity and hence production will follow from accession, but they maintain that it will be accompanied by agricultural discipline. How can this be possible? Would the Minister of State care to explain the use of mirrors by the Foreign Secretary? He managed to say that he recognised the effect that increased production by Spain and Portugal would have on surpluses, but today he told us that the management of the surpluses would be made easier.

Given that surpluses are one of the most challenging and daunting problems facing Britain and the Community as a whole, how on earth will increases in the production of citrus fruit and tomato juice by Spain and Portugal make management of the crisis easier? As we had no answer from the Foreign Secretary, perhaps the Minister of State, in his usual elegant fashion, will give us a demonstration of his skill at making speeches without his officials' notes in front of him.

There is no explanation for the Secretary of State's use of mirrors, because the two items of increased production and managing the surpluses are incompatible. The already chronic problem of surpluses is bound to be exacerbated. This, taken with the existing shortages in the structural fund—the 1986 budget freezes them at the previously inadequate levels, which is a cut in real terms—puts a relentless and intolerable pressure on the difficulties that the Community has already with the common agricultural policy. We learn from this week's discussions that the cuts in the regional and social funds will have a direct effect upon the United Kingdom as a beneficiary of the funds.

Three recent reports have underlined the crisis in the CAP which, in the absence of action, accession is bound to make worse. The first and most weighty report was that of the House of Lords Select Committee which said about the CAP:

"Left unreformed it could break down. If this were to happen the Committee fear that the existence of the EEC itself would be in jeopardy."

It continued:

"if the reform of the CAP is delayed once again, its excessive demands on available resources will hinder the Communities' economic recovery."

This report, by worthy Peers sympathetic to Europe, estimated the cost of the CAP to be as high as £20 billion. It predicted that cereal stocks would rise to more than 89 million tonnes by 1991 compared with the present 25 million tonnes, and that Spain and Portugal's accession would cause further strains. It suggested that the CAP had not resulted in aid for poor farmers who needed it. The Committee recommended that the Community should move to a policy of restricting prices and establishing realistic thresholds combined with direct economic support for those farmers in difficulties. It concluded:

"The chief obstacle to the success of a prices policy is a lack of political courage to enforce it."

The House deserves to know, as we debate this historical milestone, whether the Government have the political courage to force changes in the CAP which alone, according to the Foreign Secretary, will make the accession of Spain and Portugal a guarantee for the future.

The conclusions of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the European Commission's Green Paper make it clear that the existing need for immediate discussion and action fundamentally to reform the CAP will be made more urgent by the accession of Spain and Portugal.

We have heard little or nothing from the Foreign Secretary about the implications of accession on agricultural sectors and on manufacturing sectors relying on light industry and textiles, for example, which have been badly battered by far eastern competition. Surely that is worth a mention.

Why have we heard nothing about the renewed need for a regional policy with bite, which will arise from accession? The hard financial facts are that an adequate social and regional policy with funding appropriate to provide the structural retraining, job creation and redistributive role intended, which is doubly necessary today, is nowhere matched by the resources made available. The payments this year will be cut as the demands on the regional and social funds increase. Added to this topsy-turvy contradiction is the financing of the integrated Mediterranean programmes. The Government's White Paper, Cmnd. 9627, tells us blandly that accession will not have an effect on existing structural funds, and much the same statement appears in the explanatory memorandum. After last week's Budget Council, how can that possibly be true? How can the new demands of the integrated Mediterranean programme be met without affecting existing structural funds? How will accession affect trading with Latin America? Will not Spain's and Portugal's inevitable shift to the Lomé countries, as a result of accession, make the debt crisis of Latin America worse? What will happen about the free movement of migrant workers and other workers as a result of accession? Lack of time will prevent discussion of a series of other issues.

The impact of accession on Britain will be of considerable importance, but on this we have heard least from the Foreign Secretary. The social and regional funds are of major importance to projects in Britain and it is not sufficient for Ministers to say that, because of the Fontainebleau arrangement and the rebate mechanism, the amount of money spent from the regional and social funds in Britain is of academic importance. Surely no one believes that it is a substitute for direct aid to our poorest areas for extra cash to be handed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Any dissolution or diminution of the social and regional funds which affects Britain's poorest areas must be of consequence and must be considered by the House.

We know that the changes in the guidelines for social fund availability will, at a time of high unemployment,

[Mr. Robertson]

reduce the amount available to the United Kingdom from £350 million to £280 million, a real cut of 25 per cent. The new guidelines laid down by the Government for their own regional policy have led to a cut in the amount of money available in the social fund. We know that under the regional fund, the integrated Mediterranean programmes involved a £3·9 billion package for that region, of which £1·45 billion was to come out of existing structural funds in the Community. The Community budget cannot accommodate the cost of accession, so how can it conceivably accommodate the extra demand that is being imposed upon it?

The start of this debate was marked by genuine and justified complaints that the House and the country were insufficiently aware of the details of the agreement reached last night in Luxembourg. If major changes have been made to the way in which the Community operates and how decisions are arrived at, we deserve to have the fullest details before us in a debate of such historic importance. It is unacceptable for the Foreign Secretary to promise that the details will be available tomorrow. The details are needed today.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: They are now available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Robertson: The generosity of the Foreign Secretary, appearing an hour into the debate like Santa Claus with the finally deciphered documents, hardly assists the ability of the House, and especially the Opposition—*[Interruption.]* It would be doubly difficult for me to get to the Vote Office and back while addressing the House. Hon. Members on both sides of the House deeply resent the way in which the debate has been handled.

We welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal, and we wish them well. They will have their problems in adapting to the European Community, but these will be nothing as we all come to terms with a Community of 12. Like so many problems which the Community tackles, this has been embarked upon with inadequate preparation, incomplete financing and the already mighty burden of agriculture heavier on top of us all. We cannot turn our back on Spain and Portugal but at some time——

Mr. David Young *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: —the arithmetic of the European Community will have to be reserviced and the common agricultural policy subjected to surgery, or there will be precious little Community for Spain and Portugal—or the other 10—to be part of.

4.50 pm

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to participate in the debate at such an early stage. I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the occupants of both Front Benches for the fact that I shall have to leave the Chamber immediately after I have spoken to attend an important Back-Bench Members' Committee.

I welcome the Bill because I believe that it is in the best interests of the European Community. It will bring considerable industrial and commercial trading opportunities between Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom. That will apply especially to fish processing and agriculture products, which are two of the main sources of employment in my constituency. I hope that British support of Spain's entry into the Community will encourage that country to take its full part in working with NATO.

The Bill received welcome approval from the other place. Several of their Lordships, including my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office——

Mr. George Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have heard the Foreign Secretary say a short time ago that vital documents on the outcome of the summit which ended last night were available in the Vote Office. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has been to the Vote Office and it seems that the only documents available on this issue are glossy pamphlets which bear the date May 1985. The guarantee of the Foreign Secretary has not yet been delivered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I shall make arrangements for inquiries to be made.

Mr. McQuarrie: I was saying that when the Bill passed through another place it received welcome approval. Several of their Lordships, including my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, spoke about the dependent territory of Gibraltar. My noble Friend the Minister of State reiterated, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was kind enough to do this afternoon, the Government's adherence to the preamble to the Gibraltar constitution on sovereignty. My right hon. and learned Friend's reiteration of the Government's adherence to the preamble will be welcomed greatly by the Government and people of Gibraltar.

In this short debate I shall concentrate on a serious problem which has already been mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)—the payment of pensions to the former Spanish workers who were employed in Gibraltar until the closing of the Spanish frontier gates in July 1969. From information which I have received—this has been mentioned by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris)—the total cost of the payment of pensions to these Spanish workers will be £7 million per annum for 15 years. My right hon. and learned Friend has said that the Spanish workers contributed towards their pensions, but until July 1969 they were contributing only four shillings in old money per week while their employers were contributing five shillings. That does not relate to £7 million per annum for the next 15 years.

The hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) tabled a written question in which he asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who would be responsible ultimately for the payment to former Spanish workers in Gibraltar of pensions which were frozen as a result of the Spanish Government's action in closing the frontier. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield (Mr. Eggar), replied:

"Under Gibraltar law and under EC regulations, responsibility for payments of pensions rests with the Gibraltar Government. We are having discussions with the Gibraltar Government about how this responsibility will be met. — [*Official Report*, 2 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. *38*.]

A short time ago my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary told us that the Government are in consultation with the Gibraltar Government, who will make a substantial contribution to the payment of the Spanish workers' pensions. I shall quote from a press release which the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Sir Joshua Hassan, issued yesterday. It states:

"I have just been informed of the answer given by Mr. Tim Eggar to a parliamentary question by Mr. David Young regarding the ultimate responsibility for the payment of social security pensions to Spanish nationals working in Gibraltar before the closure of the frontier by the Spanish Government.

Gibraltar Government Ministers have made it clear to the British Government that, while Gibraltar is prepared to meet its moral responsibility in full, and has accordingly offered to contribute the total amount paid into the social insurance fund by Spanish workers, plus accrued interest (a total of some £4,500,000), their view is that the ultimate responsibility lies with the British Government."

If the Gibraltar Government are unable to pay that sum, which is equal to 12 per cent. of their budget, the Spanish workers could go to the European Court. However, it would be the British Government and not the Gibraltar Government who would be taken to the court. Therefore, the British Government should address themselves to the issue of ultimate responsibility.

Sir Joshua Hassan added that the Spanish Government should have some responsibility. The press release states:

"We reiterated previous oral suggestions that the Spanish Government might be asked to acknowledge some responsibility in this matter."

The latest communication to London on this issue was dated 29 November.

The press release continues:

"Secondly, it has been recently alleged in Gibraltar that this matter has been left too late. In fact, it was raised by me"—

that is, Sir Joshua—

"with Sr. Oreja in Strasbourg in 1977 and . . . more particularly, it has been the subject of correspondence with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and of meetings with Southern European Department ODA officials, since August 1984 and throughout 1985."

I think that I have said enough to show that it should not be the responsibility of 30,000 dependent territory citizens in Gibraltar, who have been acclaimed, rightly, as more British than the British—they fought for the right to remain British citizens, and they are prepared to accept a moral responsibility for contributing £4·5 million—to pay Spanish workers large sums in the face of the actions of Franco and the present regime in Spain, who are demanding that £7 million per annum should be paid for 15 years by people who saw some of their compatriots imprisoned by the Spanish for 16 years. Why should they be asked to do so? Why does not my right hon. and learned Friend go to the Spanish Government and say, "You have a moral responsibility to pay part of the £7 million. You were responsible for closing the border and not the British Government. The closing of the gates was not the responsibility of the Gibraltar Government. Our gates remained open for 16 years when these people were imprisoned." It is not good enough to say, "We shall give consideration to the payment of £7 million per annum and endeavour to help."

My right hon. and learned Friend is well aware that the offer that he has made to Gibraltar is inadequate to meet the obligation. The Spanish Government should accept some form of liability. It should be realised that Gibraltar is not the sole beneficiary of the opening of the border. The town of La Linea was derelict when Franco closed the border and it has benefited greatly from the opening of the frontier gates by the Spaniards. The town having enjoyed that benefit, the Spanish Government have a moral responsibility.

It is not good enough for the Government to say that they are doing something to meet the problem of the payment of £7 million per annum. No one in Gibraltar can accept that approach. The British taxpayer should not be asked to subsidise £105 million over 15 years. When my hon. Friend the Minister of State replies, I ask him to tell us exactly what the Government propose to do to ensure that the Spanish Government honour their commitment.

4.59 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I should like to put at rest the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). He is diligent in his preparations and unusually, because he has been so busy working on his speech, he has overlooked the fact that the Prime Minister has very considerately put on the Order Paper a motion to be moved at 10 o'clock to the effect that "the European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill *[Lords]*. . . may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour."

I am glad to be able to reassure any right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate that they have plenty of time.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) for butting in on his speech, but this load of paper has just been deposited in the Library. It is scarcely legible and there are only three copies. It purports to be a representation of what went on in Luxembourg yesterday. Amongst other things, it says that various matters that have been subject to unanimity are now subject to a qualified majority vote. It says—if I understand it rightly and it is possible that I do not, not because of my lack of understanding but because of the way it is written—that we should harmonise our indirect taxes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not sure what point the hon. Gentleman is seeking to raise. Is he raising the question of the availability and legibility of the document, or the content of it? The content is more a matter for a speech in the debate, not an intervention.

Mr. Marlow: I am deeply concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the availability and legibility of the document. I am also concerned about the fact that this document, which is hardly available and hardly legible, states within it, so far as I can understand, that we should harmonise our excise duties, our currency, and our VAT with these two countries. We are having a debate, but no one in the Chamber realises that by 1992 we should have the same VAT rate as Spain and Portugal——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is seeking to make an intervention. If so, it is hardly relevant to the point that was being raised by the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks). If, on the other hand, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is raising a point of order, the matters to which he is referring are not for me to deal with.

Mr. Cocks: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. While I continue my speech, the Government business managers might consider whether both points would be met by adjourning the House until

[Mr. Cocks]

7 o'clock and then proceeding after 10 o'clock with the full debate, with the full text of the document available for as many people as may wish to have it.

I have got the document to which I think the Foreign Secretary referred. I was hoping that it would be a lifebelt, but it is barely a pair of flabby water wings. I have looked through it, but I cannot find the matters in which I am interested.

The Foreign Secretary was fulsome and euphoric in his introduction. I wondered how long the padding would go on. Eventually he mentioned jobs and the need to promote our industries and said that we were doing just that. I was glad that he came down to earth. This debate is about the principle of the Bill. It was said earlier in answer to the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) that matters of detail could be debated on the remaining stages, but experience leads me to suggest that the remaining stages of the Bill will be emaciated. Therefore, if we want to raise points, we should do so on Second Reading.

The matter on which I wish to spend a few minutes concerns a constituency interest which I have already referred to in the debate on the Queen's Speech—the takeover bid for Harvey's wine firm by Elders. A sort of Antipodean skinhead is mounting what is called a leveraged takeover—something new in this country. The Government reply at that time was that the matter would be taken seriously. I hope that it is still the case.

There is a long tradition in my constituency and in other places in the United Kingdom of bottling wines that are imported in bulk. The quality is high, there is continuing investment and quite a few people are employed. In recent years there has been a move by producers to try to get the wine bottled in the country of origin. I warn the Government against that, particularly in regard to sherry and port from Spain and Portugal. Approximately 30 million litres of port and sherry were bottled in this country last year. If it were decided by either the Spanish or the Portuguese authorities that those products should be bottled only in the country of origin, it would mean a loss of 500 jobs in the bottling trade alone, of which 200 to 300 would be in Bristol, and of a similar number of jobs in the packaging trade. That is not a small matter; it is vital.

Apart from the effects of that on our domestic economy, we must consider also another matter that has arisen recently, the production of polluted wine. It has been found that some continental wines have been tampered with. Anti-freeze has been added to tone them up and give them body. It is known that such wine is poisonous and I am glad that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was recently able to reassure me about the steps the Government are taking to ensure that that poisonous plonk does not come into this country.

If wine is imported in bulk and bottled here, it is easier to detect by sampling whether there has been adulteration or pollution of the wine. That is another reason why the Government should be firm on the matter.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that there is no suggestion in what he is saying that wine imported from Spain has been or is likely to be polluted?

Mr. Cocks: I am pleased to say that no cases have yet come to light.

Mr. Parris: What is the right hon. Gentleman talking about then?

Mr. Cocks: I do not think any cases involving Spain or Portugal have been recorded of wines which have been poisoned with anti-freeze, but I am anxious that the British public should be protected. If they want anti-freeze, they should get it from garages and not from off licences or supermarkets.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Were not a large number of people in Spain poisoned recently because of the sale of adulterated olive oil?

Mr. Cocks: I believe that that is so. I think that mineral oil was added to cooking oil with disastrous consequences that are still being felt.

Mr. Marlow: By now the right hon. Gentleman will be aware that, whereas in the past we have been permitted to veto any change in certain internal European transactions, now changes will probably be made by majority vote. If he thinks that the health and safety regulations governing the production of food in Spain are not what we would find acceptable in this country, that must give him cause for concern when later this evening he is considering whether to vote for or against the measure.

Mr. Cocks: The hon. Gentleman is tempting me. I am not known for my wide-ranging interest in foreign affairs. I do not believe that I have ever spoken on the matter in the House except during the five-day debate on the great decision that we had to make in 1971. On that occasion I spoke late at night. I have not taken much active interest in foreign affairs. I am not enamoured of the Common Market. I was one of the handful of Members who took part in every Division during the passage of the legislation.

It is disturbing to hear what the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has said about the veto and the change to a majority decision. I could develop that theme, but I do not want to delay the House unduly.

I ask the Government to consider seriously what I have said about the bottling of wine. In a national context the number of jobs may be small, but they are important to the communities involved. I hope that in his reply, whether it is before 7 o'clock or after 10 o'clock, the Minister will be able to give an assurance that the Government will be robust in opposing any suggestion that wine should be bottled only in the country of origin.

5.10 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I hope that the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) will not mind if I do not pursue his ideas down the river of port and sherry that is vital to his constituency.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) came to an amazing conclusion in his speech. I was surprised to hear him say that he wished Spain and Portugal well in entering the EEC. Heaven help anybody who is wished ill by the hon. Gentleman if his speech was meant to wish those countries well. His was a strange and all-too-typical speech from the Opposition Front Bench.

Ten years ago, Spain and Portugal were just leaving a black era of tyranny under a one-party state. At that time, all the fashionable pundits in the House and elsewhere told us that the chance of democracy surviving in those countries was slim. The pundits said that there was a threat of Communists taking over and of the military reasserting

its power. The Spanish and Portuguese people deserve great credit for consistently voting in elections—and, I think our Portuguese friends would agree, in too many elections in their case — for democratic, moderate, centralist politicians and Government.

The West has an obligation to ensure that still-fragile democracies continue to flourish. There is no better way to assist them than to ensure that they are part of the European Economic Community.

I voted in favour of continued membership of the Community in the 1975 referendum, principally because I believe in the strength of a politically united western Europe. The addition of Spain and Portugal to the EEC will considerably strengthen that position. I hope that our friends in Spain will remain members of NATO when they hold their referendum next spring. I believe that Spain's membership of the European Community can only strengthen the Western Alliance and lead to peaceful co-existence in Europe.

Spain and Portugal have much to offer the Community. I do not believe that it would have been so easy for the Foreign Secretary to reach such a happy accord with the Spanish on the future of Gibraltar if Spain had not been joining the Community. I believe that Spain's accession will lead to economic regeneration both on the Rock and in the sad town of La Linea.

Europe's important trading links with South America will be improved by the addition of Spain and Portugal and their special relationship with that continent. It saddens me that in a Second Reading debate, which I believe is a historic occasion, some of my hon. Friends and certain Opposition Members are looking too closely at the balance sheet and are not taking a wider historical perspective. It is vital that the Bill be given a Second Reading by an overwhelming majority, so that our friends in Spain and Portugal can see that we truly welcome them into the democratic club. Spain and Portugal will play a vital part in Western defence and a politically united Europe.

5.15 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): The brief speech of the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) has brought the debate back to the major realities of the Bill and the political act enshrined in it.

At the beginning of the last decade, when membership of the European Economic Community was commended to Parliament and to the people of this country, it was the economic aspect that was almost exclusively stressed. It was conceded that to acquire a large free market combining the United Kingdom with the Community, there would necessarily have to be a compulsory, common framework of law. The fact that a comprehensive renunciation of the legislative and legal powers of the United Kingdom was effected passed without immediate criticism.

It soon appeared, however, that the internal market we had entered, the market in which we were to prosper, which would bring regeneration to the British economy, the inward-looking market, was related to an economic structure of the other member states, particularly in respect of agriculture, which was very difficult to reconcile with the economic structure of the United Kingdom.

That difference of structure has caused the perpetual difficulties which have dogged the questions of the European budget and the common agricultural policy—difficulties, which, within the existing framework of 10 member states, if they have not been papered over, are at any rate considered by some people to have been rendered tolerable and acceptable.

Now, in 1985, comes the paradoxical proposition that we should add to the Community of Ten two new member states whose economic and agricultural characteristics will cause even more difficulties to combine with our own and those of the rest of the Community than anything faced in the past.

Why should the Government take a step that is bound to exacerbate the difficulties which we already suffer in the Community? The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) announced at the beginning and again at the end of his speech that the Opposition would support the Bill. It would have been impossible to guess that from the content of his speech, which mostly consisted of a scathing denunciation, a veritable Philippic against the additional difficulties that would be encountered by a Community which included Spain and Portugal.

Mr. George Robertson *rose*—

Mr. Powell: I see that the hon. Member for Hamilton would like to intervene. Perhaps he intends to explain why, after their electoral defeat in 1983, the Labour party has consistently been running away from its position on the EEC?

Mr. Robertson: The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is wrong again. The Labour party is not running away from the issues; it is the world that is changing. Unfortunately, for some hon. Members and some parties, the world never seems to change. The Labour party welcomes the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC. In my speech I reminded the House and the Government of the need for political courage in dealing with the economic and agricultural problems associated with accession. There is no inconsistency in that.

Mr. Powell: I should like to remind the House of some of the difficulties to which the hon. Gentleman drew attention. He said that the accession would "affect this country for the worse". I am interested in the reasons why we should gaily take a step which in his view will "affect this country for the worse". The accession, he said, will cause the "already chronic problems of surplus to be accentuated". At one point in the hon. Gentleman's speech he even said that the problems would become "insoluble".

Why, if all the difficulties are to be made more severe, and if one section after another of the United Kingdom is to suffer disadvantages from the accession, are we nevertheless accepting this action? Why are both Front Benches commending the action to the House?

They gave the reason, although it was not in the forefront of their arguments. The reason is political, not economic. They say that in recent years those two countries have had the good fortune to have a change in their constitution. To use an American expression, they have become "democratic." It is argued that the way to safeguard their democracy is for them to become members of the European Economic Community. In that context, I hope that no Spaniards or Portuguese were listening when the hon. Member for Hamilton referred to their "political immaturity", which he felt would be much assisted by association with politically mature countries such as West Germany and other member states of the existing Community.

[Mr. Powell]

The proposition is, therefore, that the European Economic Community is an organisation for the protection of democracy. I resent the suggestion that it is any business of ours how the Spaniards or Portuguese decide to run their affairs. I resent the modern habit of criticising from a self-righteous pedestal the manner in which the affairs of other countries are regulated.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The right hon. Gentleman does it all the time.

Mr. Powell: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I do not, but we have got into a bad habit in that respect, and we shall suffer retribution when the same medicine is ladled out to us. I state my objection to the very concept of entering into a community with Spain and Portugal with a view to securing or preventing certain developments in their internal forms of government. That is as much their business as our internal form of government is ours.

Mr. Forth: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the preamble to the Treaty of Rome makes no reference to the word or the concept of democracy, and that there is no mechanism within the institutional arrangements of the EEC to expel any member state if its political institutions change during the period of membership?

Mr. Powell: All those things would surely be implicit if it were indeed an organisation for the preservation of democracy and for the enforcement of certain supposedly democratic forms of behaviour on its members.

The real intention is not quite so crude. In this context, "democracy" is used as a term of art to mean adherence to the Western Alliance. The whole business is about Spain's membership of NATO. Distinct advantages which lie within the gift of the European Community and which, as has been admitted in the debate, will have to be paid for in part by this country and the people of this country are being offered as a bribe to Spain to remain what is called "democratic", but really means being a member of NATO. It is all about the integrity, as the United States sees it, of the United States Alliance.

At a critical stage of negotiations between Spain and the EC, the then Spanish Premier deployed in his campaign for membership of the EC the slogan, "No membership of the EC—no membership of NATO." The admission of Spain and Portugal to the EC, with all the economic advantages that they anticipate from it, is the quid pro quo for remaining in NATO, a question which remains open and on which a referendum is to be held in Spain in the near future. Like certain British politicians whom we remember, the present Spanish Prime Minister, in preparing for that referendum campaign, will be on the opposite side from that on which he sought office.

An article in *The Times* of 3 October states that during the Spanish Minister's tour of Europe:

"In Bonn Senor Gonzalez had to listen to Chancellor Kohl emphasising the link between EEC membership and Nato."

This is a quid pro quo—a deal set up in economic terms between membership of the EC and a yes vote in the Spanish referendum on membership of the NATO Alliance. As they approach the referendum, the people of Spain will be told, "Don't you dare vote yourselves out of NATO. Think of all the economic disadvantages that you will incur if membership of the European Economic Community, which is linked with this, is withdrawn." That is what this is all about. It is a politicisation at the highest level of the European Economic Community.

When we receive the hastily and ill produced document to which reference has already been made, it may turn out to contain something foreshadowed earlier this week. I refer to

"the proposed treaty on a common European foreign policy"

which, according to *The Times* correspondent in Luxembourg,

"should receive a smooth passage."

The economic aspects of the EC have already demanded and obtained from this country a far-reaching renunciation of the powers of self-government and decision centred in the House of Commons, and thus in the electorate of this country; but the political dimension represents a much larger and more subtle withdrawal of power both from Parliament and from the electorate. The very fact that it will be embodied in understandings which lie outside the legal framework of the EC makes it very much more difficult for the people of this country to understand what it is of which they are being deprived.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Powell: I am about to conclude. The hon. Gentleman may be able to entertain the House with a speech of his own.

We are reminded of those facts by the very nature of this accession which the Bill makes possible—a deal between members of the EEC on political grounds and a nation reluctant to belong to NATO but trembling on the verge of taking a decision about it. The Economic Community was in itself incompatible with the parliamentary self-government of the United Kingdom through this House of Commons. A political community, which is the direction in which we are now being steered by the same influences, is a far greater withdrawal of power and responsibility from the place where the electorate of this country have always reposed them—that is, in Parliament and in the House of Commons.

I hope that there will be those who will oppose the Second Reading of the Bill. If so, I shall be happy, with my friends, to join them in the Lobby.

5.28 pm

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), unlike many previous speakers, rose to the terms of the debate, although he reached a different conclusion from mine.

I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman on two points. He reminded the House, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), that there are no mechanisms in the EC for the enforcement of democracy or its continuation on member states, but those are not the terms in which the value to Spanish democracy of joining the EEC have been advanced. Democracy is relatively new in Spain and Portugal. I believe that one of the motives for their desire to become democratic countries is their great respect for older democratic institutions such as those in this country and elsewhere in Europe.

I hope that it is not patronising to say that there is a good deal of respect and admiration in the Iberian peninsula for the democratic traditions in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. To exclude Spain and Portugal from an alliance and a community of which we are part would seem to be

a rebuff to the development of democratic institutions in their countries. To include them, and give them a warm and friendly welcome, is to encourage those democratic instincts. In that way we can encourage democracy in Spain and Portugal.

The right hon. Member for South Down said that membership of the EC would be advanced in Spain as a quid pro quo for staying in NATO, and that Spaniards would be told that if they were to leave the Community they would forgo the benefits of EC membership. He is wrong. I do not believe that Spaniards will be told that. Indeed, there would be no point in telling them that because it would not be true. A country does not have to belong to NATO to join the EC. Spaniards know that well, and it will be made clear in the referendum campaign.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): There is an additional consideration. By the time the referendum takes place, the act of accession is likely to have come into effect, and Spain will be a member of the Community and cannot be required to leave it, irrespective of the outcome of the referendum.

Mr. Parris: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. I listened to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks), who until recently was the Labour Chief Whip. Both belong to a great Socialist party. Spain is being led into the EC by Senor Gonzales, one of the greatest Socialist leaders of his time, with great courage because his party was originally opposed to membership of the EC. The debate is an opportunity for the Opposition to encourage Senor Gonzales and Socialists in Spain. [HON. MEMBERS: "We did."] If that was encouragement, they should provide discouragement. Senor Gonzales has also been brave in changing his mind about membership of NATO. He will advise Spaniards to vote for membership of NATO. As I understand it, the Labour party is in favour of membership of NATO and believes that the organisation has a useful and important role to play. The debate provides a useful opportunity for Labour party spokesmen to encourage the Spanish Socialist party in its new-found desire to join NATO.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend is usually sceptical about interference in the affairs of another nation state. What on earth has it to do with the British Labour party to offer its advice to Spaniards about the political view that they should hold on one issue or another?

Mr. Parris: I make a distinction between offering advice and interfering, and I see no reason why one may not offer advice. If the purpose of belonging to NATO is to safeguard Western democracy and to buttress ourselves against the threat from the Soviet Union, and if it would help those purposes for Spain to join NATO, it would be right to advise Spaniards that the right decision is to join that organisation. The decision is for Spaniards, but my advice is clear, and I feel no hesitation in giving it.

As many hon. Members wish to speak, I shall conclude my remarks. One of the sad inevitabilities of speaking in the House is that one gives a broad and, often, feeble welcome in general terms to a proposal, and then feels it necessary to complain at length about the details and to foresee appalling problems. I hoped that in a debate such as this we could simply say, "Welcome" to Spain and Portugal. On that note, I end my speech.

5.33 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I agree with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) that this is an important occasion, which merits being so treated. The welcome that I give on behalf of Social Democratic and Liberal Members to the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community is unqualified and unreserved.

The Foreign Secretary did not impart a sense of elan or great enthusiasm, but that may be more because of his style than his conviction. He is undoubtedly right to emphasise the importance to the United Kingdom, and the whole of Europe, of the Community's enlargement to 320 million people seeking through ever closer contacts to exercise a greater influence on the affairs of the world.

The political importance to Europe of the two great continental countries of the Iberian peninsula joining the Community is immense. Their strategic importance to our fortunes this century is surely not beyond the recall of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who seemed to think that the nature of the Governments in Spain and Portugal was a matter of indifference. The neutrality and covert hostility of Spain during the second world war was of great importance to many of our citizens. The right hon. Gentleman's memory is surprisingly short for a historian. His fairy tales about the motivation of Spanish politicians in bringing Spain to the unification of its political objectives with other European countries are matched only by the fantasising, to which we were subjected, about the Prime Minister's motivation in reaching an agreement with the Taoiseach. It is all part of the right hon. Gentleman's convoluted, twisted and self-deceiving imagination.

It is a matter of huge satisfaction that Spain and Portugal, which have played such a notable part in the development of our European culture and history, and whose fortunes have been entwined with ours, sometimes for good and sometimes for ill, should now move in parallel with us. For many centuries the history of our literature, music and religion has been greatly influenced by them. It is a matter of pride that we can now share in a common destiny through common participation in common decision-making. The United Kingdom has sought that adhesion for a long time. It was the policy of the Labour party when it was in government, and it has taken seven long years of negotiation to bring about its consummation.

It is of great importance to our future, as it is to the Iberian countries, that their democracies, now freely chosen and sustained by general elections, should be underpinned by belonging to a free association of democratic states. For their most important sectors of economy—agriculture and fishing—which have caused the greatest difficulty in negotiations, the negotiations mark a significant and important achievement.

Although there will undoubtedly be difficulties for our own horticulture, in particular, in adapting, in the 10 years available to the industry, to the new competition from the fruit growing countries of the Mediterranean, 10 years is not an impossible time in which to achieve the necessary adaptations. I was disappointed that the Foreign Secretary did not respond more positively to the intervention from the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), who asked if the Government would be willing to give assistance to our domestic industry to make the necessary adaptations.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

I add my voice to that of the hon. Member in asking the Minister of State, who is to reply to the debate, to pay specific attention to that point.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the hon. Gentleman's party satisfied with the fisheries agreement negotiated between Spain and the European Community?

Mr. Maclennan: I shall be dealing with fisheries when I have finished what I have to say on agriculture and horticulture.

The major problems that will remain for the Community as a whole relate to wine and oil, and it will be necessary to seek to exert quantitative restrictions on the price support that is available for those two commodities. There has been an important achievement on fisheries. The transitional phase that has been offered is important, but more important is the strict control of fishing, which is a part of the agreement leading to the accession of the two countries.

Spain has the largest fishing fleet in Europe and constitutes perhaps a third of the total fleet of the whole of the European Community. As such, whether within or without the Community, it would constitute a major threat to fishing stocks if it were not subjected to a fishing regime which sought to prevent the depredation of the stocks. By bringing Spain into the fisheries regime, and now applying to Spain the regulations on, for example, mesh sizes, we are exerting a control which would not have been possible if Spain had remained outside the Community.

It is also right that there should be a limitation on the number of vessels allowed to fish at any time in the specified areas which have been agreed. It was a major negotiating achievement. It was very difficult to get, and I congratulate the Government on it.

The geopolitical arguments are the most important reasons for welcoming Spain and Portugal into this family of nations. The decision has had a direct impact on the European Community and has undoubtedly played a part in concentrating the minds of the Heads of Government, who have just completed their summit discussions on the mechanisms for reaching decisions within the Community. In that sense, it is unfortunate that the Government timed the debate to take place before the outcome of the discussions could be made available to us and included in the wider debate.

It is extremely difficult to reach a sensible decision in the interests of the 12 member countries of the Community without the modifications of the Community's decision-making machinery which have been under discussion, and which we shall certainly wish to consider on another occasion. Majority voting and a strengthening of the powers of the European Parliament are essential if the Community is to move forward, particularly in the light of the enlargement of its membership. To that extent, as that development was in any event necessary, I welcome the accession of the two countries.

Mr. Marlow: With regard to majority voting, if circumstances should arise in which the Community, through majority voting, were to agree on a directive with which the hon. Gentleman and his party disagreed, would he be happy that this House would be forced to enact that legislation against his will and against the will of the House?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough, and has heard me speak on this subject sufficiently frequently, not to be surprised when I remind him that my party and the Liberal party are firmly of the view that it will be necessary to retain in some form —although in more closely defined circumstances than hitherto—the use of the Luxembourg compromise to protect the vital national interests of this country. That has been repeated by me and by Members of both alliance parties on many occasions.

I recognise that if we are to make progress towards a free market internally, and towards the development of the social and regional policies of the Community for the benefit of our unemployed and suffering citizenry, it will be necessary to make compromises on occasions, and some of them will clearly be less than desirable, but I believe that they will be more palatable than many of the measures which have been forced on this suffering country by Her Majesty's Government in the past six years.

In the debate in earlier days about the enlargement of the Community, the fear of some hon. Members was that the adhesion of these two countries would in some way dilute the European Community and deprive it of the sort of impetus that would be necessary if it was to be an effective force in the world. I doubt whether that was a justified fear, for the Spanish and Portuguese have shown, in the past few years, a dynamism and capacity for self-renewal which are a model to many of the other nations which are rather smugly congratulating themselves on their advanced state of democracy.

Spain and Portugal both have links with one of the parts of the world with which the rest of the European Community is sadly lacking contact—Latin America, one of the most unstable and threatened parts of the world. I hope that the enlargement of the Community by the adherence of Spain and Portugal will not only open up new trading contacts with the countries of Latin America and spread the influence of European thinking in that continent, but will enhance the political influence that we may have there.

I do not shrink, as apparently the right hon. Member for South Down does, from overtly expressing where I believe the interests of Britain lie in relation to other countries' internal affairs. It is perfectly legitimate for us to recognise that in Latin America the prevalence of anti-democratic Governments is positively hostile to Britain's interests, and thoroughly destabilising. The adherence of the two Iberian countries, which have such strong links with Latin America historically, could be a force for stability and for the sort of change towards democracy that we would greatly welcome.

5.50 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): A debate should comprise two sides of the argument. Until now I have heard only one side. With the honourable exception of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), a variety of hon. Members have said in a variety of ways how much they welcome the Bill.

It is clear as we debate this issue that this House has a complete lack of effective power or involvement in its determination. I say that because this matter, which is generally agreed to be vital to the EEC, has not been debated by the House since 1978, with the exception of an Adjournment debate that I initiated on 4 April of this year, when the Minister of State and I went round the course

together and rehearsed our speeches for today. At least, I rehearsed mine, although I am sure that his will contain much new material.

How can the Government know the views of hon. Members if we have not been able to express them since 1978? I ask that question because the Foreign Secretary referred with some fondness to the signing ceremony in May 1985 when Foreign Ministers gathered to sign a number of treaties which put the stamp of approval on the entry of Spain and Portugal to the EEC. He said that those countries would become members in 1986.

None of that apparently allows of any involvement or participation by this House in the process. What he said, what has gone before and what has led up to this debate has all been based on the assumption that we would give rubber-stamp approval not just to the principle of the entry of Spain and Portugal to the EEC but to all the details contained in the variety of agreements that underpin their accession. In other words, we can do nothing but give our general approval to what is proposed—or, as in my case, my disapproval or lack of support. That illustrates the way in which the House has no real involvement in the process other than giving its automatic approval.

Another indication of the lack of gravity with which the British Houses of Parliament are dealing with the matter is that, when the Bill was in another place, only one hour and 16 minutes of their Lordships' time was devoted to considering the subject before the measure received its Second Reading and was passed to us. It cannot be claimed that the important principles involved in this grave matter have received detailed examination.

We have a precedent to consider, and that is the entry of Greece to the EEC in 1981. That provides a model from which to judge the effect of a new country joining the Community, and Greece is in many ways similar, geographically and in other respects, to Spain and Portugal.

The history of Greek entry to the Community cannot give us much encouragement because not only have the Greeks suffered severely in their economy since they entered the EEC, but they have held the Community to ransom in foreign policy. We recall their eccentric line on the shooting down of the Korean air liner. They have also blackmailed the EEC into giving them ever more money so that they may at least go through the semblance of behaving themselves.

The latest news from Greece in this respect appeared in *Hansard* as recently as this week when, in answer to a written question, it was stated that the Greeks had had to take certain economic measures

"to deal with balance of payments and other problems. The package contained a number of protective measures, including the introduction of an import deposit scheme, which required derogations from Greece's obligations under the EC treaty." —[*Official Report*, 2 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. *101*.]

That country came into the EEC on the basis of the promises and rhetoric that we have heard today, yet only four years later it finds itself forced into taking special measures which run contrary to all the principles which are offered to us in defence of the EEC, such as free trade.

Greece has returned to the Community to say, "We require more money from you. By the way, we shall not be able to adhere to the rules of the Community that you said, when we came in, we should have to obey." I am beginning to suspect that the precedent of Greece, which has not been mentioned today, gives us cause for thought.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Does my hon. Friend accept that the real parallel in the case he is describing is between Greece and the United Kingdom rather than between Greece and Spain and Portugal? The essential difference is that the negotiations for Greek entry took place under a Conservative Government, followed by the election of a Socialist Government opposed to Greek membership; and the same happened in this country, which is why Britain and Greece have had political difficulties in accommodating to Europe. The Iberian negotiations were conducted by Socialist Governments, which leads one to suppose that this may be a happier story.

Mr. Forth: The irony of that agreement is that, while we continually refer to the glories of democracy in Spain and Portugal, presumably that democracy could lead to a change of Government in those countries, which could lead to precisely the effect that my hon. Friend denies could take place, so I am not utterly convinced by the logic of his argument.

Let us set aside the Greek precedent—because it appears that the British Government have not given it much thought or are not convinced by it—and consider what we have been offered many times. We were offered it in a graphic sense by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris). I refer to what go under the generic heading of the geo-political arguments. They take many forms, and they are the only real arguments that we have been offered as benefits resulting from the Bill.

The first is the NATO argument. I accept what the right hon. Member for South Down said about the bribe to Spain to join NATO. I have always believed that we have all along been saying to the Spaniards that membership of the EEC was a reward for them entering NATO. It is a straightforward and basic argument, though it ignores the fact that Ireland is in the EEC and is neutral and not in NATO, while France is in the EEC and has always had a dubious and individual relationship with NATO.

Meanwhile, the country which is arguably the more important member of NATO, Turkey, is not in the EEC and never will be so long as the Greeks are members. That returns us to the Greek dimension. Thus, I have never been convinced that the connection which is often made in the geo-political context between membership of NATO and the EEC has any validity, and I hope that the House will set it aside in considering the Bill.

The second argument is that of democracy, as the right hon. Member for South Down pointed out. The preamble to the treaty of Rome, the basis of the EEC, makes no reference to democracy; there is no necessary connection between a so-called democratic form of government and membership of the Community. Nor is there any mechanism by which EEC members can judge whether one or other is democratic or, if they deem them not to be democratic, eject them from membership of the Community.

With that in mind, I am at a loss to understand why we are being offered this rather magical but as yet undefined connection between the survival of democracy in Spain and Portugal and their membership of the EEC, apart from the fact that it is a patronising sort of argument to adduce.

I had the honour when I was in the European Parliament of being a member of that Parliament's delegation to

[Mr. Forth]

Portugal. When I visited that great country, with which we have historic connections, I was impressed with the extent to which the Portuguese have a political tradition every bit as long as ours, and in many ways longer, and it ill behoves us to lecture the Portuguese on principles of politics or about the way in which they will benefit in some ill-defined way from joining the EEC, which is hardly a model of democracy or anything else. That is why I say that the value of the benefits is at the least of considerable doubt.

The serious problem with what we are being asked to accept today is that, however doubtful the benefits, we have heard nothing about the costs. There may be arguments of a geo-political nature, our constituents may wish to support democracy in Spain and Portugal and they may wish to support the concept of the Western Alliance or even NATO. But we are being irresponsible and unfair if we expect our constituents to pick up a tab which is uncosted and unquantified in terms of jobs and many other respects.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My hon. Friend is a former member of the European Assembly and he is an expert on matters relating to the treaty of Rome. Will he therefore enlighten the House about the Council of Europe communiqué that has just been deposited in the Library? It says:

"The Community shall adopt measures intended progressively to establish the internal market."

In particular, it says:

"In article 28 the terms 'unanimously' or 'unanimity' shall be replaced by a qualified majority."

Can my right hon. Friend enlighten the House about the ability of this country to stand up for its own interests?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. It leads me to my next point about the institutions of the Community. We were told during the early stages of the argument that enlargement would speed up the reform of the European Community's institutions —a much needed and much overdue process. If Spain and Portugal enter the European Community, the Commission will be enlarged and will contain 17 commissioners instead of the existing 14. Those right hon. and hon. Members who have a passing knowledge of European Community affairs know that it has struggled for a long time to devise meaningful portfolios for 14 commissioners. What it will be able to devise for 17 commissioners is beyond my comprehension.

When my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office replies to the debate, I hope that he will refer to what the additional commissioners will do. I can anticipate what he will say. He will tell the House that Her Majesty's Government have argued for a long time that there should be one commissioner for each member state and that he is prepared to recommend that Spain and Portugal should enter the European Community on the existing institutional basis. There will therefore be 17 commissioners. When there are 17 commissioners, it will be difficult to obtain agreement, particularly the agreement of Spain and Portugal, to a reduction in the number of commissioners.

It will also mean an enlargement of the membership of the European Parliament, over which we should perhaps draw a discreet veil. Two additional languages will also have to be dealt with by the interpretation and translation facilities of the European Community, which will result in an exponential increase of the kind that always takes place in the cost of translation and interpretation.

I referred earlier to cost. I shall refer to it under two headings: the cost to the European Community, and the cost to the United Kingdom. The main burden of the cost will come under the heading of "agriculture". Agriculture already accounts for three quarters of the European Community's budget. Spain is the most important, in terms of agriculture, of the two new member states. The accession of Spain will result in an increase of 30 per cent. in the Community's agricultural area, of 25 per cent. in the agricultural labour force, of 32 per cent. in the number of agricultural holdings, of 25 per cent. in the output of vegetables, of 48 per cent. in the output of fresh fruit, and of 59 per cent. in the output of olive oil. However, the number of consumers in the European Community will increase by only 14 per cent.

These figures demonstrate graphically the potential for the exaggeration and exacerbation of the agricultural problem that already confronts the European Community. It is a measure of the extent to which the accession of Spain will add to the problems of agricultural production and cost. I leave out of account Spain's potential as soon as it has irrigation. Her productivity will be increased. With our help, advice and money the production of a wide range of agricultural products will be increased. We shall also have to grapple with two new products — olive oil and tomatoes — which will have a serious effect upon the Community's agricultural policy.

That will be bad enough, but even worse — this is perhaps the most profound problem that will face the Community if it is enlarged to include Spain and Portugal —will be the shift in the political balance from north to south. That will be a permanent phenomenon. There will also be a shift in the political balance from right to left. I hope that that will be a temporary phenomenon. There will be a further shift in the political balance from the rich to the poor countries, a phenomenon that will last for as long as we can resist the redistribution of our national resources to the new southern member states of the Community.

Mr. Maclennan: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that this year Italy's gross domestic product has outstripped the gross domestic product of this country?

Mr. Forth: That is an interesting thought, if it is true. I accept what the hon. Gentleman says.

I ask both myself and the hon. Gentleman to consider what the effect will be upon our economy, our constituents and our electorate of the accession of Spain and Portugal. If Italy has advanced so much, I suspect that it has been largely at our expense. One only has to consider the extent to which Italian white goods are imported into this country. Furthermore, when I visit factories in my constituency, over and over again I find that Italian machinery is being used there. A great deal of Italy's prosperity is probably at our expense. If Spanish industries made similar progress, that would almost certainly be at our expense, too.

In the countries of the south, which include Spain and Portugal, between 11 and 30 per cent. of their work force is still involved in agriculture and their per capita income

is between £1,000 and £3,000 per annum. Between 2 per cent. and 7 per cent. of the work force in the northern countries are involved in agriculture. The per capita incomes are between £4,000 and £7,000 per annum. There is a clear divide between the countries of the south and the north in terms of agricultural commitment and income. Most of the southern countries also have Socialist Governments.

For the first time, therefore, there will be a line up in the European Community between Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland—when it suits her for agricultural purposes—and France, when it suits her for agricultural and other purposes. The new European Community will have the political power to draw the resources of the common agricultural policy and of the other policies from the north to the south. This is the kernel of the true redistribution for the first time of political power in the European Community.

My charge against the Government is that we have not been told about the likely effect of enlargement upon our economy and upon our people because of the change in the political balance. Unless we are told what its effect will be, I fail to see how the House can reach a judgment about the effect of enlargement upon the European Community.

As for the effect of enlargement upon the United Kingdom, it has been said over and over again that one of the benefits of membership of the European Community is access to the regional and social funds. This point was referred to by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). When two less wealthy countries enter the Community we shall slip further down the league of claimants on the regional and social funds. Enlargement means that we shall lose out in our claim upon Community resources. We shall be faced by increased competition in horticulture from such products as lettuces, cucumbers, strawberries, potatoes, tomatoes, cut flowers and apples. The Government may say that horticulture will be protected for 10 years, but horticulturists will want to know what will happen after that. We cannot reach a decision on such a matter, which is based upon protection for a certain period, without knowing in full what the effect will be after the 10-year period has expired.

Furthermore, Spain's industrial productivity is about 60 per cent. of that of the United Kingdom. When Spanish industries have access to European Community markets, who can say what the effect will be upon industries such as drop forging in the west midlands and automobile manufacture? Why is it assumed that our industrialists will be able to export goods more successfully when they have access to the Spanish market? They will be faced with competition from West Germany, France, Denmark and Italy.

Mr. Parris: I understood that my hon. Friend's complaint, and that of many of his hon. Friends, in the past was that membership of the European Community disbarred us from buying cheap food outside the European Community. My hon. Friend now appears to be complaining that we may be able to buy cheap food within the Community.

Mr. Forth: I am complaining in the sense that I am concentrating upon the effect that enlargement will have upon the growers of food in the United Kingdom.

The effects of EC membership on consumers since we joined have been a matter of some debate. It is not strictly relevant to the debate today, although I take my hon. Friend's point. However, if we enjoy the benefits of cheap citrus fruits, horticultural products and the like from Spain and Portugal, I leave the effect of that on our indigenous growers of those products to my hon. Friend's imagination. I am worried about that on behalf of my constituency.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Why is my hon. Friend worried about the horticulturists? Is it not one of the basic rules of the Common Market that all the extra cucumbers, tomatoes, oranges and apples that we have we simply destroy? I thought that we had a policy of spending about £87 million a week on destroying food, so all the extra tomatoes, oranges and cauliflowers will be destroyed at the taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Forth: I regret to say to my hon. Friend that that is almost certainly correct, and I bow to his knowledge of such matters.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Why is it that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) never worried about £20 billion spent on dole money for the unemployed because we are not reducing the unemployment figures? Is not that far more important than small amounts of money spent on EC countries?

Mr. Forth: I shall resist the temptation to discuss unemployment at greater length. One of our other concerns must be the effect on Britain's unemployment of Spain and Portugal coming into the EEC. I regret that my pessimistic view is that unemployment in Britain will increase as a result of the entry of Spain and Portugal into the Community.

The case for the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community has not been made in a convincing manner. Several arguments have been repeated with little substantiation and support. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will offer us more when he replies to the debate. However, much more worrying than that is the complete lack of any effort by the Government to tell us in detail and over a wide range what the costs will be for agriculture, horticulture and industry, and the Government's view of the effect of the shift of political balance in the Community from north to south and its effect on the institutions and policies of the Community. Until we are given that information in more detail, I am unable to support the measure.

6.12 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I should not be intervening in the debate if the Secretary of State had not seemed to dodge with some agility the effect on the people of Gibraltar of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community. Gibraltar is a small community, they are still British citizens, and their main work force is organised by a British trade union. Indeed, they gave Britain tremendous support over many years and more recently during the Falklands conflict. It will be recalled that the Falkland islanders got their British citizenship due to an Argentine invasion.

Let me outline the problems about which Gibraltarians are worried. I am assured that from 1 January, with the Spanish accession, the problem of pensions will come to a head. We are assured that in the current negotiations Her Majesty's Government have allowed a position to arise where 12 per cent. of Gibraltar's GNP will now be given

[Mr. David Young]

over to the repayment of the pensions of former Spanish employees of the dockyard who were excluded from their occupations by the decision of Franco to close the gates. That amounts to £7 million a year.

Mr. McQuarrie: I must make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that it is not only the dockyard which is affected. More than four thousand other workers went across the border in July 1969 and did not return because Franco closed the gates.

Mr. Young: I accept that. I am saying that, in consultation with the Gibraltar Government, we are told that unless there is some urgent decision on the issue, Gibraltar's economy will be destroyed. That is the kernel of the problem.

We should be aware that we cannot wait for negotiations until 1 January 1986. I am informed that Her Majesty's Government put responsibility for the payment of those pensions on to the Gibraltar Government. But the Gibraltar Government are not in a position to pay. As was said earlier, if the matter were taken to the European Court of Justice, Her Majesty's Government would be in the dock, as they were about birching in the Isle of Man. I hope that the Minister of State will deal with that essential point so that we know precisely the Government's point of view.

Her Majesty's Government closed the dockyard, privatised it and made it commercial. We are now informed that the dockyard cannot obtain skilled labour from within Gibraltar. Therefore, British taxpayers will now be subsidising labour from Portugal to carry out the skilled work in Gibraltar. Will the Minister ask for a clear indication of how that will place us, knowing the strains on our dockyards in Britain and Gibraltar?

In agreeing to the accession of Spain and Portugal, it is the duty of the House not to neglect the rights of 30,000 British citizens in Gibraltar who look to us as their one safeguard. I ask hon. Members to remember that it is Her Majesty's Government who have negotiated the accession treaty, not the Gibraltar Government. I hope that the Minister of State will not dodge those essential issues, as his right hon. and learned Friend did earlier.

6.17 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I have supported the Community over the years from a political standpoint. I have never really believed the economic arguments. In the long term, they could turn out either way. But I believe that the way forward for western Europe is through political unification. That intention is clear in the Treaty of Rome. The phrase used there is

"to seek an ever closer union among their peoples."

We put our signature to that treaty, and much of the pressure that Britain has been under over the past few years arose simply because we wanted to treat the Community as some form of free trade area while other members wanted to carry out the original intention and go forward.

I favour the entry of Spain and Portugal. It will be a good thing in the long run, although the long run could be a lot longer than 10 or 15 years. For both countries on the Iberian peninsula, this marks the end of a long dark night, not only in the sense of coming out of the corporate state regime of the past few years but for the past century.

There will be economic difficulties, let no one mistake that. We are bringing into the Community economies which are fundamentally different from our own. The only comparison is with Greece. In my opinion, that is secondary because my support for the Community is from a political standpoint in the first place. It is not just a matter of balancing the books and asking about the price of half a pound of butter or whether we shall be better or worse off. That is the small change of the movement towards European unification. I hope that we shall see the day when the nations of eastern Europe come out of their long dark night able to join the European Community when they, too, are free.

We are trying to create much more than just a "get rich quick" club. There will be problems, and one can see that the cost of accession has now been put back into the budget. When we last debated European affairs, I was critical of the European Council, because it had ignored the costs of the accession of Spain and Portugal and had taken out of the budget the cost of the burden of the past. At least it has now restored the cost of accession. One hopes that it will go further. If the burden of the past is not built back into the budget, hon. Members who said that we were likely to lose out on the distribution of funds in the next year are correct.

Some hon. Members will cynically vote for the Bill in the hope that, with the addition of two more countries, the Community's structure will crack up. I do not believe that that will happen. We still do not have the details. Various hon. Members have been running in and out of the Library trying to discover exactly what was agreed at Luxembourg yesterday. No doubt that will become clearer. However, it is obvious that a start is being made to sort out the decision-making process in the Community, and it is about time. But I can be sure, even before I read the agreement, that it will not go far enough. We should have been a long way down the path to majority decision-making and enhancing the powers of the European Parliament. I think that the agreement will be the first hesitant step.

Mr. Deakins: Federalism.

Mr. Knowles: The hon. Gentleman is yelling "Federalism" as if it were a wild accusation. He will be speaking in a moment in favour of a federalist Government, the United States, and presenting their case, as he often does in the argument.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend and I disagree on this point, and he knows that perfectly well. I should like to refer him to the provisional text of the conclusions of the European Council that has just been placed in the Vote Office.

Mr. Knowles: I have not had a chance to look at the agreement. Waving the agreement at me from 3 ft away will not help me at all. I am willing to admit that my view will probably be that it does not go far enough.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said that one of the problems was that the House did not get an early look at European legislation. A Bill has been presented by the Government today and we have had no information. Somehow, the blame for that is put on the Community. It is not the fault of the Community; it is the fault of the House for letting the Government get away with it. There is a Select Committee on European Legislation, with restrictive powers, by the decision of the House.

Mr. Forth: The problem that I was highlighting is that the Foreign Secretary said that he had signed the agreement in May and that we were being presented with a fait accompli, not from the Community but from our own Government. The process that we are going through today gives the House no opportunity to express its view about what is going on.

Mr. Knowles: On that matter, there is no difference between us. The fault lies with the House for letting the Government get away with what it does not like.

Western Europe is now too small for old-fashioned Napoleonic imperialism. We shall have to draw closer together. The choice for us is not between an independent Britain and a Britain taken over by foreigners. If Europe tries to remain a medley of small and middle-rank countries, its future lies in being a series of small-time American and Japanese colonies. Britain's only choice lies in integration.

6.24 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I realise that this is an open-ended debate, but there is some desire to finish it early. However, I think that it is an important debate. I disagree with virtually everything that was said by the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), except his conclusion.

I welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community, not because I think it will strengthen it, but because it will weaken it. I say that as an inveterate opponent over 25 years not only of British membership, but of the Common Market itself. On the federalist lines developed by the hon. Member for Nottingham, East, I think that the Common Market will develop into a superpower and will be a real threat to the peace of the world. It is already a threat to relations between north and south because of its economic imperialism, its network of client states and its trade policies, which discriminate against goods from the poorer countries.

There are two reasons why I think that the accession of Spain and Portugal will weaken the Economic Community — first, cost, and, second, agriculture. Both those subjects have been alluded to by hon. Members in the debate.

On the subject of cost, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that we passed a Bill at the end of the previous Session raising the VAT limits to 1·4 per cent. and 1·6 per cent. respectively over the next few years. A major justification for VAT increases in the EEC was the cost of the accession of Spain and Portugal. However, the explanatory memorandum to the Bill states:

"Spain's contribution to, and receipts from the Communities' Budget should roughly balance".

It also states:

"Portugal should be a modest net beneficiary, After the end of the transitional arangements, Spain and Portugal may be expected to be net recipients from that Budget."

If that is the case, what is the justification for the VAT increase to 1·4 per cent. with a further increase to 1·6 per cent.?

The Foreign Secretary said in his opening remarks that the Commission had estimated that, in the seven years that it would take to complete the accession of Spain and Portugal after the transitional arrangements, the total cost would be no more than 0·1 per cent. of VAT. In other words, of the extra 1·4 per cent. that has just been put on to VAT, only 0·1 per cent. is accounted for by the accession cost. That is not in line with earlier justification of the VAT increases.

How can we believe the Commission's estimate over seven years ahead of what Spain and Portugal are likely to do, which is an unknown quantity? We know from experience that the Commission is incapable of assessing the cost of the common agricultural policy from one year to the next. How, therefore, is it possible for the Commission, with any hope of reasonable accuracy, to assess the cost of enlargement at 0·1 per cent.? That is a sheer guess on the part of the Commission, and it might be miles out, or it might be 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. on the VAT rather than 0·1 per cent.

In his opening speech, the Foreign Secretary gave the impression of being complacent about the additional cost, which he admitted, of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC. He said that it does not really matter because Britain's contribution to that extra cost will be only 7 per cent. Bully for Britain. What about the Community as a whole, when costs go up massively because of the accession of Spain and Portugal? We shall be getting not just the 1·4 per cent. on 1 January but we shall reach the 1·6 per cent. much quicker as a result of increased costs of enlargement. Thereafter, the Government — if they are still in power, and this could happen before a general election in 1987 or 1988—will return to the House with another patched-up agreement with the EEC to raise the 1·6 per cent. limit perhaps to 2 per cent. or even higher. There is no end to the cost implications.

I refer to agriculture. There will be greater pressures for price increases from the producers of Mediterranean crops in Spain and Portugal, adding to the existing pressures from those in Greece, Italy and southern France. There will be greater surpluses of olive oil, horticultural products, citrus fruits and wine. We must not forget that the Community already has a vast wine surplus, and is building up a fairly substantial olive oil surplus, even with existing Mediterranean producers.

Therefore, there will be more disruption of crops, and more wastage of taxpayers' money in storing crops that no one will buy and that will eventually have to be dumped on world markets or destroyed. Will we see the price reductions that the Government hope for? We shall not see them on Mediterranean products. It is doubtful whether we shall see them on the more temperate zone products, such as cereals, which are still in great surplus. When Spain and Portugal enter, they will bring with them a large number of small farmers, small producers, whose average size is probably below the average size in France and Germany. The Community average size is raised because Britain and Denmark have fairly large farms, on average, but when Spain and Portugal enter the average will go down once more and the voting power in Spain and Portugal and therefore indirectly in the Community, through the European Assembly and the Council of Ministers, will be enlarged once more in favour of price increases. I do not forget the cost of the integrated Mediterranean programme, which my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) mentioned in his opening speech, which was very good and clearly outlined the deleterious effect on the Community and on Britain of Spanish and Portuguese entry.

While we are debating the matter, we are awaiting the report from Luxembourg. No doubt there will be a statement by the Prime Minister in the House tomorrow.

[Mr. Eric Deakins]

In view of the problems of Spanish and Portuguese accession, which I and other hon. Members have outlined —and which both Front Benches agree on—and in view of the existing problems of the Community on surpluses, agricultural policy, regional policy and so on, one would have thought that a meeting of Heads of Government in Luxembourg would address its mind to those problems. Far from it. Hardly a word has been said about those real problems facing the Community and people in western Europe. We now have an agreement on improved decision-making in the EEC. However, it just shows how out of touch with reality all the Heads of Government, including our Prime Minister, are if they think that improved decision-making is the key to putting right what is wrong in the EEC. Even those who agree with the EEC realise that some things are wrong with it.

It is not speed of decision which is important in the Community, which is holding up the progress of the Community, or which is contributing to the vast costs, inefficiency and bureaucracy; it is the content of decisions that matters. It is the content of those decisions that has been so bad in recent years.

The Heads of Government have said nothing about the common agricultural policy in their bulletin, nothing about budgetary costs, nothing about the cost-effectiveness of the CAP, and nothing about value for money in the Community. They have said nothing about any of the controls on public expenditure that we have and sometimes suffer from in this country, which are not applied in the Community, nor could they be unless, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, East wishes, there was a federalist Government in western Europe with a strengthened European Assembly with powers enhanced at the expense of the House of Commons.

I welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal, which will give us a breathing space before other new members come in, when we can resolve, perhaps at the next general election, the contradictions in our attitudes towards the rest of the countries of western Europe. Thereafter there will be increasing progress towards federalism. I cannot believe that a majority of hon. Members would support that solution to the problem.

6.34 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) is not the only one in the Conservative party who has grave reservations about the treaty. His speech was the most impressive that we have had during the debate.

I listened to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) with growing incredulity. He seemed to be welcoming the accession of Spain and Portugal as well as finding every reason that he could for objecting to it. If the Spanish and Portuguese Governments were right of centre, I wonder whether his enthusiasm for the accession of the two countries would be as great. To a certain extent, the Labour party is in a bit of a dilemma on the matter.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said that, far from the economic Utopia that the EEC was supposed to have become, we have been going through an exceedingly difficult period, when there has been a great crisis of confidence in the future of the Community. As we have failed manifestly to solve the problem of the CAP and all the other problems related to the Community, to take in Spain and Portugal is rather like saying to a man who is deeply in debt, "Go and borrow a lot more money and that will get you out of your difficulties." From an economic point of view, the entry of Spain and Portugal will add considerably to the Community's difficulties.

I speak as one who, after much heart searching, originally voted against this country's accession to the EEC. Later I was persuaded that we should be better off inside it, but I have now come to the conclusion that first impulses are probably right. I think that my attitude is shared by many millions of people.

I do not wish to talk at length about Gibraltar because it is a highly specialised subject, but if we are talking about a so-called friendly power, I wonder how we define "friendly" when we see the way in which the Spanish Government have treated Gibraltar until comparatively recently. There are still problems with the use of the landing strip at Gibraltar and, hitherto, the Spanish Government have been obdurate in allowing flights into other Spanish cities—hardly the action of a so-called friendly power.

Furthermore, there is fear in Gibraltar that allowing Spain into the EEC is, in some people's minds, a roundabout way of getting rid of the Gibraltar problem and trying to help towards the absorption of the Rock and its people into Spain. I know that that is bitterly resented by the people of Gibraltar, who are very pro-British. I should not like the debate to conclude without putting that on record.

The effect of the accession on British industry worries me very much. If the Spanish Government had shown themselves to be broad-minded and that they had a liberal attitude towards world trade, I would have had greater confidence. I speak as the chairman of the all-party footwear group, and my constituency is probably the centre of men's shoe production. For years I have had complaints about the way in which the Spaniards have protected their industry.

It is interesting that only in March this year the Spanish Government passed an order saying that from 18 October all footwear must carry an incredibly detailed swing tag printed to unbelievably strict specifications, all in Spanish. Yet the Government were negotiating to join the EEC for the liberalisation of trade. Is it any wonder that footwear interests in this country concluded that that move can be interpreted only as a blatant attempt to obstruct the entry of footwear imports to the Community?

Therefore, because I doubt the actions of the Spanish Government in relation to trade, and know that the Spanish will be able to compete behind still substantial barriers for many years to come, I believe that the Governments of the EEC have given away all their powers before seeing the true spirit in which the Spaniards intend to enter the Community. I fear for the jobs of footwear workers in Britain, and I suspect that many other hon. Members will come to fear for the jobs of workers in other industries. It is right that that point of view should be expressed.

When the footwear industry representatives spoke to the British embassy in Madrid, the recommendation was to take the matter to Brussels through the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation. We know how long that path can be, and how empty the solutions when one eventually arrives. We must accept that there is a danger to many jobs in Britain. I am not satisfied that that aspect has been taken into account, so I cannot possibly agree to the treaty.

6.41 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): This has been one of the more lively debates on the European Community, even though the Opposition are not opposing the Government on this issue. The last time that I replied to a debate on the European Community, which was on the EC budget, the Minister made a robust speech from which I emerged somewhat scathed and bruised. I caution the Minister of State that that Minister was the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), and that the following day he returned to the Back Benches. I do not imply that there was a direct connection between the two events—I do not have that influence. However, the Minister should beware of pushing his luck.

At the start of the debate, some of my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members complained about the unavailability of a key document. We now have copies, but it is not easy to read such a large document during a debate. Hon. Members were not joking or raising an unimportant question. An increasing number of hon. Members are worried that Ministers at overseas or Community meetings are more and more acting in our name, and that the House is being contemptuously treated as a rubber stamp. A large majority is no reason for the Government to assume that they can act in that way. It is important that the House is treated properly, and that includes hon. Members being provided with the right documents.

The only useful information that I can obtain from the glossy document is the speed in dismantling tariffs for tomato concentrate and peeled tomatoes, which does not appear to be relevant to the major issues before us. The important question that hon. Members want answered is which issues will be transferred from requiring unanimous decision to decision by a qualified majority. That is important, because we shall be relinquishing our veto on those issues.

We are concerned about the movement towards conformity, led by Lord Cockfield and others. The Government have not fully appreciated the implications of conformity on such issues as banking, insurance and transport, especially in the light of Spain's and Portugal's accession.

The main thrust of the debate is about the membership of Spain and Portugal. The hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) questioned the sincerity of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I jump nobly to my hon. Friend's defence. We welcome wholeheartedly the accession of Spain and Portugal, which we believe will help to strengthen the democratic structures in those countries. That view is not paternalistic or patronising.

Even in his speech today, the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) was preaching to other people. It serves no purpose for him to tell us that we should not offer advice to other democratic countries. We welcome Spain as a Socialist country and Portugal as a long-term ally. I make no bones about the fact that we welcome the increase that their accession will represent in the Socialist group in the European Parliament after the direct elections in two years.

However, the accession of Spain and Portugal is not without difficulties, and it would be a disservice to Britain, Spain and Portugal not to spell out and recognise those difficulties. There is no contradiction in welcoming them for political reasons. We are all politicians, so why should we be ashamed of that? We welcome them for political and other reasons, but we accept that there are some economic difficulties. However, we can and must work together.

I emphasise the difficulties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton. One is the increased strength of the agriculture lobby. There is also the relative poverty of Spain, and Portugal especially, that will exacerbate the tendency towards economic divergence in the Community. We must also accept that there will be increased difficulties in decision making, which no doubt will be welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins).

Hon. Members were unconvinced by the Foreign Secretary's assurance that reform of the common agricultural policy would be easier following the accession of Spain and Portugal. That is manifest nonsense. Although I did not agree with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), he made an excellent speech. As he said, with the exception of Spain and Portugal, farm acreage is increasing by 30 per cent. and the number of consumers by 18 per cent. It is madness to believe that Spain and Portugal will not increase productivity and thereby take advantage of the CAP. Indeed, one reason for their entry to the EEC is to take advantage of it. Production will rise, and there is a danger that surpluses will increase. That is why the reform of the CAP is even more urgent. At every opportunity, we have asked, pushed, pressed and bullied the Government to try to get some real reform of the common agricultural policy. All we receive is the assertion that something is being done. No real reform is taking place.

There may be problems with the accession of Spain and Portugal, but we should not deny that it will create opportunities. No reference has yet been made to the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture that considered the matter. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) will especially welcome recommendation No. 18, which states:

"We look forward to seeing our Scotch Whisky trade expand considerably."

The Spanish and Portuguese will be looking forward to the opportunity of drinking more of our Scotch whisky, and we shall be happy to provide them with it. We are concerned that the European Community budget has not been adjusted to take account of the accession and its effect on the CAP.

I return to the political implications. We believe that there will be effects on political co-operation. One point that I have been able to glean from the voluminous document on the conclusions of the European Council is contained in article 1 of the draft treaty on foreign policy co-operation, which states: "The High Contracting Parties"—another Euro-jargon phrase—

"being members of the European Communities, shall endeavour jointly to formulate and implement a European foreign policy."

We have been at odds with our European partners on a number of issues—for example, on South Africa, where the EEC is anxious to impose more vigorous sanctions, but we are holding back for reasons that I do not have time to explain now. On UNESCO, from which we have given notice to withdraw, our EEC partners are attacking and criticising us. Indeed, at the United Nations we were isolated on the issue of the Falklands——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Not while the war was on.

Mr. Foulkes: The Prime Minister may think that she can bully our EEC partners into line, in the same way as she can bully Cabinet members into line. That will be more difficult than she imagines. Indeed, there will be pressure on us to come into line with the majority in Europe.

The Opposition welcome wholeheartedly the accession of Spain and Portugal on 1 January. We look forward to a move in the Community towards the Left—a move that, thankfully, will be continued with the return of a Labour Government in Britain.

6.50 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) rightly said that this has been a lively debate. I like to think that the Opposition's support of the Government on this matter has contributed, even if only indirectly, to that. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises that if the Labour party enthusiastically welcomes Spain and Portugal into the Community, it is ludicrous that it should reserve the right of a future Labour Government to take Britain out of that same Community.

A number of hon. Members spoke about the democratic identity of Spain and Portugal. The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) suggested that to raise that matter as being relevant to the question of Spanish and Portuguese membership represented interference in the internal affairs of those countries. There are circumstances in which the right hon. Gentleman's comment might be justified. If, for example, the existing members of the Community said to Spain and Portugal, "Please come and join the Community because of your democratic requirements and because it will strengthen your democratic institutions", that could rightly or wrongly be described as interference.

However, that does not reflect the true position of the Community, which is that every democratic party in Spain and Portugal has said to its people and to the European Community, "We wish to be members of the Community because we believe that the democratic foundations of the new Spain and the new Portugal will be strengthened by membership." It cannot possibly be interference if the countries of the Community say, "We agree with you—that is a relevant consideration and one that should be taken into account."

That was not the only criterion during the negotiations. Had it been it would not have required seven long years of negotiations for these matters to be resolved. The fact that it has taken those seven long years for the applications of Spain and Portugal to be approved by the Community and for a treaty to be formulated shows that the issues go far wider than the right hon. Gentleman suggested. The original date for Spanish and Portuguese membership of the Community was two years ago. That had to be deferred because of the impossibility at that time of reaching agreement on the essential conditions, relevant to the European Community, before membership could take place. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to reflect on his analysis of the background to Spanish and Portuguese membership. It does not stand up to examination.

A number of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), referred to Gibraltar. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary clearly set out our position. No Spanish citizen will be entitled to a pension from the Gibraltar Government unless he has contributed to the pension fund of that Government. His entitlement will be on exactly the same basis as that of any Gibraltarian who has made comparable contributions through employment in Gibraltar. My right hon. and learned Friend said that the Government had agreed to assist Gibraltar with a significant sum during the first year following Spain's accession. There will be further discussions with Gibraltar on the issue.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred to the implications of enlargement for the regional and social funds. He was right to suggest that we should take that into account. The final quota ranges in the regional fund to which Spain and Portugal will be entitled have not yet been determined. However, it is clear that they will be significant, because Spain and Portugal are relatively poor countries within the Community.

That will not necessarily preclude substantial resources coming to the United Kingdom. That will, in part, depend on the total sum of the regional fund. Some time ago the European Council agreed that there should be real increases in the size of the fund, but I accept that our traditional position, where we have been a modest but significant beneficiary, may not continue when the wider entitlement of Spain and Portugal is taken into account. I have no doubt that we will continue to be a major beneficiary of the fund, but the precise amount will need to be determined.

Mr. George Robertson: Why did a Minister representing the Government canvass in favour of a freeze of the regional and social funds at the last meeting of the Budget Council?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows that the requirements of budgetary discipline include a reference framework. He is aware that these matters, which come under the non-obligatory side of Community expenditure, have their own constraints, which need to be observed. No quotas are laid down for the allocation of the social fund, so there is no predetermined basis on which we can assume the entitlement of various countries.

The right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) spoke eloquently. He raised a constituency interest in asking whether bulk deliveries of wine and sherry would continue to be exported to the United Kingdom for bottling within the United Kingdom. We are not aware of any proposals that would interfere with that traditional practice. We hope that the employment prospects described by the right hon. Gentleman will continue to be available and that nothing will interfere with that.

My hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), in eloquent speeches, expressed their concern about the implications of Spanish and Portuguese membership. They clearly indicated their opposition to that. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire for, sometimes single-handedly, raising this issue over a number of years. There is no doubt of his sincerity on this matter.

My hon. Friend asked about the costs that would arise from Spanish and Portuguese membership, and correctly said that the House must take that factor into account. We must consider the transitional arrangements. It is proposed that Spain should achieve broad financial neutrality over the period of transition, whereas Portugal should be a

modest net beneficiary. I am sure that most Members will accept that that is not unreasonable. The gross domestic product per head in Spain is 56 per cent. of the Community average, whereas for Portugal it is only 24 per cent. It is reasonable to take such factors into account.

Mr. Marlow: There is another aspect of the costs that frightens many Conservative Members. My hon. and learned Friend will know that after yesterday's business in Luxembourg more measures will be decided by majority voting rather than unanimously. Within the Community, Spain and Portugal will be pro-Socialist. At times, with those countries in the Community, there will be pressure for more Socialist government. More measures will be presented with a Socialist bias, and that will have cost implications. Is my hon. Friend not concerned about that?

Mr. Rifkind: I have more confidence than my hon. Friend about whether Spain and Portugal should be assumed to have Socialist Governments for all time. They are both democratic societies. Spain had a Conservative Centre-Right Government immediately before its present Administration. Spain and Portugal will no doubt enjoy the democratic pendulum in exactly the same way as it is enjoyed by other member states.

Mr. Foulkes: That will depend upon their electorates.

Mr. Rifkind: Indeed, and that is a sensible criterion to apply.

On the long-term cost implications of enlargement, I agree that we cannot be sure of the exact figures, because many matters cannot possibly be resolved in advance. We do not know what decisions will be taken by the European Community on the details of expenditure. We do not know some of the implications within Spain and Portugal of membership of the Community. The Commission has estimated that, in the long term, the expenditure of the Community on enlargement will represent 0·1 per cent. of the VAT base. The most crucial point is that, thanks to the Fontainebleau agreement, 93 per cent. of any additional, continuing net costs of enlargement will be met by member states other than the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom's involvement is marginal. It is some 7 per cent. of the total, and that is an important consideration.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have shown by an overwhelming majority that they believe that Spanish and Portuguese membership of the Community is highly desirable. I believe that that view is represented by the vast majority of people in Britain as well as elsewhere in the Community. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before the Second Reading debate begins, may I say that I have not selected the six-months amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher). His motion, That the Bill be committed to a Joint Committee of both Houses, is in order, and it may be convenient to the House to debate it together with the Second Reading motion.

7.1 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

For the last half of this century, the people of Edinburgh have been waiting for tonight's debate. The concept of a western relief road has featured in every plan for Edinburgh for some 50 years. Indeed, the line of the western relief road has been safeguarded by the Government, and in every statutory plan since the war its construction has been supported by the officials of Edinburgh corporation, on which I had the honour to serve as a councillor, and by the officials of Lothian regional council and Edinburgh district council. The relief road is not a motorway or a high-speed road. For almost its whole length it will be subject to a speed limit of 40 mph.

At the provisional order inquiry, evidence was given by the officials of Lothian regional council, including the director of public transport, and by the police in its favour. It is significant that not one official of Edinburgh district council was prepared to give evidence against it at the inquiry.

The purpose of the relief road is to provide a bypass to relieve the intolerable environmental pressure on communities in Gorgie, Dalry and Corstorphine. The construction of the outer city bypass is likely to relieve Corstorphine, but all estimates have shown that it will make traffic from the proposed M8 extension on to the Gorgie-Dalry road worse, much of the Gorgie road lying in my constituency. At present, almost all the traffic from the west goes along the A71 on the Gorgie-Dalry road or along the A8, the Corstorphine road. Both roads are narrow and have shopping centres and schools fronting on the road. There is a very high accident rate on both roads, particularly on the Gorgie-Dalry road. There are about 300 accidents in west Edinburgh every year. About 100 of them involve pedestrians, and in an average year there are about seven deaths.

That brings me to the case for the road and its moral justification. I think that the strongest single reason for the western relief road is that without question it will save lives and reduce personal injury accidents. The streets with the highest personal injury accident rates are those where there is a conflict between heavy volumes of traffic and concentrations of parked cars, service lorries and pedestrians. The relief road will attract a substantial amount of traffic from these streets and in consequence reduce traffic conflict and accidents. It was calculated that the contribution of the relief road would reduce the personal injury accidents by about 60 a year, and the traffic management measures would increase that reduction to about 120 a year. Therefore, the safety considerations are extremely important. In the past three years there have been 21 deaths. The Bill will reduce that grisly figure.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

Secondly, for the five sections of the western relief road there are significant employment opportunities. When one takes into account the work of the suppliers from the granite quarries, those making the cement, the binding of materials and the haulage contracting, the road would ensure the employment of 1,500 people for three to four years. Unemployment in my constituency over the last year has gone down by more than 5 per cent., but the issue of enhancing employment opportunities is very real, and there will undoubtedly be employment benefits to other constituencies if the project goes ahead.

Hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies will have received from the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors a letter making it clear that employment is of great concern to them and to the trade unions. I have received a message from the managing director of the Tarmac Group who confirms that the general secretaries of the Transport and General Workers Union and of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians support the Bill. Indeed, it is mentioned in the letter of the federation that there was substantial trade union support for it.

The third reason in favour of the Bill is that the building of the relief road will make it possible to take further steps to reduce the volume, noise and fumes of traffic in Gorgie-Dalry and in Corstorphine, and it will improve conditions for public transport. Without the relief road, no such steps can be taken. The director of transport wants the relief road to be built because it will make it possible for him to run a better and more attractive public transport service. The relief road will allow much higher bus running speeds on existing roads, increasing the popularity of public transport.

In addition, the traffic restraint measures will increase the environmental gains. Beside the A8 and the A71 are 1,800 homes experiencing noise levels above the threshold required for double glazing. The road will cause over 1,000 houses to obtain an important improvement. Indeed, where it is proposed to build a bypass to relieve comparable environmental conditions, there is often a great deal of support for it beyond that in towns and villages. At present, bypasses are under construction to relieve Portobello, Musselburgh and Tranent. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), I understand, is supporting a bypass for Dalkeith also, and I wish him well.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) present because, I understand, he is only too happy to have a bypass for Musselburgh giving relief to the constituents of Edinburgh, East. But I say to him with the greatest respect that he is seeking to condemn the constituents in the western sector of Edinburgh, particularly in Gorgie-Dalry, to living in increasingly intolerable conditions without relief. For this there is no cure other than the western relief road.

As I explained earlier, all estimates have shown that the outer city bypass with the M8 extension will make traffic on the Gorgie-Dalry road worse if the western relief road is not built.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingstone): The whole point of the bypass is that it takes the traffic round the obstacle in its path. The whole point of the western relief road is that it will funnel all the traffic to which the hon. Gentleman is referring to a traffic light connection with Lothian road. Does he really believe that the traffic can be brought to that point with no additional traffic measures without resulting in intolerable traffic pressure in the centre of Edinburgh and eventually in a road through the centre of Edinburgh?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have explained why it will not add to congestion in the centre of Edinburgh, and how congestion in the centre of Edinburgh can be prevented. The Musselburgh bypass gives relief in the eastern sector of the city and, I understand, most of the traffic using it goes on to the centre of the city. That provides relief for the east of Edinburgh. I am asking for relief for the west also. I will deal later specifically with how congestion can be avoided.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): What about Musselburgh?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am anxious that many hon. Members should be called to speak, and I wish to get through my speech as quickly as possible.

I am exercised by the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) with the representations of the Cockburn Association and the National Trust for Scotland. For many years I have been a life member of the National Trust for Scotland and the Cockburn Association. If I believed for one moment that the Bill would damage their interests, I should not be proposing it. I sense that they fear what they imagine to be the unknown, but the methods used——

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Nevertheless, is it not a valid point that the outer city bypass makes more sense than this road? Let us make building the outer road our first priority. If it does not work, we can consider this road.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: While the outer city bypass will reduce congestion in Corstorphine, all the estimates, and the evidence in the inquiry, have been to the effect that it will increase congestion in Gorgie-Dalry. This is not an advantaged area of Edinburgh, and that is one of the fundamental reasons for the western relief road.

The methods used in prediction techniques in transport planning are standard world wide, and it is indisputable that the traffic witnesses for the objectors at the inquiry admitted that this relief road would not increase traffic in the city centre. Of the 300 accidents a year in the area affected by the relief road, more than half occur in the constituency of Edinburgh, Central which includes Edinburgh city. Most of the accident saving can come within that constituency, which is an important benefit of the Bill. I can give two examples.

Along the A8 going down West Coates into Shandwick place, about 50 injuries or fatal accidents occur each year. That is the heaviest concentration of accidents in the western sector. Hundreds of homes and businesses are also affected by congestion and pollution. The relief road will remove one third to two thirds of the traffic on this road. On the Dalry road, the A70 is a high-density, tenemental area on which occur about 40 accidents each year. The construction of the outer city bypass will increase traffic volumes and, in its turn, the risk of accidents. The relief road would reduce traffic on the Dalry road by about 20 per cent. and would make possible traffic management measures to remove the 80 per cent. of bypassable traffic to that road.

The Gorky road, which is in both the Edinburgh, Central constituency and mine, is also a high-density

tenemental area, with problems of noise and environmental pollution. Even on the short section in Edinburgh, Central, 13 people are killed or injured each year. The outer city bypass increases traffic problems on this road which the relief road will alleviate.

Mr. Ron Brown: This is all academic.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is important for safety considerations, and is thus one of the fundamental points of the Bill.

It should not be forgotten that part of the western approach road has already been opened, from Lothian road in the city centre out to Balgreen, and it is significant that after its opening studies recorded a drop in peak hour traffic in Lothian road. In other words, opening half of the western approach road, far from doing harm, has done some good.

Basically, people come to the city centre only if they have the time and the money. If and when the relief road goes ahead, it will not radically affect the amount of time or money available to the traveller. In the absence of extra time and money, it is unlikely that there will be extra journeys. Traffic within the city centre can, should and must be controlled. The principle behind the Bill is that traffic in the western city area of Edinburgh should be redistributed from residential and shopping areas to the relief road. Even so, the distribution of access points to the city centre will remain the same — from Shandwick place, Queensferry street, the existing west approach road, Morison street and across Fountainbridge. In future, traffic will be able to fan out as it does now.

Because of the environmental improvement measures to Gorgie-Dalry, Stenhouse-Whitson and Corstorphine, the capacity of existing roads will be reduced, but the total road capacity from the west will remain the same. Additional measures will make certain that congestion in the city centre is avoided, thus helping to alleviate the concern of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown). I can give five examples of how this can be done.

First, the present computer-controlled central area traffic light control system can and will distribute traffic between the Lothian road exit and that at Roseburn. Secondly, the council's parking control measures can and do discourage long-stay parking in the city centre. The effect has been to keep peak hour traffic at the same level since 1968.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I was the chairman of the inquiry and thus had the opportunity of travelling through Corstorphine. I noticed that there was an absence of traffic management schemes, particularly at the peak hour. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if there were traffic management at Corstorphine, there would be a truer figure of how fast traffic can move in that area and the extent to which the new road could alleviate people's problems?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is a fair question, although the hon. Gentleman has broken the thread of my speech. Corstorphine is a tremendous bottleneck in peak hours, and business men have complained because they want to travel more rapidly instead of being stuck in traffic jams on that road. I am more concerned with Gorgie-Dalry. I am explaining how congestion in the city centre can be prevented.

The third way to avoid congestion is the newly opened railway halts at South Gyle and Livingston, and other stations at Bathgate and West Lothian, which will soon be open, all of which will provide park-and-ride schemes. This will encourage commuters to leave their cars outside the city. In west Edinburgh, the South Gyle halt was the initiative of councillor Donald Gorrie who got the measure through with the support of Conservatives.

The third item is the large multi-storey car park being promoted by the Lothian regional council at the end of the western relief road. The Edinburgh district council has now objected to it and the matter is on appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The car park would provide places for 1,500 cars and would prevent congestion. If the district council is so concerned about traffic in the city centre, it should bear in mind the need for proper parking facilities. Not everyone wishes to travel by public transport, and appropriate provision should be made for parking.

A fifth way to prevent congestion in the city centre is to go ahead with the outer city bypass as a priority commitment. This will remove from the city centre all the bypassable traffic.

The conservationist objection represented by the Cockburn Association, which has concerned my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), is a relatively new phenomenon. Until shortly before the inquiry, the Cockburn Association did not oppose the road in principle. It argued that it should be single carriageway rather than dual carriageway, and I can give evidence for that. In its newsletter of April 1984, it was confirmed that it held a special meeting and submitted detailed comments to Lothian regional district council. It reported:

"These accepted the principle of the road, subject to rigorous conditions."

The road is planned as a dual carriageway, principally for safety reasons. The police stated that they would be strongly opposed to a single carriageway for safety reasons —particularly in connection with access for ambulances and fire engines, if required. Every effort has been made to take account of amenity considerations. In particular, every effort was made to safeguard the industries and employment at Westfield, in my consituency, by building a viaduct. Also, only one house is to be demolished and the lady concerned, whom I have seen, is already rehoused.

What is more, the Royal Fine Art Commission has discussed with the region at every stage the lay-out of the road and its landscaping, which will be extensive. No fewer than 300,000 trees and shrubs will be planted, and therefore the overall impression will be extremely attractive. A great deal of effort has gone into that.

The Cockburn Association stated in its petition that the procedure is constitutionally unsuitable. I reject the allegation that it was not satisfied that the majority of commissioners gave proper consideration to the effects of the road. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central still has doubts over the issue—indeed, he has tabled a motion, supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) to refer the matter to a Joint Committee of both Houses. That appears in both petitions. I am certain of the overwhelming justification for the road, and, in a desire to be helpful to my hon. Friend, I shall not oppose the motion. The people of Edinburgh have waited 50 years for the road, and if they have to wait a few more

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

weeks so that justice is seen to be done, so be it. I hope that it will be for only a few weeks as the contractors are ready to start work.

Lothian regional council's reason for using the procedure of a parliamentary commission was that it would simplify overlapping statutory procedures. I could have been faced with three separate, lengthy public inquiries on, first, the planning aspects of the proposed road; secondly, the land acquisition, apart from the rail diversion; and, thirdly, the rail diversion and associated land acquisition. The public would have had to bear the cost of three major public inquiries.

The procedure of a parliamentary commission enables a public hearing to be held dealing with all the relevant facts leading to the provisional order and to the Bill. It is the only procedure which guaranteed a hearing for all the objectors to the proposal.

The witnesses from the smaller amenity bodies said that they had received a fair hearing and the parliamentary commission procedure has allowed a wider range of compensation than would have been available under the Land Compensation Act 1961. A planning inquiry would not have allowed any other issue to be aired. The two independent commissioners were entirely independent. I believe that the Cockburn Association's attack on the procedure and on the commissioners is wrong.

As I have said, I shall not oppose the motion to refer the Bill to a Joint Committee of both Houses. That is something for which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East asked in *The Scotsman* on 28 February this year. He said:

"If Labour MPs could not defeat the Bill before or at Second Reading they would certainly want it referred to a Committee of both Houses because of the legal and procedural matters raised."

I will end with the words of a man whom the House of Commons remembers with warmth and affection, the late Frank McElhone. He replied as Minister to my Adjournment debate on this subject and on the outer city bypass on 6 February 1978. He said:

"Although I am a great lover of Edinburgh, it figures much smaller in my affection than does Glasgow. However, it is plain that over the years Edinburgh has, as the hon. Member for Ayr said, been plagued by indecision. Whether we talk about opera, sewerage or roads, Edinburgh seems to be plagued with that indecision. Perhaps those in Edinburgh are not gifted with the directness and desire to do things that we have in Glasgow." —[*Official Report*, 6 February 1978; Vol. 943, c. 1207.]

Tonight we have the opportunity to prove that Edinburgh is capable of the same greatness of character that Frank McElhone knew to exist in Glasgow.

The Bill is in the interests of Scotland because a capital city needs good communications. It is in the interests of Lothian region because it will provide employment for more than 1,550 people for several years. It is in the interests of Edinburgh because it will improve the amenities of thousands of house owners. Above all, it will save lives and reduce personal accidents. This is the moral justification for the Bill and why it deserves to succeed. The Bill is good for Scotland, Edinburgh and its citizens. It stands for progress, and that is why I commend it to the House.

7.24 pm

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I have had the privilege of voting for my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) in all of the elections in which he has been a candidate, but I shall not be voting for him in any future election. He may know that that is because I have moved out of his constituency.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): And moved into his own.

Mr. Fletcher: My hon. and learned Friend is correct. I can now vote for an even better candidate.

I have always been impressed by the interest and hard work of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West in local issues, and I respect his point of view in this instance. However, what is good for West Edinburgh is not necessarily good for Edinburgh as a whole. The proposed western relief road would benefit one ward of my hon. Friend's constituency, and I know that it could be stretched to cover some parts of my constituency.

I do not think that my hon. Friend would deny that the main traffic problem in West Edinburgh is in the Corstorphine area, which stretches from Drumbrae to Clermiston, a distance of less than half a mile. It is rather absurd that we should vote to spend £37 million on four miles of dual carriageway to overcome this short length of congestion, especially when it will only overcome the traffic problems in West Edinburgh and Corstorphine by transferring them to the centre of the city.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is my hon. Friend not aware that all the evidence at the inquiry was to the effect that the congestion in Gorgie road and Dalry road, much of which is in his constituency, will be far worse once the outer city bypass is constructed? Is he aware also that in Corstorphine there are least four wards and not one?

Mr. Fletcher: I do not think there are four wards between Drumbrae and Clermiston, which is the locality where most of the trouble is. The road is quite broad until it reaches Drumbrae, and it spreads out again immediately after the Clermiston road. My hon. Friend said that the western relief road had been planned for 50 years. I suggest that that is evidence in itself that the plans are out of date. Indeed, we are in the middle of constructing an outer ring road, which will relieve a little pocket in my hon. Friend's constituency and a great deal of traffic from the city as a whole.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): In the course of my hon. Friend's research into this issue as a local constituency Member, has he read the transcript of the evidence that was laid before the commission? The evidence of the traffic analysis and projected traffic flows is that even after the ring road is built—it will take away some of the traffic that would otherwise go through Edinburgh—there will still be a substantial amount of traffic passing through the A8 and the Gorgie-Dalry road. It is to relieve these communities that the western relief road is so essential.

Mr. Fletcher: What my hon. Friend is suggesting is only one solution to the problems to which he referred. I and others take the view that the problems at Corstorphine and Gorgie-Dalry can be overcome at much less cost than that proposed by the construction of the western relief road.

I wish to make it clear to those who are not familiar with Edinburgh that the relief road is not an Edinburgh city bypass. That bypass is being built at enormous public expense and will be ready for opening by about 1990. It

is of great significance to all traffic problems in Edinburgh, and that is why Edinburgh Members are most grateful that construction of the road is well in hand.

The relief road is not planned to decrease city centre traffic. On the contrary, it will increase the amount of traffic entering the middle of the city. It will invite vehicles into the city centre traffic jams and tend to make them worse. The relief road will be a story of misspent millions and misplaced party loyalty. It is not wanted by those whom I meet in the city centre and nor is it wanted by groups which take an interest in their local environment and local amenities. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West that I do not accept that we must spend £40 million to ensure his return to the House after the next general election. I believe that we can confidently expect him to return here at much less public expenditure.

I have conceded already that Corstorphine has traffic problems between Drumbrae and Clermiston and Fermaston, a distance of half a mile. However, other remedies are available there and elsewhere. I contend that the relief road proposal is out of proportion to the size of the problem.

The issue of the relief road was raised during the 1983 general election campaign, and I was put under pressure. I did not always welcome those who tended to follow me round and ask, "Are you going to oppose the western relief road?" My reply was, "Frankly, I know little about it." That was the position. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) might confirm that the boundary changes that affected the two of us occurred at a late stage before the general election. That was mainly because there were two public inquiries into what should be the boundaries of what is now the Edinburgh, Central constituency.

I told those who were asking me whether I opposed the relief road that after the election I would consider the matter most carefully and then make my decision. That is what I did. I discussed the issue with my regional councillor, the late Ian Cramond, who spearheaded the proposal in the region. I had discussions also with consultants, council officials and others in the constituency, including members of my constituency association, before reaching the conclusion that the road as proposed was not welcome and would not be beneficial to my constituents. My position has been known now for almost two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Why is it that every Conservative regional councillor supports the relief road, including those in my hon. Friend's constituency?

Mr. Fletcher: I am amazed that a former Whip should ask why Conservative councillors of a tightly balanced region should all take the same line on the proposal.

In October 1983, the region decided to construct the road and applied to the then Edinburgh district council for planning consent. The council gave its approval in February in 1984, subject to various but important detailed conditions being agreed. Agreement on those conditions was never arrived at and, despite strong objections and requests for a public inquiry, which I supported, the region took the less helpful route of opting for further discussion. As the House knows, it promoted a provisional order. A parliamentary inquiry followed, which lasted for no fewer than 52 days. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) feels rather sore about that, because he was one of the commissioners.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend accept that the parliamentary inquiry was the only forum at which the details of the proposal, including the diversion of the railway, compulsory purchase orders and planning permission, could be discussed? Had the application to the district council for planning permission been approved without a public inquiry, the people of Edinburgh who allegedly object to the scheme would never have had the opportunity to make their views known. Does my hon. Friend accept that the parliamentary inquiry fulfilled the right to consultation?

Mr. Fletcher: I do not think that it is important whether I accept that. Most of the objectors who participated in the inquiry did not think that the inquiry met their requirements. They would have preferred a public inquiry. They felt that that procedure would have given them greater access and would have allowed them to make their case. I agree that the parliamentary inquiry allowed all these matters to be considered, including the railway diversion, but the railway issue could have been dealt with separately. Indeed, I understand that that issue has yet to be resolved. That could have been dealt with as a separate issue, and a public inquiry could have taken place in the normal way, which is what the objectors wanted.

Mr. Martin: Had it not been for the railway, a parliamentary inquiry could not have been conducted. That would not have been possible if the only issue had been the road.

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, I understand that. The parliamentary commissioners ruled that the objectors were entitled to two thirds of their costs. I understand that the region claims that that ruling is ultra vires and refuses to pay the costs. I respect the legal point that may exist, but I hope that the region will consider its position. It is extremely costly for members of the public to make representations when such important matters are being discussed. I have been an objector to a number of schemes, and I know the effort, time and costs involved.

No one will be surprised to learn that Edinburgh has a proud history of preserving its architectural heritage, not least against the road lobby. As the hon. Member who represents the old and the new towns in Edinburgh, I have a duty to foster that tradition, even against a Conservative council, which I do with reluctance. I do not believe that this should be a party political occasion.

I do not go lightly against the Lothian region or my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West, but my judgment of what is right for my constituents must take precedence over other considerations. I accept that conservationists are not always right, but in Edinburgh they have been right more often than not. I quote an article that appeared in *The Scotsman* in October 1983 on this issue. It reads:

"Edinburgh, the only British City which has not been a happy hunting ground for road planners over the past 20 years, owes its escape to broad based campaigns which in 1966, 1970, 1973, 1976 and 1979 told all the experts and most politicians they were wrong. As a result, there is no motorway under Charlotte Square, above Tollcross, over the Meadows, across the Royal Mile, round the bridges, through Calton Hill, and next to the New Town".

That is excellent for Edinburgh.

[Mr. Fletcher]

Opposition to the relief road is broadly based. It stands alongside the campaigns to which the article in *The Scotsman* was referring. No fewer than 38 organisations believe that the proposals supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West represent a major threat to the city's environment. These include the National Trust for Scotland, the Cockburn Association, the Scottish Civic Trust, the Architectural Heritage Society, no fewer than 17 residents' associations, six community councils and 11 amenity groups. The views of these various organisations must be taken into account when we decide whether the Bill should receive a Second Reading.

Mr. Hirst *rose——*

Mr. Fletcher: I know that my hon. Friend wishes to participate in the debate, and I think that I should proceed with my speech so that I can leave time for him.

I have recited what I consider to be an impressive list of organisations in Edinburgh which are opposed to the relief road, and their objections deserve the closest consideration by the House.

The main reasons for the objections include increased traffic congestion in the city centre. The western relief road may relieve the western approach to Edinburgh, but that will be achieved at the expense of the city centre. The road will funnel traffic into the centre of Edinburgh. There are no intermediate junctions for traffic to leave or to join the proposed road between the periphery near Edinburgh airport and the central area. Like any other new road, it will attract more traffic, including heavy vehicles, to the city centre. There is no evidence from the consultants to support the contrary.

The road will be connected directly with the M8, making it, in effect, an extension of the motorway into the city centre. When the region first made the proposal, it was proud to talk of it as an extension of the motorway. It will be a dual carriageway and will be built on stilts. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West underlined that there will be a speed restriction of 40 mph. Now it is referred to only as safe dual carriagway leading into the city centre. Even that more modest presentation will encourage at least some of the traffic to continue through the city centre when the new ring road, which will be completed shortly, would be more appropriate.

Areas in my constituency such as Roseburn, Haymarket, Tollcross and the Meadows will be adversely affected. The Meadows are the southern boundary of my constituency and the northern boundary of the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), who is not prepared to bat even an eyelid lest his neutrality is questioned. Congestion in that part of the town could lead to demands for widening of the road at the Meadows—a precious part of Edinburgh's green belt.

There are fears for the stability of many listed buildings in the old and new towns in the city. All of this is to save only an estimated two minutes on a typical journey from the western periphery to the city centre, a distance of four miles. On arriving at the city centre, drivers will find a bigger than ever traffic jam at Lothian road.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West claimed that the proposed road would reduce the number of accidents. With respect, that is misleading because the road and all that is claimed of it will not solve anything. It will shift problems elsewhere. The congestion caused in the central area of the city will be just as likely to create as many accidents as those that my hon. Friend claims are caused by congestion in Corstorphine and in Drumbrae Dalry. Shifting the problem from one part of the city to another will not solve anything.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is my hon. Friend aware that traffic management measures on the other roads which go through his constituency, such as Dalry road, can reduce the volume of traffic on those roads? What is proposed is merely a redistribution of existing traffic and not an increase of traffic into the city centre.

Mr. Fletcher: I am coming to what improvements might be made. I accept that improvements could be made to the western road system, but I do not think those have to be achieved by funnelling all the traffic on to one road with just one exit in the city centre. That is the basis of many complaints about the system. There could be better traffic management measures, such as junction improvements and road realignments, as well as improved parking facilities. Those could be carried out at a cost of a very few million pounds compared to the proposed expenditure of nearly £40 million.

I note what my hon. Friend said about the motion that I have on the Order Paper that the Bill should be committed to a Joint Committee of both Houses. I do not propose to enlarge upon that. If that were the decision of the House, it would allow further discussion on some of these matters.

Much discussion here and outside the House is concerned with inner city deprivation. I confess that Edinburgh has problems, but by no means can it be regarded as a deprived inner city area. Edinburgh ratepayers could think of better things to do with £40 million; for example, a cut in the rates would be much more warmly welcomed than the proposed road. My hon. Friends complain frequently about the extravagant plans of Edinburgh district council. How can they justify expenditure on a road that is largely unwanted? No doubt the region believes earnestly that the relief road would be good for Edinburgh, but Edinburgh thinks otherwise. Why not simply save the money and have the benefit of a cut in public expenditure on the one hand and being popular at the same time?

I repeat that the proposed road will not be a city bypass but will shift a traffic problem within the city. The House is being asked to decide on a matter where the majority of Edinburgh opinion is at best opposed to the road and is at worst evenly divided. In those circumstances, the House should follow the excellent traditions of the Chair; we should support the status quo by voting against the Bill.

7.45 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) approached me while he was a Scottish Whip to ask if I would take part in an inquiry in Edinburgh. I asked the obvious question about how long it would take. He replied that the local authority, the promoter of the Bill, had said that it would take three or four weeks. That was a ridiculous assumption by the local authority. Some people who gave evidence were in the witness box for seven or eight days.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) mentioned landscaping. He will know

that landscaping was not referred to in the proposal that was before the inquiry, yet we had a witness giving evidence for three days about how many trees would be planted along the proposed road. It was ridiculous that the promoters of the Bill gave an estimate of three or four weeks for the inquiry when they knew that it would take longer. In fact, it took three and half months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In clause 36, which deals with preservation of amenity, landscaping and tree planting have been mentioned, so they are taken into account.

Mr. Martin: If the hon. Gentleman reads the evidence, he will note that that clause was not in the original legislation.

In an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) I made it clear that had it not been for the railway there would not have been a parliamentary inquiry about the road. If we allow the legislation to go through, we will set a precedent. For the first time in the history of private legislation in Scotland a road was tied in with a railway. If it had been only the railway that was under consideration, the parliamentary commissioners would have taken only about three weeks for the inquiry.

Mr. Hirst *rose*——

Mr. Martin: I am not giving way. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make a speech.

As parliamentary commissioners, we received strong legal advice straight away from the clerks, who are also counsel to the Secretary of State for Scotland, that every statutory means should be used by the local authority before it sought a parliamentary inquiry.

The only reason for a parliamentary inquiry was the railway. There was nothing to stop the local authority from drafting another piece of private legislation when only the railway was under consideration. The other proposals in the Bill could have been covered adequately by ordinary planning permission or a planning inquiry.

It is nonsense to suggest, as officials of Lothian region suggested in their evidence, that the reason for a parliamentary inquiry was to provide a public forum for the good people of Edinburgh. Another argument for the parliamentary inquiry was that it would save money. It is difficult to accept talk of making savings on public inquiries when one is considering spending £40 million. The main consideration of a local authority on an issue such as this should be to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to express a point of view for or against the proposal.

As I understand it, a person wishing to object to this legislation would have to petition to become an opposer or an objector at the parliamentary inquiry. There is nothing to stop someone from appearing in person as an objector at a parliamentary inquiry, but that is rather like saying that there is nothing to stop a person accused of a serious crime from turning up at the High Court and appealing on his or her own behalf. Anyone with any sense would urge people to get proper legal counsel in such a situation and it was no accident that every body which petitioned for or against had a Queen's counsel and a junior present at the parliamentary inquiry.

I complained bitterly about the hearing lasting three and a half months, but it would have lasted a great deal longer if the Cockburn Association had not decided to be the umbrella organisation for all the petitioners against the proposal, apart from the railway and the district council. The hearing might have lasted many months if they had all chosen to appear as individuals rather than under the umbrella organisation.

I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind that our consideration of the legislation is not solely on the merits of the road. We are here to examine legislation and to ensure that the House is not abused. We must make sure that the legislation is properly drafted and worded. As parliamentary commissioners in Edinburgh, we had to consider what the wishes of the House would be and I know that hon. Members who are more experienced parliamentarians than I am are very particular about the wording of legislation.

If a railway is diverted by means of parliamentary legislation, someone 100 years hence must be able to identify where the railway was diverted to. That could not happen in this case. The legal advice was that the proposal was ambiguous as to the location of the new railway layout. Although I expressed my dissent and concern and voted in favour of the legal advice, I was overruled. The plans which the commissioners accepted by a majority decision are not the plans before us now. The plans have been changed since we left Edinburgh. Therefore, the decision taken in Edinburgh is not the one that we shall take tonight.

The officials of the regional council told us at the parliamentary inquiry that the road would be a dual carriageway. I said that there were dual carriageways and dual carriageways, and I asked them to describe a dual carriageway similar to that in the proposal. I was told that the nearest thing to the proposed plan was the Clydeside expressway in my native city of Glasgow.

There are dual carriageways in my constituency that are very quiet, and if someone were to describe a dual carriageway I would think of one of those which are in housing estates and therefore do not have much traffic. The Clydeside expressway is not a typical dual carriageway. It is sectioned off and the public cannot cross it. Workmen who were late for work were injured when they tried to cross the expressway with using the overhead bridges. It is more like a motorway without a hard shoulder. I do not think that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West would like such a road in his back yard.

Many people believe that Glasgow has a terrific motorway system, and I grant that that is so, but, having lived in Glasgow all my life, I believe that the people who get most benefit from the motorway system in Glasgow are not the people living in Glasgow, but those living outside the city. The expressway is in the Anderston district where I was brought up. A whole community was destroyed and streets, schools, churches and places of historical interest disappeared from the face of the earth.

I later moved to Townhead. I first heard of the Townhead interchange when Lord Ross of Marnock pressed a detonator, blew up a wall and set the interchange on its way. There are areas in Townhead which no one would recognise. People have been pushed to the four winds because of the motorway system there. Everyone can say "Hear, hear" for the motorway system in Glasgow, except the majority of Glaswegians. In my own constituency of Springburn, where I live, many difficulties are caused by motorway proposals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a fundamental difference between the environment in which he was brought up, where whole communities were broken up by the wide-scale demolition of buildings, and this proposal, where only one house is to be demolished and where satisfactory settlement has been made for the occupant affected?

Mr. Martin: The plans for motorways in Glasgow were drawn up in 1964. Some of the plans which were still on the drawing board in 1964 have suddenly been resurrected now, and there is still motorway building in Glasgow. In fact, there have been several inquiries in my constituency.

I am trying to explain to hon. Members that the proposal could mean the beginning of a motorway system in Edinburgh. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West, who knows Edinburgh better than I do, will realise that when this relief road reaches the approach road there will be heavy traffic going right to the foot of the castle, the most important tourist attraction in the country. He should think very carefully about what might happen.

I am glad the hon. Gentleman accepts that a Joint Committee of both Houses should consider this matter. I took the word of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian, who had taken the word of the local authority, that the inquiry would last about three and a half weeks. In fact, I could not come to the House for three and a half months. If the House instructs a Member to do something in another part of the country, he must accept that duty, and I make no complaint about it. I object, however, to a Queen's counsel who has nothing to do with the House advising a client—I do not blame the regional council, because it had to take advice—to lump the road and the railway together to obtain a parliamentary inquiry.

Because the scheme was opposed, the House had to find two commissioners from this House and two from another place. As no one in the other place bothered to put any names forward, we had to have two people from outside the parliamentary system. I strongly object to the fact that for three and a half months I could not represent my constituents here. In a Parliament in which the Government had a very small majority, or no overall majority at all, as occurred under the Labour Government, it would be absurd to deprive the House of attendance by Members because of private legislation instigated by people outside. In my view, parliamentary commissions should not be set up until the petitioners have been through every other statutory procedure at their disposal.

Finally, I urge the House to consider seriously, not just the terms of the legislation, but the damage that could be done to a very beautiful city. In my three and a half months in Edinburgh, I came to know the Mound, the old town and the university area well. To me, it is a lovely thing to see people living in the centre of one of our cities. It reminded me of the Glasgow of my childhood, when people lived in the city centre. I believe that if we allow a road system of this kind to go through the city of Edinburgh we shall risk losing something that other major cities in the United Kingdom are striving very hard to retain.

8.3 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): It may be for the convenience of the House if I intervene briefly at this stage to explain the position of the Government and of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 in relation to this confirmation Bill.

Where a provisional order made under the provisions of the 1936 Act is opposed, arrangements are made for an inquiry to be held before parliamentary commissioners. Counsel for the promoters of the order and objectors to it appear before the commissioners and lead evidence. Following the hearing, the commissioners submit a report to the Secretary of State in which they recommend that the order should be issued, or should be rejected, or should be issued with modifications. That was the procedure adopted in this instance. In the case of the Western Relief road order, following an inquiry which sat on no fewer than 52 days over a period of three months, the commissioners found in favour of the council, but with such qualifications as to require the deposit of a modified order under the private legislation procedure. The plans for the road also had to be cleared by the Department of Transport railways inspectorate because of the close proximity of the proposed road to the Edinburgh to Glasgow and Dundee railway.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not, therefore, in a position to introduce the Bill in the House until the end of June. He took the view that introduction at that stage of the Session would not be for the convenience of the House as it seemed unlikely that there would be adequate time for the important issues at stake to be fully discussed. The Government have presented the Bill in the new Session so that it can be fully and properly discussed.

It would, in theory, have been open to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to refuse to accept the recommendations of the parliamentary commissioners, but successive Secretaries of State have honoured the undertaking given during the passage of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1933, which was consolidated in the 1936 Act, that the Secretary of State would treat such recommendations with the fullest respect and would not set them aside other than in exceptional circumstances. Accordingly, my right hon. Friend has submitted the order to Parliament in the form of the confirmation Bill which is now before the House.

The role of the Secretary of State in introducing the Bill is essentially formal. In particular, my right hon. Friend's decision to introduce the Bill is not to be taken as implying any view on his part on the merits of the order, but merely as enabling the appropriate parliamentary procedure to take place. I therefore see my role today as that of a catalyst, and I do not propose to utter any view for or against the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister sets great store by the authority, standing and status of the parliamentary commissioners. For the record, will he tell the House who the commissioners were and who appointed those who were not members of either House?

Mr. Ancram: The commissioners are appointed by the House authorities, and that is what happened in this case.

Mr. Home Robertson: They were appointed by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ancram: I have listened with care and attention to the comments that have been made about the way in

which the procedure was followed in this instance, and I suspect that there will be more comments to come. I have taken careful note of the the points made today. Extensive consultation, especially with the Chairman of Ways and Means, would be necessary if any review of the procedure were to take place, but I believe—I think that there is support from historical precedent for this — that the circumstances surrounding this provisional order were exceptional. A wide range of business has been conducted under these procedures in the past 49 years, but so far as I am aware those other instances did not reveal anything particularly defective about the procedures themselves.

Mr. Martin: On previous occasions the petitioners were careful to restrict this type of legislation to bridges and railways. In no circumstances were roads involved, except in the case of approach roads—for instance, the approach road to the Kingston bridge. I agree that in more than 40 years no difficulties have arisen, but no previous legislation has involved a major stretch of road going through an urban area.

Mr. Ancram: I listened to the hon. Gentleman. He is as aware as I am that the regional council would have required parliamentary powers to divert the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway if the road were to be built. The regional council was entitled to decide to promote a wider provisional order. When the order was deposited, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was obliged under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 to make appropriate arrangements for the order to be considered. The provisional order may have been wider than is sometimes the case, but in the circumstances the procedures were carried out properly.

All hon. Members involved in Edinburgh welcome the construction of the outer city bypass, which should improve traffic conditions in Edinburgh and provide a fast and convenient route for traffic wishing to avoid the city centre. I take full account of the planned works on the bypass in determining Lothian region's capital allocation each year, and our arrangements to give grant assistance for the remaining sections of the bypass will also have the benefit of significantly relieving the burden on Lothian ratepayers.

Where, as in this case, a petition against an order comprised in the confirmation Bill is presented timeously, there is also, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) correctly pointed out, provision under section 9 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 for the matter to be referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament. The motion before the House, which we shall consider together with the main motion, is clearly competent. The House must decide whether a sufficient case has been made for it. The Government's position on that, as on the question of the principle of the Bill, is neutral. I trust that the House will accept that the Government have fulfilled the responsibilities expected of them regarding the provisional order.

8.11 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) said, the Minister, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), will not bat an eyelid that may suggest that he is anything other than neutral. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and I, representing the Labour Front Bench, believe that we should not express an opinion. However, unlike the Minister, at the end of my remarks I shall say how I intend to vote on a personal basis. It might have been for the convenience of the House if the Minister, as an Edinburgh Member, had told the House how he intended to vote as the Bill affects his constituency. Some of his hon. Friends will watch with interest to see how he casts his vote, if he votes.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) will agree that even among his hon. Friends he comes from a privileged background. It appears that he is a highly privileged hon. Member because twice within seven days the House has debated Bills designed to protect his small 500 majority. Last week, when we debated the Housing (Scotland) Bill, some hon. Members said that it was designed to protect him, and his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central said the same this evening.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that people living in Gorgie and Dalry are in no way from an advantaged or privileged background, and that the Bill will alleviate the intolerable circumstances in which they live, which can only get worse when the outer city bypass is built? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman received a great deal of support for his intervention, but his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central did not take part in it. Clearly, the House cannot be divided along party lines on this matter. There are divisions within the Conservative party, and, without going into last week's politics, that is not wholly uncommon in the Scottish Conservative party.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) is one of my constituents, and I should have mixed feelings if he lost his job. The hon. Gentleman lives in my constituency and, presumably, goes to his constituency occasionally. If the western relief road were built, he would probably go straight through the centre of Edinburgh to get from his home in East Lothian to his constituency in west Edinburgh, whereas it would be much more appropriate for him to go round the city on a completed outer city bypass.

Mr. Maxton: I shall not become involved with my hon. Friend's constituents, as I am sure that he looks after their interests, and perhaps even those of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West.

Conservative Members are divided on the matter, and their party's two House of Commons parliamentary commissioners also take opposite sides. There are no divisions in the Labour party's ranks on this issue. Although the alliance parties hold the balance of power on Lothian regional council, which is promoting the Bill, none is present to say where the alliance stands on the issue.

As a Glaswegian, I am loth to take too large a part in the controversy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) investigated the matter for three months, he is entitled to intervene, although he is a Glaswegian too. Although all Glaswegians reluctantly must go to Edinburgh on occasions, we do not know the geography of the city as well as Edinburgh Members.

[Mr. Maxton]

Obviously, there are traffic congestion problems. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West argued cogently why the congestion in his constituency should be relieved. However, his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central argued equally cogently why the relief road should not be built until we see whether Edinburgh traffic is relieved by the bypasses around Edinburgh. Each of my hon. Friends must decide how to vote, and they will have received a great deal of advice. They must pay attention to what the majority of the parliamentary commissioners recommended, but equally they should pay careful attention to the valid points of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn, the chairman of that commission. My hon. Friends have listened to the arguments of their friends within Edinburgh and Lothian region, and all Labour Members pay high regard to the views of those in Edinburgh whom they know best.

I intend to vote against the Bill. However, if the Bill is passed, I warmly welcome the disclosure that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West is prepared to accept the procedure of a Joint Committee of both Houses because at least that will allow the matter to be considered in more detail before the proposal is passed. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friends to weigh their decision carefully before they cast their votes.

8.18 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I was amused to hear my colleague, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), say that his Whip approached him smiling and asked him to go to Edinburgh as a parliamentary commissioner, and that his Whip believed that the inquiry would last about three and a half weeks. That was not my experience. My Whip did not smile, but merely said, "There is a job to be done in Edinburgh. It may take three weeks or it may take slightly longer, but you should be back well and truly before Christmas."

I sympathise with some of the hon. Gentleman's views, because, like him, I always find it frustrating to be away from Parliament for a long time. I do not complain about that, because I recognise that it is a duty which from time to time falls on hon. Members. I hope that I can honestly look all hon. Members straight in the eye when I say that I endeavoured to do my duty as a commissioner to the best of my ability.

It has not been easy to cope with all the demands of one's constituents, and my colleagues on the commission recognised and readily acknowledged that I had a substantial amount of work to do, but I do not believe that any of my constituents suffered because I had to be away from the House for three and a half months. That should be borne in mind by any other hon. Member who finds himself similarly dispatched to a parliamentary commission in future.

Having kept fairly silent on the matter for the nine months in which the commission was completing its work, I must say now that it sat for an unnecessarily long time, and criticism that is made of the procedure and the time in which two Members of Parliament were involved must be tempered by the fact that there were ways in which the proceedings could have been truncated. There need not have been such lengthy bouts of evidence as we received. I think that the chairman of the commission will acknowledge that some of the objectors indulged in flights of fancy. I remind him of the Cowgate boulevard, a preposterous suggestion which wasted two and a half days of evidence.

While I am sensitive to what the hon. Member for Springburn has said about the cumbersome nature of a parliamentary commission, I believe that, if the commission had been run in a much more businesslike way, it would have been possible to sit for a much shorter period and still to give all the objectors and the promoters adequate opportunity to put their points of view.

Mr. Martin: Surely the hon. Member will recall that the proposers took longer in giving evidence than the objectors. A witness gave evidence that the Cowgate was to be extended into a dual carriageway, and we, the commissioners, asked for more evidence. Therefore, it was to satisfy the commissioners that the matter of the Cowgate was considered for an extra two and a half days.

Mr. Hirst: I am sure that it would be to the amusement and edification of the House if we indulged in a re-run of some of our spirited discussions, but it is fair to say that the promoters, who are putting forward such a major scheme, must inevitably spend time in justifying their proposal. The function of the commissioners was to examine and take a decision on the merits of the scheme, and that necessarily involved an exhaustive examination of the merits of the case.

There was indeed an exhaustive and painstaking examination of the merits of the scheme. Having approached my duties initially in an entirely neutral way, I found myself, as the scheme unfolded, attracted to the logic and merits of the scheme. I believe that the case was conclusively proved. The significant point is not that I found it conclusively proved but that a majority of the commissioners came to that conclusion.

As some hon. Members may know, the other two commissioners were people with no party affiliation and with no preconceived notion about the matter. They were entirely independent in regard to their appointment and the way in which they made their decision. It is significant that, after 53 days of painstaking consideration, the two independent lay commissioners and myself found the merits of the scheme conclusively proved. Not only were the merits of the scheme conclusively proved, but every available opportunity was afforded to objectors to come before the commission to state their case and to have it tested under the most rigorous cross-examination. The two lay commissioners and myself came to the conclusion that the objectors' contentions and fears could not be established in evidence and under cross-examination.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Member will surely recall that a motion was moved by me, the wording of which was not disputed, that in view of the strong legal advice being given by Queen's counsel, the commissioners should reject the legislation. Therefore, the hon. Member is not telling the full story, because he knows full well that there was strong legal advice in favour of rejecting the legislation.

Mr. Hirst: I do not mind the hon. Member doing me an injustice, but in making that statement he does a significant injustice to the non-parliamentary commissioners, who exercised their duties as commissioners with great diligence and pondered all the points put to them with a great deal of care and principle.

We have heard this evening a reiteration of many of the fears that were expressed by objectors who came before the commission. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) has reiterated many of the fears in his speech. I accept that for the past five and a half years my hon. Friend has been trammelled with ministerial duties, and that in addition, as a result of changes in his boundary, he suddenly found that his constituency included an area that he previously had not known. But I have to say to him, with all the kindness in my heart, that clearly he has not examined carefully the evidence that was laid before the commission, and which is available to him to inspect in the Library if he is so minded this evening. Many of the points that he has made were made in the course of the commission's proceedings. They were repeated by objectors and subjected to careful cross-examination so that the facts could be established. If the fears that he has expressed this evening had been substantiated at the commission, the commissioners might very well have taken a different view.

Mr. Fletcher: My hon. Friend has an advantage over me as to much of the detail, because he spent 52 days in listening to it. He did his job as a commissioner and I did mine as a Member of Parliament. While he was sitting on the commission, I was taking advice and sounding opinion in my constituency. I did that not just for 52 days but for about 5,052 days before reaching my conclusions, which I have expressed in the debate.

Mr. Hirst: I greatly respect my hon. Friend, and I respect his right to come to a view based on his perception of the facts and on the views expressed to him by his constituents. But the points that he made in his speech received the most rigorous examination in the course of the commission's proceedings, and a full transcript of the evidence is available for all to see in the Library of the House of Commons. That transcript is helpful to any hon. Member who is genuinely confused by the claims and counter-claims and wishes to see what the professional witnesses and the objectors said about the matter, and the conclusions expressed by counsel appearing at the commission.

Mr. Fletcher: I am marginally older than my hon. Friend and I have read and listened to expert advice. I think that I am able to judge as well as anybody else the views of professional experts and their ability to forecast what traffic congestion may be.

Mr. Hirst: I understand that point of view, but I doubt whether my hon. Friend could find more esteemed or distinguished witnesses anywhere else in Britain. When the objectors brought forward similar professional witnesses to argue against the points that had been made, their evidence could not be sustained under the rigorous cross-examination which ensued.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central referred to the number of bodies associated with the objections to the proposals, in particular the National Trust for Scotland and the Scottish Civic Trust, to which both bodies I belong in one or other capacity. Neither of those bodies invited their members, in Edinburgh or more widely in Scotland, to express an opinion on those points. I do not presume to say, as a result, that their association with the objections should be disregarded, but one tends to get a knee-jerk reaction when a proposal is made which has not been exhaustively examined in public. Frankly, I wonder whether those involved in the National Trust for Scotland now would, if they studied the proposal and the safeguards imported into it, reach the view today which they reached when they associated themselves with the objections.

Various points have been made about the character of the road. It is not my function, nor do I want, to get down to the nitty-gritty points of the proposal, but I must remind my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central that his contention that the road would be a motorway is not the case. The analogy with the Clydeside expressway is nearer the mark, although if the hon. Member for Springburn recalls the plans over which we pored for many days, he will remember that there was a hard shoulder element, so that the Clydeside expressway is a comparator, if not a strict one.

The road is not a motorway, nor does it have a direct link with the M8. There is a grade separated junction, and that is of vital importance. My hon. Friend and I travel extensively throughout central Scotland and frequently move from motorways to dual carriageways by means of grade separated junctions.

Indeed, recently I risked my life travelling with my hon. Friend, though I risked it without fear. He is a regular motorist and will know that drivers adjust to the speeds which can reasonably and safely be done on roads. It is clear from the design of the proposed road that it would not be driven on under motorway conditions.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): I travel with my hon. Friend frequently, and I refuse to set a price on my life when I am a passenger in his vehicle. Will he comment on the safety aspect of this road? Hon. Members on both sides will have received representations from organisations about the safety aspect. It has been represented that if the development goes ahead, there will be a substantial increase in safety, with a probable reduction in road injuries.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Expert witnesses who gave evidence on road design, as well as the assistant chief constable, were categoric in their professional opinion that the road would enhance safety standards not just on the road but in the areas which would be relieved by having lower levels of traffic. There would, therefore, be less risk to pedestrians and other road users. The assistant chief constable of Lothians and Borders police was emphatic in his belief that the design would give the road a level of safety that could not exist on the roads that the project would relieve.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central asked whether the development would lead to other road schemes—whether, for example, there would be further developments in other parts of Edinburgh which might arouse the fears of local inhabitants. I remind him that officials of Lothian regional council who gave evidence were emphatic that their plans for the city of Edinburgh included no project that would lead to further developments in Edinburgh.

My hon. Friend can consult the structure plan for Lothian regional council, in which he will see set out clearly the priorities for the region's roads development programme for the next 10 years. His fear that this development could lead to further road developments is unfounded.

[Mr. Hirst]

I regret that it is necessary for me to chide my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central on these points. I do so because he repeated some of the fears to which I listened for many days. Because I was satisfied at the end of the day that such fears had been laid to rest as a result of the evidence, it is only fair that I should bring such matters to the attention of the House.

I have made it clear that the police were firm in their evidence about the safety of the road. Evidence was also led by the director of passenger transport in Lothian making it clear that the creation of the road would help the smoother flow of traffic, in particular buses, in the city, with consequential benefits throughout the city.

As one who comes from the west and enjoys the transport system run by the Strathclyde passenger executive, I am envious of the record of Lothian Regional Transport, which is virtually unrivalled in the rest of Britain for punctuality and quality of service. I am entitled, therefore, to attach considerable importance to the evidence that was led by the director of Lothian Regional Transport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central should remember that residents appeared before the commission for the promoters and the objectors. Those who appeared for the promoters were prepared to talk of the noise and pollution and environmental disturbance as a result of the traffic volumes in their areas. They were residents not simply of Corstorphine and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). They also came from Gorgie-Dalry, where the proximity of the houses to the road makes matters of environmental pollution all the more nauseating for them.

The professional witnesses who appeared before the commission were of extremely high calibre, and the fact that they succeeded in convincing not just me but the other two lay commissioners speaks volumes for the quality of their advice and the opinions that we received and respected.

For the benefit of the House, I can do no better than quote from a recent letter from Professor Donald MacKay, who wears many hats. He has been an adviser to Labour and Conservative Secretaries of State and his professional expertise is widely respected throughout the country. In other words, his views on this matter must be taken on board.

The letter from which I quote was written not in the spirit of someone writing to his MP but rather in the spirit of a professional witness succinctly summarising the aspects of the project that appealed to him. As time in the debate is not pressing — there is not a plethora of speakers anxious to address the House—I trust that hon. Members will grant me the indulgence of quoting from the letter because it fairly summarises the position. Professor MacKay says that the western relief road is essentially a bypass for the residents of Corstorphine and Gorgie—Dalry. He continues:

"All the studies indicate that the construction of the WRR would take a large volume of traffic out of existing residential and shopping areas and transfer that traffic to a purpose built road, saving lives and accidents, reducing traffic noise and improving the quality of life. All the expert evidence, including the traffic experts called for the opposition at the Parliamentary Commission, accepted that the WRR would not increase the volume of traffic travelling along the radial routes in the western sector."

That is vital to all those who assert that this road will bring massive quantities of traffic into the centre of Edinburgh. He also states:

"The exits from the WRR at the city end were deliberately designed to redistribute traffic at the western end of the route. All the expert evidence, including the traffic experts called for the opposition at the Parliamentary Commission, accepted the WRR would not increase the volume of traffic on Lothian road."

Professor MacKay ends his letter by saying:

"In all my experience of dealing with road schemes"—

he is an acknowledged road expert—

"I have not seen a more clear-cut case for construction than that for the WRR. The expert evidence was agreed on the main facts and it is a matter of everyday experience that existing traffic has substantial adverse effects on Corstorphine and Gorgie—Dalry. If the WRR was constructed it would not adversely affect Alex Fletcher's constituents. It would, however, be an appreciable benefit to thousands of households along the existing radial routes."

Professor MacKay has made that point far more eloquently than I could have made it.

May I deal now with Opposition criticisms about certain aspects of the scheme. It is important to recognise that the stated sum of money does not cover just the construction of the road. It covers a substantial upgrading of the entire environment from Lothian road to the roundabout where it would join the outer city bypass. One of the happy byproducts of the project is that it would enable various measures to be undertaken on the existing radial routes which would make them much safer. That would be in the interests of pedestrians. These measures would reduce the volume of traffic, ease the flow of bus services and be of benefit to those who live close to the roads. The House ought to recognise that the project includes various traffic management and environmental improvement measures which can reasonably be associated with the scheme.

Those right hon. and hon. Members who have criticised the scheme tonight have said that the western relief road should not be built until the outer city bypass has been completed. That, however, flies in the face of the professional evidence which predicts, as has happened in virtually every other city in the United Kingdom, with reasonable certainty what the volume of traffic is expected to be.

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend and I have great experience of what happened in Glasgow. There was a comprehensive scheme to route traffic through and round the city. That scheme went ahead, despite enormous local opposition. It has proved to be a success. It has relieved traffic congestion and has increased road safety. Although there may always be local opposition to schemes of that kind, does my hon. Friend agree that eventually they are seen to be exceptionally worthwhile?

Mr. Hirst: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. Furthermore, improved communications, as we have found in the west of Scotland, attract potential investors. The flow of traffic is speeded up. I freely acknowledge that Labour councillors in Glasgow had the foresight to recognise that their city would die if it did not have proper communications. It is very much to the credit of Tom Fulton and others in Glasgow that they had the wisdom and foresight to create in Glasgow a road system that enables one to get from one side of Glasgow to the other in a very short time.

I entertained recently a group of important American visitors to the west of Scotland. They were fulsome in their praise of Glasgow's excellent communications. After their visit to Edinburgh, they said that the city is beautiful but they wondered why the city fathers had not done anything about providing a road system that would enable travellers to get to Edinburgh in the same way as they are able to get to Glasgow. But relief is coming. There is to be an outer city bypass.

However, it would be fatal to imagine, based on the professional evidence that was laid before the commission, that the outer city bypass will divert traffic that needs to enter Edinburgh. The outer city bypass will enable traffic to flow quickly around the city of Edinburgh. It will not have to travel through the western sector or the city centre. However, that does not provide an answer to the volume of traffic that will still flow through the western sector after the outer city bypass has been constructed. The professional evidence suggested that Corstorphine would receive a measure of relief but that Gorgie-Dalry would not: the traffic volume there would be increased.

The Opposition say that no relief road should be constructed before the outer city bypass has been completed. However, the result would be that traffic would feed in through Gorgie-Dalry and would also go further round the ring road and start coming in via Bruntsfield. Although he is not in the Chamber, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland would quickly find that his constituents were very concerned about traffic that was seeking to get to the centre of Edinburgh passing unnecessarily through his constituency. That is the established pattern of traffic movement after similar bypass developments have been completed. The professional experts were able to satisfy the commission that the traffic volumes were of such a nature that relief had to be provided in the western sector.

The critics also say that the road will pile traffic into the city centre. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central was at pains to refer to the extra traffic that would be generated. I sat and listened for 52 days, expecting to hear where the extra traffic would come from. If traffic has to reach the centre of Edinburgh, it must be going there for a purpose. That applies to the traffic which passes along Queensferry road, or along the main roads through Corstorphine or Gorgie-Dalry. It may be using those roads for work, shopping, leisure or tourism. Can my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central tell me where the extra traffic will come from? The professional witnesses for both the promoters and objectors were united in acknowledging that experience shows that a new road does not generate additional traffic. I hope that my hon. Friend can tell me where the vast amounts of extra traffic that will pile into the centre of Edinburgh will come from.

Mr. Fletcher: Experience shows that new roads attract additional traffic. Those who visit the city of Edinburgh snake their way through its streets. If a new road like this were to be created, people would use it. However, the people of Edinburgh would be unable to use it. There are no means of entry to or exit from it other than at the extreme ends of the road. I am not surprised that an hon. Member who represents a Glasgow constituency applauds the building of this new road. Those who reach the centre of the city of Edinburgh faster than anybody else will be those who come to it from the west, not those who live in Edinburgh.

Mr. Hirst: I can do no more than refer my hon. Friend to the evidence that was presented to the commission. It was tested under the most rigorous cross-examination and finally it convinced the commissioners. No traffic expert could be produced who was able to satisfy the commissioners that the construction of a new road would generate vast amounts of extra traffic coming to Edinburgh. It is the rat runs which cause such distress and environmental disturbance to my hon. Friend's constituents. It must be desirable that motor cars which currently use minor roads, where children are crossing to school and elderly people are going to the shops — necessary, non-local traffic — should be removed from the roads.

The commissioners were well aware of the regional council's intention to proceed with the construction of a multi-storey car park at the far end of the western relief road which would provide a place for people visiting Edinburgh for shopping, tourist or leisure purposes to park. That car park is an important element in what I perceive to be the whole scheme.

I could understand more readily my hon. Friend's fears if there were not to be such a car park. There is to be a car park, and I find it slightly strange, perverse and particularly saddening that the district council is not prepared to give it planning permission. However, I am confident that the justification for that will be established at the public inquiry into it.

Evidence was laid about the amount of green time, that vital element in any computer-controlled traffic management scheme, which allows the motor vehicles to leave the road and move into Lothian road, either northwards or southwards. The point about green time is that people simply will not use the road if they are not able to obtain egress at the far end. Voluminous evidence was laid on the green time issue, and I am happy to say that the majority of commissioners were satisfied on that point. I accept that it is a concept that may be difficult to understand. Indeed, one of my colleagues on the commission asked for the road expert to return to explain it to him again. That was important and necessary, because the fear was constantly expressed. It is sufficient for me to be able to reassure my hon. Friend that, in the light of the traffic expert's assurances and explanations, my fellow commissioner was prepared to agree to the scheme.

Edinburgh is singularly badly endowed with parking spaces. People will simply not use the motor car to travel if they cannot find a parking space. My hon. Friend will know that the issue of parking spaces is carefully considered in the structure plan and the modifications to it. He can be assured that the number of parking spaces will not rise so dramatically that it will encourage people to come into the centre of Edinburgh unnecessarily.

Frankly, it is a function of the black propaganda that has surrounded the proposal to make people feel that traffic will pour out of the western relief road into Lothian road and saturate the old and new towns. Funnily enough, I share my hon. Friend's concern for the preservation of Edinburgh's historic buildings. My record on a civic trust involved in the preservation of old buildings testifies to my concern to protect our architectural heritage. But architectural heritage is not something that one cocoons in cotton wool. It is nothing if it cannot live with the contemporary world, providing that there are adequate safeguards to proect it, and there are adequate safeguards

[Mr. Hirst]

to protect both the new and old towns of Edinburgh. I for one, having listened to all the black propaganda, am not minded to swallow it.

Finally, let me deal with the point made by the critics that the parliamentary inquiry was an inappropriate method of considering the scheme. The hon. Member for Springburn was at pains to point out that there was no precedent for a road scheme that involved a railway diversion. That matter occupied the commissioners' attention for the major part of one afternoon. I am surprised that he has overlooked the precedent of the Ross and Cromarty legislation under which a road was built which necessitated the diversion of a railway. Parliament then found it convenient to take the road construction scheme and the railway diversion in one measure. It was subject to the same investigative processes as the western relief road in Edinburgh by the parliamentary commission. I was at pains to ask the promoters' counsel to describe that precedent so that it was firmly on the record that there was a precedent which the commissioners could properly follow.

As the project aroused many fears and suspicions in Edinburgh, notwithstanding the extensive consultation embarked on by Lothian regional council in order to explain the process and the project to people and to allay their fears or answer them, and, indeed, at a formative stage in the project to take on board the worries that were being expressed, the regional council found itself in a position where the district council had given outline planning permission and there would have been no public inquiry because the Secretary of State was not prepared to call the matter in.

In view of all that, I cannot accept that it was inappropriate to have a parliamentary commission at which all the merits of the scheme were discussed at one time. There would have been a parliamentary commission for diverting the railway. There could certainly have been other inquiries about the compulsory purchase or the planning for the road. In fact, the district council was prepared to give planning permission and the Secretary of State was not prepared to call it in.

In those circumstances—I am sure the point will not be lost on the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East—the people would have had no opportunity to have had the merits of the scheme examined and tested under cross-examination. The fact that the commission lasted as long as it did is a testimony to the ability of the objectors to come before the commission to argue their case and to be heard. In the latter stages of the commission I asked objectors whether they felt that they had received a proper and fair hearing for the simple reason that, having gone to all the elaborate arrangements to provide a forum for examining the merits of the scheme, I did not want anyone to go away and say that the commissioners did not give them every opportunity to be heard and to have their point of view properly expressed.

As someone who has visited a number of cities, I believe that Edinburgh has a serious problem with its communications, but that problem has been recognised and it must surely be a tribute to the foresight of past Secretaries of State for Scotland that they have protected a route that would provide reasonable access from the western sector to the west end of Edinburgh. Usually, to put forward a scheme such as this would entail substantial demolition and distress, the dislocation of small businesses, environmental pollution and many other things during the construction period. Amazingly, the scheme entails the destruction of one derelict bungalow and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West has said, the occupant of that house has already been rehoused.

I believe that the project is a major advance. It will confer on a wide area in the western and south-western section of Edinburgh substantial environmental benefits. Members of the golf course will have it substantially upgraded, and the derelict land beside the railway line between Glasgow and Edinburgh, which is currently a casual recreation area, will have facilities for children and young people that it does not have at the moment. The other people who will be displaced have adequate alternative arrangements.

I am certain that in years to come people in Edinburgh will welcome the road, and I am equally certain that they will ask what all the hoo-ha was about and say how much they value and are grateful for such a road. The trouble with change is that some people will welcome it and some will instinctively fear it. Those who fear it—there are many people who do so for perfectly honest reasons—will fall prey to those who, for one reason or another, are prepared to exaggerate the fears and excite suspicion about the scheme. In the course of 52 days of the commission, I heard a lobby articulate fears and complaints that were found not to have substance. The lobby was a curious coalition of people whose political philosophy made them antagonistic to car ownership and, therefore, the construction of roads, and conservationists who felt that the new town of Edinburgh, which is some distance from the western relief road, should be cocooned and preserved, and not made available to other people.

I believe that this is a worthwhile project. Having listened to the merits of the scheme being exhaustively examined during the commission's inquiry, I have no hesitation in recommending it to the House, and I hope that it will receive the vote of confidence that it deserves.

9.1 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I have listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). I do not accept that the parliamentary commission was the appropriate way to handle the matter. It is essentially a planning issue, and in my opinion there should have been a full blown public inquiry to deal with the planning aspects of the road.

I cannot accept the strange argument of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden that all the opposition is based on fear of the unknown and that somehow it is a gut opposition to change regardless of the nature of the measure. One only has to look at what is currently happening in Edinburgh, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) reminded us. We are in the middle of the construction of the Edinburgh outer city bypass. That road has not evoked enormous opposition. Therefore, it is not a matter of opposition to change for the sake of change. There is massive opposition to the road. One cannot run away from that. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central is opposing it in response to the views of his constituents. He made that clear.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. As I had ample time to speak, I do not intend to interrupt him again. As a democrat, he must respect the

fact that the true opinions of people can be obtained when the democratic process is exercised. Does he not find it significant that in a by-election in Edinburgh, in the seat formerly held by Ian Cramond — an area that is substantially affected by the western relief road — the one candidate whose political philosphy makes him opposed to the road raised 7 per cent. of the votes? Is it not a reasonable corollary to say that if that was the issue, 93 per cent. of the people supported the road?

Mr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman should study the history of the voting pattern of that area and look at some of the other issues in the election.

I was not going to be drawn on this issue, but there is a widespread view in Edinburgh that one of the factors that led Labour to take control of that council, for the first time ever, was opposition to the road. I do not wish to make too much of that because there is no way of knowing what particular issues determine how people vote in an election. I say to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden that it will not wash to pretend that there is not substantial opposition to the road. There is opposition to the whole protracted process. Can anyone recall another road that has been built in Scotland in the past 20 years that has evoked so much public opposition, so much time of distinguished professional people and so much controversy? The nature of tonight's debate is, in itself, a reflection of just how controversial the road is. One has to face up to the fact that hundreds of roads are being built all the time throughout the country, and very few have evoked the controversy that this one has.

This is not a party issue. Indeed, hon. Members on both sides of the House are opposing the road. Although I am the only Labour Member representing the Lothian region who is speaking in the debate, all my hon. Friends who represent Lothian constituencies are opposed to the road. Both my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) and my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) would have liked to participate in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Leith has an important interest in the issue, and his constituents oppose the road. He is also concerned about the future of the centre of Edinburgh. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston has a particular knowledge of the area because he represented the constituency there. It is interesting that the previous Labour Member and the sitting Conservative Member in the central area of Edinburgh are united in their opposition to the road.

The starting point for the debate is that Edinburgh is a beautiful city. It is one of the most beautiful capitals in Europe. It could have been destroyed if we had allowed some of the roads to be built that were advocated by various groups in the past. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) made that point effectively. It is not for me to comment on Glasgow. It is a much bigger industrial city and the need for roads is different.

We are talking about the central area of Edinburgh. We know that some housing schemes on the outskirts need improvement and investment, but the centre of Edinburgh is beautiful. Many people can walk to work and to the shops. We should cherish and protect the nature of the area. Among other things, that means seeking to allow car owners and other people to come into the centre, but we should minimise pollution, congestion and the amount of unnecessary traffic coming into the centre.

I remember a great controversy in Edinburgh about an inner motorway. It is great that that motorway was never built. I remember all the arguments and the advocates of the motorway, many of them Labour and some Conservative councillors, who wanted to build a major inner circular motorway system in Edinburgh. Thank goodness we defeated that. That was at a time when the idea of building more roads was seen as progress per se. We have moved a long way forward, just as we have moved beyond the idea of knocking down all the houses in the central area. We now realise that the best thing to do is to try to retain the housing stock if we can get another 20 or 30 years out of it.

We have also learnt that the last thing that we want to do is to allow the motor car to dominate our lives. I am all for people owning motor cars. I want more people to own them, but it does not mean that we should allow them to rule our lives or that we should build roads in the centre of beautiful cities such as Edinburgh just to cater for the needs of some people who want to bring their cars into the centre.

There is a powerful case to be made about protecting the beauty of Edinburgh's central area and reducing the traffic damage there, not building a major road that comes right into the centre. That cannot be disputed. It comes into Lothian road only a few yards from the west end.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central eloquently talked about the environmental damage. There is real opposition to the road in the area where it will be built. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden knows where many of the real objectors come from. Those people know what they want. They are opposed to the road because it will mean environmental damage and loss of open space. Open spaces are precious in Edinburgh and London — they make them beautiful cities. The huge parks and open spaces are some of the great strengths of Edinburgh. We want more open space in my constituency.

Mr. Malone: I do not like to participate too much in a debate that has little to do with my constituency. However, I have considered the evidence with some care, and I believe that the road will destroy precious little of the open space referred to by the hon. Gentleman. He is talking nonsense when he says that the road will destroy the open space in Edinburgh.

Mr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman should consider both sides of the argument, the evidence that has been given to the inquiry and some of the arguments put forward by the Edinburgh district council. Anyone who tries to persuade me that everyone wants the road is obviously unaware of the nature of this debate.

Mr. Hirst: I am sorry that it is necessary for me to intervene. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would tell me precisely what open space and parkland will be destroyed. I referred earlier to the protected route, much of which comprises derelict land. I also said that other pieces of land were being made available in compensation. Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House which areas of green parkland will be lost?

Mr. Strang: I will not be drawn into arguments about the relocation of the railway and the changes to the golf course. I make the simple point that if a major new road is constructed, it will take up land.

Mr. Hirst: Derelict land.

Mr. Strang: The road will last for 100 years. The land will not stay derelict for 100 years. It is no argument to say that the land is derelict.

Many years ago the Lothian region Labour party had a great debate about a road pattern for Edinburgh. Many people wished to build roads here and there, but the overwhelming consensus was for an outer Edinburgh city bypass. We have waited generations for that bypass. It is now going ahead and it will be an important road.

I do not dispute that the bulk of the traffic approaching Edinburgh wants to enter the city. The bypass will help to secure industrial development in my constituency. The only other road to which that Labour party agreed was one about which I did not feel as strongly as some of my colleagues. I accept that, on balance, it was right. It is a matter of whether the investment can be justified. That road is very different from the proposed road. It basically serves industrial traffic to Leith docks, to the freightliner depot, and takes the heavy traffic away from Portobello.

The proposed relief road is not a bypass in the usual sense. It is incredible that Professor MacKay seriously argued that he had never before come across a road that would bring so much benefit. That is an insult to our intelligence. Proper bypasses, in the usual sense, are the only roads that bring benefit. Real benefit is gained where roads bypass small towns and villages and relieve them of heavy traffic congestion. It is nonsense to compare the western relief road with those bypasses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: What parts of greenland will be used for the road? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is estimated that the A1 from Musselburgh will have its traffic reduced from 25,000 vehicles to 11,000 vehicles a day when the relief road is opened? That will bring very great benefits. Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that the traffic using that road will be going to the centre of the city?

Mr. Strang: I have already discussed that point and I can see no benefit in going over it again.

My case is based not on west Edinburgh alone, but on the city of Edinburgh as a whole. I am opposed to the road for a number of reasons. Surely the prudent course would have been to have waited until the complete outer city bypass was completed so that its effect on the Edinburgh area could be evaluated. It is not good enough to claim that we can predict that effect. That outer city bypass will be an important distributor of traffic. Hon. Members must consider the issue from a more sensible base.

Let us take the volume of traffic going into central Edinburgh. The building of another road merely distributes some of the congestion from the other routes going into the centre. Of course, I accept that that road will have an effect on the traffic going through Corstorphine. However, there is a certain volume of traffic going into Edinburgh in the rush hour, and there are already three or four routes that it can take. All that the building of the proposed road will do is provide an additional route. For example, traffic coming from the airport to east or central Edinburgh can use three or four different routes in an attempt to avoid being delayed by traffic congestion. The building of an additional road will merely redistribute traffic between existing roads and the new road. The new road cannot be justified in terms of its impact on central Edinburgh, and it certainly cannot be justified in terms of cost.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is it not nonsense for the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) to compare the so-called western relief road with the Tranent-Musselburgh bypass, with which my hon. Friend and I are familiar? That bypass is part of the outer city bypass and takes traffic out of Edinburgh, whereas the western relief road will actually bring traffic into Edinburgh.

Mr. Strang: I agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, that is such a basic point that I cannot understand why we have to argue it. I accept that there may be an argument for relieving the traffic congestion in Corstorphine, but there is no way in which the proposed road can be compared with a road that bypasses a whole community, such as the Tranent or Musselburgh bypasses.

We will have to wait to evaluate the effects of the outer city bypass in reducing the flow of traffic to Edinburgh. It depends on the extent to which some traffic chooses to go down Ferry road, although we hope that that will not happen. The vast bulk of the traffic, whether from Musselburgh or the west, will want to go into Edinburgh.

It has been argued that the western relief road will reduce accidents. That is a very strange argument. The same number of cars will be going into the city, so there will still be the same risk of accidents on those roads. I do not know how anyone can try to quantify the effect of that road on the number of accidents in that part of Edinburgh.

Another argument has been the possibility of job creation. If ever there was a pathetic argument, it must be that we should build a road simply for the sake of creating jobs. I am in favour of a massive expansion of investment in our infrastructure. I want a complete reversal of the Government's massive cuts in the public sector and in investment in housing, because that would benefit the construction industry. I should like to see the speeding up of the outer city bypass.

As to the argument that building the road can be justified on the ground that it will create jobs, to take it to its most absurd, one might as well argue that we should demolish Edinburgh castle and build flats there because it will create jobs. One cannot make a case for the road on the basis of jobs. We want jobs and we want more investment, but this is a planning issue and we have to consider the effect of the road on the communities, on Edinburgh and on the people who use the centre of Edinburgh.

With regard to the cost of the road, it is not enough to say that the arguments are evenly balanced. If they are evenly balanced those proposing the road have to make a case for the investment of £37 million. At this time, that is a colossal investment. It is an infrastructure which will bring no significant benefit. It will not benefit industry. Is somebody suggesting that it will attract more manufacturing industry to Edinburgh? Of course not. Is somebody suggesting that there are no other infrastructure investments to be made which would have a greater effect on economic growth? It is ridiculous to suggest that this is a particularly desirable infrastructure investment in terms of encouraging industrial expansion and promoting industrial efficiency. I do not think that any of the letters which we have received have sought to argue such a case.

Our position in the Labour party is that this money should be used for other purposes. We can think of a whole range of more desirable projects which would benefit from such investment. We support public transport, and I was

grateful to note the remarks made from the Conservative Benches about the public transport system. It was the Lothian regional council, then controlled by Labour, which brought about the major improvement in our public transport system. If we take control of the regional council again in May, we want to be in a position to put more money into public transport and to improve the public transport system in Edinburgh.

Why is Lothian regional council proceeding with such haste that it has even invited tenders and is going further down the road on the basis of a decision that it took last week in advance of Parliament's decision? It is because there is such a narrow base of support for the road. All shades of opinion in Edinburgh are against the road, but this narrow group on Lothian regional council is determined to force it through. Any objective planning official in Edinburgh would say that at this time at the very least we should wait to see the outcome of the elections to Lothian regional council. Maybe the Conservatives will take control and, if they do, fair enough. It is a scandal that they have invited tenders and are forcing it through to make sure that, if Labour later controls the region, it will have difficulty in stopping the road without incurring financial penalties.

The project is irresponsible on the most objective grounds, and I remind the House of the widespread nature of the opposition to the road. Is somebody telling me that the Cockburn Association does not have a splendid record in the defence of Edinburgh's beauty? It has made a tremendous contribution over the years to protecting the quality of life in central Edinburgh. Is somebody telling me that the National Trust for Scotland is an organisation whose views should not be given great weight and consideration? It will not wash to try to pretend that this is a small group of people who do not know what is good for them, people who are opposed to motor cars——

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury) *rose——*

Mr. Strang: I shall not give way because I am winding up.

It is nonsense to suggest such things. These people are not fuddy-duddy conservationists. This road is being foisted on Edinburgh by a small group which happens to be in a dominating position on the council. The support tends to come from people outside the city rather than in the city. Opposition to the road is all-party, comes from all walks of life and in particular from the people who want to protect and develop the centre of Edinburgh as one of the most beautiful capitals of Europe.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 138, Noes 82.

Division No. 17] **[9.25 pm**

AYES

Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clegg, Sir Walter
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Phillip
Parris, Matthew
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watson, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton
and Mr. Michael Hirst.

NOES

Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D f'mline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Fletcher, Alexander
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank

Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Nellist, David
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*	Neubert, Michael
Janner, Hon Greville	Park, George
John, Brynmor	Pavitt, Laurie
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*	Pike, Peter
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald	Radice, Giles
Lamond, James	Redmond, M.
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*	Richardson, Ms Jo
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*	Robertson, George
McCartney, Hugh	Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh	Rowlands, Ted
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*	Skinner, Dennis
McKelvey, William	Soley, Clive
McNamara, Kevin	Spearing, Nigel
McTaggart, Robert	Stott, Roger
McWilliam, John	Strang, Gavin
Madden, Max	Tinn, James
Marek, Dr John	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Martin, Michael	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Maxton, John	
Maynard, Miss Joan	Tellers for the Noes:
Michie, William	Mr. John Home Robertson and
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*	Mr. Richard Page.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Joint Committee of both Houses. —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

INCREASE OF LIMIT

9.39 pm

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): The clause as drafted is, indeed, the Bill. I take it that observations which relate to the Bill are pertinent to the Question which you have proposed to the Committee, Sir Paul.

Any hon. Members who are accidentally remaining in the Chamber, washed up after the Division of a few moments ago like flotsam upon the beach, might be surprised to learn that these proceedings, if they pause for a moment to listen to them, are of no practical effect to the House. If the Bill had not been introduced, or if the Bill failed to pass through the House, not one penny less, not one penny more, whether for capital or current purposes, would be expended in Northern Ireland. Such an atrocious misuse of the time of the House might well excite their curiousity. Lest they should go away unsatisfied, I might explain, perhaps briefly on the Question that you have proposed, Sir Paul, how it comes about. It is not without its historical interest and its current importance.

Once upon a time — now quite a long time ago — there was a Parliament and a Government in Northern Ireland established under the Government of Ireland Act 1920. That home rule Government of Northern Ireland, thus established, was fitted up with all the appurtenances and furniture of a Parliament and Government to which we are accustomed, including the pieces of furniture relative to the conduct and control of financial affairs.

Accordingly, there was a Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland and a loans fund for Northern Ireland. The purpose of the loans fund for Northern Ireland was analogous to that of the public works loans fund in Great Britain, which subsequently became the national loans fund, namely, to borrow money on public credit and re-lend it to certain bodies for purposes which would be self-financing in the sense that when the capital works in question were carried out they might be expected to yield revenue or a rent which would in due course go towards the satisfaction of the interest and the repayment of the capital which had been advanced out of the Consolidated Fund after it had been received from the Loans Fund.

Things went on in that way in Northern Ireland until in 1972 the constitution was suspended and in 1973 abolished. Since that time, responsibility for the Government of Northern Ireland and for the financing of the Government of Northern Ireland, and of all matters pertaining thereto, has fallen upon the House and is discharged through the financial mechanisms of the House. Therefore, it may be inquired why this venerable relic not only has been preserved by the Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975, renewed by an Order in Council in the meantime, but is to be warmed up again to a renewed lease of life by the Bill which is at present in Committee of the whole House.

Before I answer that question, perhaps I might draw attention to a curious consequence of its survival after the demise of the Government and Parliament established under the Government of Ireland Act. I have already explained to the Committee that the concept was that only capital purposes which were self-financing would be the recipients of onward loans from the loans fund, it being the general notion that a loans fund might be able to borrow at more advantageous rates of interest and conditions than those at which individual undertakings might borrow.

Of course, when everything was dealt with by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that distinction ceased to hold good. Consequently, the purposes to which the proceeds from the Northern Ireland loans fund are now devoted are those

"of any expenditure which, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, is of a capital nature."

Those are the material words.

9.45 pm

The Minister of State has, as he did before Second Reading, refreshed his memory of the debate that took place on 28 November 1984. He will know that a question was asked then to which an answer is still outstanding, as answers usually are to unanswerable questions, namely, how the Secretary of State determines, for this purpose, expenditure which is of a capital nature.

In a sense, all Government expenditure is current expenditure. It is a transfer of resources from within the economy for current use. For different purposes we find it convenient, by way of analogy with non-Government expenditure, to treat certain matters as capital—such as housebuilding or the erection of factories, which would be capital expenditure if it were privately commenced.

There is no longer a distinction in Northern Ireland between enterprises which are, in the sense that I previously defined, self-financing, and other enterprises. The margin of expenditure in Northern Ireland is not deemed to be met out of taxation, which of necessity must be met by borrowing out of the public sector. That forms part of the public sector borrowing of the United Kingdom.

The consequence is that the notion of issues out of the fund going to expenditure which, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, is of a capital nature is sheer nonsense which has had to be maintained in order to justify the continued existence of the fund. The initial and practical purposes of the fund have no relationship whatsoever with the present financing of public expenditure in Northern Ireland.

The Minister has been candid about the reasons for preserving the antiquity which is the fund. Indeed, some of the Minister's predecessors were equally as candid when the corresponding question was put to them, usually at a much later hour of night than this. The Minister says that the fund is kept hanging around because one day, one never knows, there might once again be a devolved Government in Northern Ireland. It would then be splendid if, besides all the other legislation which would be necessary to bring that regime into existence, there was already a Consolidated Fund and a Loans Fund. That is an untenable explanation.

It would be a considerable legislative achievement if such a regime ever came about, and it is not likely to come about in the circumstances that I can at present envisage. To reinstate and re-elect a devolved Administration for Northern Ireland would be a fairly large legislative undertaking, which I do not expect or hope to live to see. It would be such a large achievement that merely to insert in it the creation of a Consolidated Fund and a Loans Fund would be a negligible addition to the bulk of such an Act.

The Minister is trifling with the Committee when he says that such things are kept in existence because it would be highly convenient, in an extremely improbable contingency, not to have to put an additional clause or subsection of a clause into a hypothetical Bill.

The fund is maintained as a declaration of intent by the Government to keep up the pretence that they still look forward to a time when there can be an effective Government in Northern Ireland. That would be a Government, not on the lines of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, but on lines on which no Government could possibly carry on, namely, that the minority and majority in their Parliament have exactly the same political effect and bear exactly the same responsibility.

The House is being put to all this trouble to maintain erect a mere totem which no longer brings any satisfaction or cause for comfort to anyone in Northern Ireland and has no practical effect whatever. It is an affront to the intelligence of the House and to those who believe that the time of the House should be spent as rationally as possible.

My final observation relates to the Second Reading debate on 27 November, and I put it before the Committee as an illustration of the unwisdom of intervening in a debate to make critical remarks about other Members when one is ill acquainted with the subject at large. I had assumed that the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who participated in the Second Reading debate, would have continued his interest to the Committee stage. I had also hoped that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who made such a distinguished contribution to that debate, might have been persuaded to continue in the Committee. However, that was not to be. The hon. Member for Grantham will therefore forgive my being obliged to refer in his absence to the intervention that he made on that occasion.

The Minister had referred, as I have, to the fact that there had been a national loans fund under the Northern Ireland Act 1920. The hon. Member for Grantham intervened as follows:

"Does not the fact that a separate fund has existed since 1921 show conclusively that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is wholly wrong when he says that its purpose is to enable the Government to hive off the Province."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 990.]

Having delivered himself of that, the hon. Member for Grantham sat down with the self-satisfaction that one can almost hear exuding from the words that I have just quoted. In fact, of course, it shows that the right hon. Member for South Down was wholly right. Anyone who takes the trouble to peruse the Government of Ireland Act 1920 will discover that that legislation was specially devised to further the creation of an all-Ireland state, providing for a Council of Ireland and a built-in-mechanism whereby the two home rule Irelands — Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland—could coalesce without further action on the part of this House.

It was for that very reason that the Northern Ireland devolved Administration was set up. It was part of the operation which has been going on between the Government and Dublin in the past few months, a part of the process — as abortive as all subsequent parts have

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

proved to be—of hiving off Northern Ireland to a place to which its inhabitants have no intention of going. In his way, the hon. Member for Grantham did the House a service by reminding those who care to be reminded that the British state has been working away since the end of the first world war at the thankless and self-destructive task of attempting to disembarrass the United Kingdom of an integral part, namely, Northern Ireland.

We shall not contribute to that end—malevolent or otherwise, ill fated or otherwise—by wasting the time of the House with measures of this kind. I hope that I have not wasted the time of the Committee by pointing out to it that it is wasting its time.

Sir John Biggs Davison (Epping Forest): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) spoke of wasting time. On Second Reading he described the Northern Ireland Loans Fund and the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund as fictional and suggested that legislation in respect thereof was unnecessary. He reiterated that point today.

When my hon. Friend the Minister of State replied to the Second Reading debate he founded the need for this legislation on the wearisome assumption, if I may so describe it, of successive Governments that

"Northern Ireland's special needs and problems can best be met by a devolved system of Government."

He kindly added:

"I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) does not agree".—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 990.]

The hon. Member for Epping Forest certainly does not agree. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Minister, who is intelligent and down to earth, who understands Catholic and Protestant Ulster people, and who gives them his affection and service, agrees either.

My hon. Friend said that there had been a separate consolidated fund in Northern Ireland since 1921, and that it was established with a view to devolution. The right hon. Member for South Down referred to the history of that time, and the Government of Ireland Act 1920, but it was then that the fundamental mistake was made. There was some excuse for it because the new authority in southern Ireland was under the Crown and was part of the empire. Perhaps it was understandable that there should be a wish to establish a devolved system of government in the north, and to bring the north and the south together through parliamentary representatives sitting in a Council of Ireland, to which Northern Ireland appointed representatives, but Dublin did not. It may have been excusable, but it was a fundamental mistake, from which Northern Ireland has suffered ever since. It denied the minority the protection of this Parliament.

In 1972 that subordinate Government and Parliament were abolished, and it seems to have been the purpose of every Government since then to restore Stormont. They have perversely and vainly pursued a form of devolved Government which, to satisfy them, must reconcile the insistence of the majority on majority rule with the insistence of the minority on a devolved Government. That is despite the evident popularity in Northern Ireland of government from Westminster.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Will the hon. Gentleman be more precise in his definition of Stormont? It was self-government in Northern Ireland. The devolution that is now being sought is completely different. Stormont had its own Cabinet, Prime Minister and Upper Assembly, and was entirely set apart from this Chamber. In 60 years not one question was asked in this Chamber by a Northern Ireland Member. Does he accept that we are discussing not that sort of Stormont, but devolved Government?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Discussions about how the clause came about are in order, but we cannot have a general debate.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I am not sure if I may give way. Perhaps if I utter a few more words, I shall then be permitted to give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

I thought that I had pointed out that that was what was wrong. This Parliament did not concern itself with the problems of the minority of Northern Ireland. That is the tragedy, and that was the great mistake. However, I must not be drawn too far along that track.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman made a tremendously important point, which is beginning to dawn on all the people of Northern Ireland. During the period to which he referred, we had majority rule in Northern Ireland, as the term is generally understood throughout the free nations in western Europe. From 1972 onwards we then had what was called direct rule. Since last week we now have minority rule, and the majority is ignored.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. We must not stray from the clause which we are discussing.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) has made an important point—that we are now reaching a position in which part of the United Kingdom is being governed without the consent of the governed. For that reason, I agree with the right hon. Member for South Down that it would do something to help in a very difficult situation if we were to do away with this method of legislating for and financing Northern Ireland.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said when he opened the Second Reading debate, it is a technical financial measure, but whether it be a question of borrowing from the National Loans Fund, which Northern Ireland repays with interest——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I was making the point that the borrowings are repaid with interest. People who are critical of the amount that is spent on Northern Ireland should note that. Whether we are debating this technical measure or any other aspect of Northern Ireland affairs, we debate under the shadow of resentment, menace and foreboding which is felt not just by Loyalist militants but by the most sober elements, not all Protestant, in Northern Ireland. The Republican terrorists have not been overcome by the sheer goodness of the Hillsborough agreement, and the paramilitaries, dubbed Loyalists, have not evaporated.

Northern Ireland, as I have said, is now not being governed with the consent of the people. Therefore, I submit that it might do a little to assuage the anguish and restrain the lurking forces of violence if the Government were to pluck up their courage, forgo this sort of separate legislation, close that precious separate statute book, and administer and finance Northern Ireland as though it was what the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland thought and said it was until he was told differently by the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister—acting, I suppose, in the spirit of the intergovernmental conference—namely, truly a part of the United Kingdom under this one Parliament.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Any piece of legislation which is described as a technical financial measure is one that usually does not attract my attention, but, because money has been lent in Northern Ireland over the past decade without much accountability to the House of Commons, I hope that I shall not stray out of order if I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State if he could answer a few questions about the Bill and about clause 1, in which the principle of the Bill lies.

As I understand it, the Bill increases the ability of loans to be made by a further £700 million over the £1 billion which is currently available. I think my hon. Friend made it clear to the House on Second Reading that that would mean about £150 million a year extra available in loans. He also told us that the full rate of interest would be paid on those loans, but what I do not know is the rate of interest that is currently being levied on those loans, and over what period they are expected to be repaid.

I have sought some information about the current situation, but in the Library I can find only the annual report for 1983-84 of the Northern Ireland civil contingencies fund account and that lists loans and advances given by that body to a total of £329,335,641. However, there is a note at the bottom of the appendix which says:

"These figures differ slightly from those on page 11 as certain receipts were not brought to account until 1984-85, an amount of £502,156 being in transit."

Even if that is the case, I find it difficult to discover why we are having to increase the loan limit if that figure is the sum total of loans and advances. If it is not, will the Minister say how much has currently been lent and why he is seeking this further ability to lend another £700 million?

How many of the loans listed in the appendix have been paid back by the various local authorities and statutory bodies named? When are some of them due to be paid back? I again ask how much of the £1 billion originally provided for loans under the 1975 Act have been lent and when some of the money will be paid back? Does the new total imply that the Government are setting about a fresh programme of capital expenditure by the statutory bodies to which they intend to lend this money?

I notice that one of the beneficiaries of loans was the Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel. It, in turn, up to 1982 made advances of capital to the Northern Ireland Development Agency. That agency ceased to exist in 1982. What happened to the money that was lent to it? Over £5 million is quoted. What body has taken over its responsibilities?

The Minister will be aware that my questions about the Northern Ireland Development Agency bring me to the subject of De Lorean and Learfan, not because I wish to debate those unhappy subjects but because money was lent by the Northern Ireland Development Agency to both organisations and all that money has been lost.

Did that money originally come from the loans fund? I think I see the Minister shaking his head in dissent, indicating that it was not. How can he be so categoric, for apparently the £5 million to which I referred was outstanding up to 1982? Presumably it was passed on to whichever statutory body took over from the Northern Ireland Development Agency.

I hope that the Minister will answer those questions and agree that they are pertinent to the debate.

Mr. Bell: I congratulate you, Sir Paul, on having permitted the debate to weave in and out of the complexities of the Hillsborough summit in relation to the Bill, and I am sure that hon. Members on both sides enjoyed the contributions of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Members for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) and for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson).

I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Epping Forest when I say that he slipped in a Mickey Finn when he said that there was no longer government by the consent of the majority. I do not know how that can be tied into the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill on clause stand part, but it is not the Opposition's view that that is the case. Arrangements of a limited nature have been made. They allow for consultation and consensus.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I have made the point that since the Hillsborough agreement there has been an atmosphere and a feeling of resentment in Northern Ireland. It amounts to the withdrawal of willing consent to being governed as the people of Northern Ireland are being governed now. Will the hon. Gentleman, who disputes that, agree that there should be a referendum on the Hillsborough agreement?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. We must return to the clause.

Mr. Bell: I shall gladly return to the clause, but may I point out that I have not said that there is not a feeling of unease in Northern Ireland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and I have said that there is a feeling of unease in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John David Taylor: The hon. Gentleman said that there is consultation. With whom is there consultation in Northern Ireland? There is certainly no consultation with the majority of the people in Northern Ireland.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) will resist the temptation to reply to that question. I know that he is anxious to discuss the clause that is in front of the Committee.

Mr. Bell: To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, I can resist everything except temptation. However, on this occasion I shall resist the temptation to involve the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) who, on his own behalf and on behalf of his constituents, feels very strongly about these issues.

Clause 1 has been described as the operative clause. It amends the limit upon the amount of lending that the Secretary of State may make from the national loans fund to the Northern Ireland consolidated fund. The limit is contained in the Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975. The right hon. Member for South Down reminded us last week that he was in the Chamber when the 1975 Act was discussed. The Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975 was amended by the Northern Ireland (Increase of Limit) Order 1984. The clause relates to the total indebtedness of the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund to the National Loans Fund. The Opposition understand the reasons for clause 1. It is the operative clause and we support it.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Boyson): I shall confine my remarks to clause 1. As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said, it contains the guts of the Bill. I do not disagree with the right hon. Gentleman about the history of this fund. It was created by the Government of Ireland Act 1920. In 1921 it became the consolidated fund. In 1950 there was another Act. After devolution in 1972 it was withdrawn from devolved control. However, it was kept in being not as a relic but like a suit that one has not worn for some time but which one keeps in the wardrobe in case it should be needed. I think that the right hon. Gentleman has been influenced by Professor Hayek: that it is accident to which one reacts.

One cannot say that something will never happen. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman, for whose speeches and writings I have great respect, believes that one can say that something will never happen. I do not believe this. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) made a similar point. His party supports devolution if it can be applied in Northern Ireland. The Government's policy is similarly to support devolution. I know that the right hon. Members for South Down and for Strangford (Mr. Taylor)——

Mr. John David Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Boyson: No, not until I have finished this sentence.

Mr. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Dr. Boyson: No, the right hon. Gentleman will have to wait for the full stop. I do not expect the right hon. Gentleman to run away, but we in England do not run away, either. We have respect for Northern Ireland Members and we in England do not run away. I shall continue until I reach my full stop.

Mr. Taylor *rose*——

10.15 pm

Dr. Boyson: Let me finish my sentence and then I shall give way. The right hon. Gentleman must contain himself. We do not want any heart attacks in the Chamber. We can all get excited from time to time.

I was saying that I do not believe that any right hon. or hon. Member can say that a thing will never happen. I shall give way willingly now.

Mr. Taylor: As the Minister has mentioned devolution, will he tell the people of Northern Ireland honestly, because it is in Northern Ireland and nowhere else that the final decision will be taken, what powers will remain outside the devolved system of government and within the Anglo-Irish conference if we agree to devolution?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I hope that in answering that point, the Minister will be able to relate it to clause 1.

Dr. Boyson: I shall follow your guidance, Sir Paul, despite my desire to follow the hon. Gentleman's line.

Mr. Taylor: Running away.

Dr. Boyson: I follow the guidance of the Chair. That is what democracy is about when all is said and done. I have great respect for Sir Paul and the way in which he guides in this Committee.

Mr. Taylor: Very weak.

Dr. Boyson: The right hon. Gentleman can throw all kinds of adjectives across the Chamber, but they will not help. Let us return to the point.

Mr. Taylor: Answer the question.

Dr. Boyson: If the right hon. Gentleman listens, he might learn something. I have listened to other speeches too——

Mr. Taylor: Answer the question.

Dr. Boyson: I am not answering any more questions from the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman has no intention of listening so why should I tell him?

The consolidated fund does not exist for something that may never happen. It may never happen, but it is possible that it will. It exists for the return of devolution in Northern Ireland and that is all that the Bill is about. I rest the case for clause 1 there.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) feels strongly about the issue. The disagreement is again on the question of devolution. My hon. Friend prefers no devolution but integration in the United Kingdom which is not the policy of the two major parties in the House, nor indeed of other parties in the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) raised points of detail which I cannot answer now but I shall write to him. The Bill has been brought forward because the £1,000 million which was allowed under the Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975 will run out in the middle of next year. We could not continue transferring money from the Treasury here to Northern Ireland without the Bill. This transfer is not the only income going into the consolidated fund. Savings certificates, surplus cash balances of other Departments and money from the European Investment bank have also gone into it.

Mr. Taylor *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: I shall not give way. I am answering the questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury. I have no intention of giving way.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is afraid.

Dr. Boyson: I do not spend my life saying that people are afraid. I am answering the questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury and I shall continue to do so. He has asked serious questions without repeating himself.

Mr. Taylor *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. May I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that we are in Committee and it might be much easier if he were to listen to the Minister and then try to catch my eye?

Dr. Boyson: I shall continue trying to answer the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury. He asked serious questions instead of speaking to the wind.

At present, £1,502 million has gone out of the consolidated fund. Some of that comes from other funds on the technical side and some from what is borrowed and transferred. I must put the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury at rest. To my knowledge, none of the Lear Fan money or the De Lorean money came from that. It came directly out of the Northern Ireland block from the Department of Economic Development. None of that money ran away. I will write to my hon. Friend about the details that he raised.

I know that many right hon. and hon. Members would like to extend the debate so that we have the Anglo-Irish debate all over again, but this is a one-clause Bill and I am speaking to clause 1 stand part.

Mr. John David Taylor: The Minister has given a despicable performance. It is a performance that will underline the withdrawal of consent within the majority community of Northern Ireland from the present imposed Dublin-London system of government in Belfast and throughout Northern Ireland. He is an absolute disgrace to the people in Northern Ireland. In 1986, the people of Northern Ireland will so express their opinion through the democratic process.

The Minister referred to two systems that reflect democracy throughout the United Kingdom. One is democracy itself and the second is the financial implications. In a rather flimsy manner, he referred to the transfer of finances from the central Exchequer to the Stormont Exchequer in Northern Ireland.

I shall deal with the first aspect—democracy. I speak as one who has been a Member of Parliament for some 20 years. Democracy depends upon the people, not upon Parliament or the Government. At the end of the day, it depends upon the man in the street. Democracy also depends upon consultation. In what respect in recent months have the people of Northern Ireland had consultation? The Whip tonight, the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude), who voted against the people of Northern Ireland, even with a small majority, knows that there has been no consultation in Northern Ireland.

The second pillar of democracy is consent. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, so-called of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—so she says—states that we shall not seek the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. The two great pillars of democracy, consultation and consent, have been thrown to the side. Since it was the Minister who raised the question of the Anglo-Irish agreement, I say that there is one remaining pillar of democracy—the voice of the people. The Government will ignore the voice of the people in Northern Ireland in 1986 at their great risk. If the majority of people in Northern Ireland go to the poll and express their view of what the Government have done without consultation or consent, saying, "So what", the Government will be answerable for what takes place in Northern Ireland thereafter.

The second issue raised in the debate is transfers from one Exchequer to another. It has been a dishonest debate, showing that the United Kingdom is not governed under a system of economics where all people within the United Kingdom are treated equally.

In the United Kingdom there are two Exchequers—not three or four. There is the Exchequer at Stormont and the Exchequer here in the capital of the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is easy for Ministers to refer to the transfers from London to Stormont. We have not heard what the transfers are from here to Scotland, Wales or the south-west of England. The Government run away from that. They pillory the people of Northern Ireland. They speak in terms of the transfers from London to Northern Ireland, but there are transfers from London to many other regions in the United Kingdom. It is dishonourable for the Minister to say that in some way Northern Ireland is exceptional and depends on support from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Many of the regions depend upon support from the central Exchequer. All that we in Northern Ireland ask is that the Government—last week they failed to recognise the fact—recognise that we in Northern Ireland, as with England, Scotland and Wales, are part of the United Kingdom, and like all other citizens we wish to carry the same burdens and accept the same privileges. When the Government face up to that, we shall support them, but at the moment we are on the road to confrontation with them.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

10.27 pm

Mr. Bell: I am glad to see the House move so rapidly from Second Reading, to Committee, to Third Reading. That comes from the heart, because I sat through 67 sittings of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill in Committee and, in the same year, 195 hours of the Finance Bill, so I am encouraged to now note that the House can make rapid progress when it wishes.

As we have seen, the Bill is essentially technical and provides merely a piece of financial machinery. It does not itself authorise any expenditure, nor does it affect policies behind the programmes that it will help to finance. It merely ensures that when certain programmes of capital expenditure have been approved by the normal procedures, the money for them can be made available. All expenditure on transferred matters in Northern Ireland is financed out of the Northern Ireland consolidated fund. It obtains most of its funds from revenues. The Northern Ireland consolidated fund also obtains smaller sums by

[Mr. Bell]

borrowing from various sources, of which the national loans fund is by far the most important. The Bill is concerned solely with loans to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund from the national loans fund.

On Second Reading there were interesting interventions by my hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry). They were concerned that the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill touches upon housing and, of course, the Divis flats were mentioned. Although I do not wish to go beyond the scope of Third Reading, reports have reached me that Mr. Frank Gillem, chairman of the Divis flats residents association, his wife Lillian, the secretary of the association Mr. Francis McCann, and his partner Jeanette Lackey were arrested by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, under section 12 powers, in a raid on the flats at 6 o'clock this morning.

The Bill relates to housing, and housing relates to the Divis flats, which in turn raises a question about social conditions. I do not wish to labour that point, but simply to place it on record for the benefit of the House.

We have followed these proceedings with great care. They are identical to the proceedings on 28 November 1975, when that Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill was read a Second and Third time. The proceedings have been enlivened—if that is the right word—by the intervention of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and by hon. Members occasionally wandering off into the broader issues of that agreement rather than sticking to the narrow issue of the Bill.

I welcome that widening of the debate, because hon. Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland take their duties seriously. They have expressed their view to the Government and to the Opposition across the Floor of the House. No doubt in future we will hear more about the Anglo-Irish Agreement than we will about the Bill.

10.31 pm

Dr. Boyson: Obviously, I support the Third Reading of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) raised a point in Committee about the interest rate, to which I did not reply. It is exactly the same as the rate fixed by the Treasury every Thursday.

I commend the Third Reading of the Bill to the House so that, when the existing loans money runs out in the middle of next year, it will be replenished so that allocations for housing and for the Northern Ireland electricity authority — especially for the transfer of Kilroot to coal—can go ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Motion made and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 15th November, be approved. *—[Mr. Mather.]*

Question agreed to.

Heating Bills

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Mather.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): The subject of the debate is the effect of poor summer weather on the elderly and the very young. Before coming to that, I must say that the debate on the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill evoked memories of 1975 and devolution. It is one of the paradoxes of this place that Northern Ireland is to be offered devolution when it does not want it, while Scotland, which wants it, cannot get it.

I want to turn the attention of the Minister and the House to the problem facing many elderly and very young people because of the poor weather during the summer —if summer be the right description. In recent years a considerable amount of attention has been drawn to the instances of fuel poverty, but most of the concern was about the effects of winter weather on the frail, elderly and the families living on the margins of income.

Those on supplementary benefit and heating allowances hope that during the summer they can save to pay their winter electricity, gas and coal bills. Many hon. Members will have experience of constituents approaching them at the end of winter with high bills that they have great difficulty in paying under the current supplementary benefit rates. Indeed, they have been faced with the prospect of disconnection.

Some of those people were able to cut their arrears during the summer months when they could turn off their heating systems, or perhaps put something aside towards the bills for the winter months. We must recognise that this is not an academic matter, nor is it purely a case of the discomfort that many families experience because they cannot afford sufficient fuel. It can be one of life and death.

Age Concern has looked into the matter. It has said, based upon a survey done as far back as 1972, that some 70,000 Scots pensioners are at risk from hypothermia. If, however, one scales it up to the present population aged over 65 years, I am informed that the figure is now nearer 130,000.

The problem medically for the elderly, although it applies also to children in their first year of life, is that they sometimes have difficulty in being able to sense changes in temperature. The young have no control over their clothing or the way in which they react. The elderly frequently do not notice changes in temperature up to something like 5 degrees Centigrade. That is why they can be at risk and, before they know it, they can be in danger.

There are between 3,000 and 5,000 deaths per year in Scotland from cold-related illnesses. Some 20 per cent. of all Scottish houses—and that may be an underestimate —have a problem with dampness. In 1972 the Wicks report when it came out made it clear that pensioners spend over twice as much of their budget on fuel as the average of all households. Indeed, that same report demonstrated that 88 per cent. of people who would have liked more heating cited expense as the reason for not having it. They deliberately economised on fuel because they felt they did not have the resources with which to pay for it. We are now dealing with the problem of the population becoming progressively older so that at present some 17 per cent. of the Scottish population is over pensionable age.

I do not pretend that this is a purely Scottish problem. Other areas of the United Kingdom suffer from climatic variations, but I trust that it is stating the obvious to point out that the Scottish climate, because of our northerly location, suffers from harsher weather conditions. It is a matter of indisputable scientific proof that it is 20 per cent. more expensive to heat a house in Glasgow than it is to heat a similar house in Bristol. In Aberdeen the comparable figure is 30 per cent., while there are many more upland and exposed households where the weather is windier and colder. Nor is it just the case that cold weather is more severe. People also have to cope with a longer winter, lack of sunshine, shorter days, greater wind velocity and a higher rainfall, all part and parcel of living further to the north in winter. It is not surprising, therefore, that electricity consumption is 25 per cent. and 50 per cent. higher in the south and north board areas respectively compared with consumption in England.

If any further proof were needed, a glance at a recent written answer given to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) shows not only that official hypothermia death returns are running in the first half of 1985 at record levels but that Scotland accounts for some 33 per cent. of all the deaths where mention is made of hypothermia on the death certificate. As we know, the official returns on the death certificate, because of the difficulty of diagnosis, represent only a small proportion of those who die from cold-related illness.

All this has been compounded by the 1985 summer. Apart from the month of October, it was simply appalling. Cumulative Scottish weather conditions were found to be the worst for a century. From July to September rainfall was 200 per cent. to 300 per cent. above normal. Sunshine was less that 75 per cent. of the usual. This has had a direct impact on heating. People had to heat their homes right through the summer. During the summer quarter, fuel consumption rose dramatically. Compared with 1984 gas consumption went up by 20 per cent. and electricity in the south of Scotland electricity board area by 12 per cent. Figures have not been made available for the hydro-board area, but might be greater because it covers the more northern latitudes. Increases in coal were also sustained in different areas, to upwards of 20 per cent.

It is not surprising that during the summer fuel arrears have arisen. Many people have used up the savings that they had kept for fuel consumption during the winter. This is serious, because the graphs show that deaths among the elderly rose by 20 per cent. and among the very young by 40 per cent. in winter, as compared to summer. This phenomenon does not occur in similar age groupings in Scandinavia. Part of the blame lies in the poorer quality of housing. With lack of insulation, a disproportionate amount warms the external environment, and there is no real programme of upgrading, and what there is seems to be under attack. It is one of the stupidities of Government policy that in 1982-83 they paid out something under £15,000 million of fuel benefits, actual or reputed, but provided only some £18 million for basic insulation.

The whole point is about ability to pay. On 28 November, the Government acknowledged the exceptionally bad weather conditions, when the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave a subsidy to farmers, for fodder for their cattle. What about the people who also had to put up with the cold, wet and windy summer? So far, there has been no announcement, although winter has struck early and most bitterly. The benefit system is inadequate, unfair and unjust.

The House knows that I have before called for a cold climate allowance. Instead, there is the severe weather allowance, which I prefer to call a warm climate allowance because it favours payment in the south rather than in the north. Last year, 170,000 payments were made in England, but none in Scotland, although lower temperatures were prevailing in our country.

No one in Scotland will miss the severe weather allowance when it is abolished. It does not give us any help —a case of cold comfort for the Scots, and southern comfort for the English. In any event, the system has been declared illegal by the Social Security Commissioner, but the Government are silent, and I hope that the Minister will say something to clear up the position, and about the guidelines. Will the scheme last, and will any back-money be paid to all those people who applied last year, but failed to get a bean out of the system?

In plain language, the scheme is daft. It is unfair to those living in normally cold areas. It is confusing for benefit officers, and if it is confusing for them, how much more confusing must it have been for the general public? The elderly could not predict whether the cold temperatures would last long enough to bring down the average and so trigger off the payments. Old folk had no way of knowing whether they could afford the extra heat. The winter has struck early, and the fear of the size of the fuel bills is the greatest disincentive to the elderly in keeping warm. After the summer, many could have difficulty in paying for fuel, and be in a more difficult and harsh position than last year.

The Government cannot be complacent about the trend in deaths. It is immoral to give extra cash to keep animals alive when people either die or face the misery of being trapped in cold and draughty homes. It is necessary to give help to the farmers, in view of the bad summer, but, if the Government are willing to give it to the farmers, they should also be prepared to help other people. The Government cannot abolish fuel allowances. Adequate allowances are the only guarantee for aged and low-income families that they will have any chance of keeping themselves warm in this and future winters. I hope that the Minister will be able to respond sympathetically to my case.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) has pursued the issue of heating in all its aspects for some time, and I congratulate him on his persistence. I hope that he will understand if I cannot congratulate him wholeheartedly on everything that he said. It is not so much what the hon. Gentleman said as what he did not say.

An acknowledgement of what the Government have done to help with heating bills would have been welcome. By any yardstick, the Government's contribution has been substantial, whether in terms of summer or winter bills. It is appropriate to put that on the record.

The hon. Gentleman did not mention that the Government have committed many billions of pounds to social security and have kept major benefit rates ahead of rising prices since 1979. This includes considerable help to the least well off for day-to-day expenses, including

[Mr. John Major]

heating, through substantial increases in supplementary benefit rates. These rates rose by 6 per cent. over and above the rise in prices between 1979 and 1984, and they were raised again a few days ago. More specifically, there was no acknowledgement of the substantial sum of £400 million spent last year on heating additions. The money was directed primarily to pensioners on supplementary benefit, to the sick, to the disabled and to some other special groups. That is a substantial record. The hon. Gentleman did not acknowledge that that substantial amount was £140 million more in real terms than had been spent by any previous Government on heating additions. This substantial Government record is not inclusive of all that has been achieved. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, when presenting his case, was not able to make specific acknowledgement of this record.

Mr. Wilson: I do not wish to deter the hon. Gentleman from answering the principal case, but does he think that the Government have done enough, considering the rising trend of deaths from hypothermia and the misery that many elderly people face in their homes?

Mr. Major: I shall deal with that issue in the course of my speech.

The principle of weekly help with all living expenses, plus extra weekly help for those with special needs, is one that we plan to retain under the proposed reforms that will see the light of day in the White Paper shortly. I stress this because the hon. Gentleman clearly feels that, by changing the present complex system of heating additions, we are ending assistance with heating costs. That is not the position.

The income support scheme which we propose in our Green Paper in June will provide a better basis for regular weekly help for claimants. There will be basic personal allowances for normal living expenses, including fuel costs. There will be weekly premium payments for families, pensioners, the sick, the disabled and for lone parents. The premiums will be given in recognition of the fact that these groups face special pressures, not least with the cost of extra heating.

The fact that we shall not call the premiums "heating additions" does not mean that they do not exist, that the cash is not in the claimants' pockets and that it cannot be used towards fuel costs. We expect that these resources will be used to go towards fuel costs and that income support, for a variety of reasons, will be a simpler and more effective means of help than the present complex system which has many defects, some of which the hon. Gentleman honestly outlined.

I do not disparage the substantial help given through heating additions, though their structure results in an uneasy alliance between automatic entitlement for pensioners on supplementary benefit and others and the complex rules about details of claimants' health problems. The present regulations are quite mind-boggling in their complexity. The advantages which we believe will accrue from the income support scheme include the fact that we will avoid complexity and most important, the intrusive questioning that takes place before an entitlement can be determined. I believe that the hon. Gentleman will concede that that will be a substantial improvement on the present position. I emphasise strongly that help will continue to be given to these groups through the special premia that we propose.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about high summer fuel bills, and I recognise that there are particular difficulties when bills are higher than usual. However, the problem must be put in context. Social security collectively costs many billions of pounds. It helps millions with their living expenses, and our aim is to ensure that that happens as effectively and simply as possible. Surely no one can dispute that over the years the system has become far too complicated and that that is not in the interests of claimants who receive assistance or those who run the system. It is clear that it is of no help to anyone. However, we shall make no progress in producing the right sort of rational, modern and helpful system that directs and targets help to where it is most needed if we try to tailor the weekly income that is provided for millions by introducing variations that are based on weather conditions, time of year or locality, for example.

Most people plan on the basis that they will spend less one week and more the next, and we should give social security claimants the credit of recognising that they do likewise. We shall continue to provide a level of weekly income that takes account of the recurring extra pressures that are faced by groups such as pensioners. That must be a more sensible and efficient way of providing help than increasing heating additions in the winter, decreasing them in the summer and increasing them again in the summer if the weather proves to be especially bad, as the hon. Gentleman has said it was during this summer.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the length of the heating season, and I understand the arguments that he has advanced. I have already explained that the help that we provide is geared to people's needs year in and year out and not to providing higher levels of help at certain times of year. He implied that the heating season is generally longer in the colder parts of Great Britain than elsewhere. That followed on to a matter which he has raised before and on which he has some depth of knowledge, which is his idea of a cold climate allowance. That means, effectively, variable rates of weekly benefit depending on which part of the country someone lives.

I recognise the hon. Gentleman's interest in this subject, and he knows that my colleagues have discussed it with him in the past. There are real difficulties. Ministers in previous Governments have seen strong arguments against any deviation from the principle of national benefit levels and I am bound to say that we can see the same arguments against them. Apart from heating, there are many regional price variations. It would be possible to make a similar case based on variations in transport or food costs, for example. There is a variety of other variable prices in different parts of the country and I have no doubt that others could point to variations that have an acute effect on the persons with whom they are concerned.

If we were in the business of trying to take a detailed and comprehensive account of all the variations, the task of setting and changing all the benefit rates each year would become impossibly complicated. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that that is so when he has time for reflection. There is evidence that there is little variation between the amount spent on average on fuel by those who live in different parts of Britain. That remains true at all income levels throughout the United Kingdom.

I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about hypothermia. Each winter we hear distressing accounts of old people—perhaps proud and independent people who are entitled to help but who for various reasons do not seek it, or who face difficulties in obtaining it—who suffer from the cold. I understand the problems and care about it as much as the hon. Gentleman. However, it is not reasonable to portray the Government—I think that the hon. Gentleman began to move in this direction when he remarked about help for farmers and not for those in need of heating additions—as uncaring and aloof from the problem of hypothermia.

Mr. Wilson: They are.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): That is right.

Mr. Major: I reject that charge absolutely. They would do well to recall, before they make it, that it was a Conservative Administration in 1979 that introduced automatic heating additions for the first time for older supplementary pensioner householders.

Mr. Wilson: It is not enough.

Mr. Major: If he thinks that that initial move was not enough, the hon. Gentleman may recall that subsequently we extended the number automatically entitled to heating additions so that as of today about 1·5 million supplementary pensioners over 65 get extra help with their heating of between £2·20 and £5·45 per week. When he makes remarks about help for cattle and not for people, he overlooks that substantial amount of assistance that was introduced, and is being given, by this Government. He might also bear in mind that nine out of every 10 supplementary pensioners now get heating additions, compared with only six or seven out of every 10 in 1978.

The hon. Gentleman also dealt with the exceptionally severe weather payments and some of the difficulties they cause. That payment is often confused with the cold climate allowance, but there is an important difference which may be understood in the House but not outside. Those payments are one-off payments to claimants in any part of the country if they have used more fuel than planned because of a period of exceptionally severe weather. The payments have always been a tiny part of the overall help with heating costs for the least well off.

The winter before last the chief adjudication officer, who advises local adjudication officers on the interpretation of the law, introduced a new system for determining when the regulation was satisfied. That system was based on temperature data provided by the Meteorological Office, collected from 17 weather stations throughout the country. The system was first fully tested earlier this year. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, there were some criticisms of the way in which it worked. I put that in the mildest form that is appropriate.

In the first place there were complaints from Scotland and from some parts of England and Wales where payments were not made. Secondly, the system was very complicated to understand. I recall that my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security himself described it as a pretty weird and wonderful construction. Thirdly, the amount of help delivered under the system was relatively modest, about £10 on average. We now know that the administrative cost of the scheme was very high indeed in proportion to the help given. We estimate that last winter it cost over £1 million administratively to pay out £1·7 million in benefit. Clearly that was not satisfactory. In view of the difficulties we undertook to review the provision.

In the meantime, the chief adjudication officer arranged for a test case to be heard by the social security commissioners to clarify whether his guidance properly reflected existing law. Their decision, which was issued recently, was that the system used last winter was not a satisfactory method for deciding claims. They held in effect that local adjudication officers should use their own judgement in deciding, on the facts of each individual case presented to them, whether there had been a period of exceptionally severe weather and how much extra the claimant had spent as a result.

The chief adjudication officer is now issuing new guidance to local adjudication officers in the light of the commissioners' decision, so we shall no longer have the system of trigger points and degree day percentages which caused so much bewilderment last winter. None the less, local adjudication officers may still have to face substantial difficulty in determining whether exceptionally severe weather payments should be made. For example, they will have to decide whether the weather is exceptionally or abnormally severe. Interpretation of those terms is difficult. They will have to decide whether there has been a period of exceptionally severe weather, although there is no set definition of "period" and it may in theory be as little as a single day.

The local adjudication officers will also have to establish both what the claimants' normal fuel expenditure is and how much extra is spent as a result.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister saying that in departing from the previous system of trigger points and so forth the temperature to be used as a criterion in each area will be a local one rather than a national one? In other words, will it still be possible for people in the south to get benefits under the severe weather scheme while people further north will not get them if their average temperature is much colder?

Mr. Major: I was about to make that point, though we shall have to wait for the guidance of the chief adjudication officer, which we shall have very shortly. There is a substantial probability that payments may still vary between different parts of Britain in an unacceptable fashion. I stress that point because some hon. Members may have overlooked it. The commissioners, in their recent decision, held that the weather must be exceptional for the place in question.

A number of other factors will need to be considered, one of which is the commissioners' ruling that "exceptionally severe" also means exceptional for the time of year. I have no wish to belittle the difficulties outlined by the hon. Member for Dundee, East, that high summer heating bills can cause. The issue is whether ad hoc, finely calculated payments towards specific bills are the best way to help. I wonder if the social security budget and social security staff are best employed making adjustment for exceptionally rainy summers, exceptionally chilly springs, exceptionally misty autumns, and so on. Surely it is better to concentrate on delivering the correct level of weekly income efficiently to those in need.

We are therefore continuing to consider this provision very carefully in the light of the commissioners' decision and the chief adjudication officer's impending guidance.

[Mr. Major]

We shall be looking at the effects of that guidance, both in terms of the way in which it seeks to provide extra help with fuel bills and its practical implications. In the meantime, the guidance is being issued so that staff will be able to handle any claims being made.

I hope—though my expectations are not high—that I may have persuaded the hon. Member for Dundee, East that the Government are anxious to help the least well off with their heating problems. The Government are genuinely concerned about the matter and, regardless of whether I have convinced the hon. Gentleman, we shall continue to offer substantial assistance, although it may not be in the ways that the hon. Gentleman suggested in his remarks today.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGES FROM THE QUEEN

INCOME TAX

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Addresses, as follows:

I have received your Addresses praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Canada) Order 1985, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Soviet Union) Order 1985, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income (Norway) Order 1985, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Finland) Order 1985 and the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ivory Coast) Order 1985 be made in the form of the drafts laid before your House.

I will comply with your request.

SUMMER TIME

I have received your Address praying that the Summer Time Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before your House.

I will comply with your request.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed.

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR (NO. 2) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR (NO. 3) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Shops Bill

1. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning the Shops Bill *[Lords]*.

The Minister of State Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): We have received 6,688 representations concerning the Shops Bill *[Lords]* since it was published.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Does he agree that these representations confirm general support for reform of the Shops Act 1950, but overwhelming opposition to the idea of unrestricted free trading? In this instance, does he accept that people must be right, where a small committee may well be wrong and that I cannot support proposals that are against custom and practice and the country's Christian tradition?

Mr. Waddington: In my experience, people write to Members of Parliament when they disapprove of legislation introduced by the Government, but they rarely write and thank us when they agree with what we are doing. In the main, the letters that we have received have obviously come from a vociferous minority.

Mr. Ray Powell: Why do we have appeals for contributions towards the preservation of St. Margaret's church, Westminster, and churches throughout the country when the Government are doing everything possible to persuade people with a tradition of 500 years of Christian belief to abandon that belief and to shop and work on Sundays? Are the Government now opposed to the Church of England, and are they abandoning that Church because it has become more Marxist or more honest?

Mr. Waddington: Apart from the fact that in many of our cathedrals Sunday trading is pursued illegally, there seems to be little connection between the hon. Gentleman's question and that on the Order Paper.

Mr. Butler: My hon. and learned Friend referred to our constituents writing in and making representations direct to the Government. Is it not the case that the volume of letters being received is much greater than on any other subject, in my experience? Will he take into account what people are saying, which is, "Keep Sunday different"? That being so, unless their Lordships, in their wisdom, amend the Bill, will he withdraw it?

Mr. Waddington: The halfway houses recommended by organisations such as Keep Sunday Different are beguiling at first glance, but the Auld committee looked at them. The Jubilee Centre suggests a new list of goods, but has come up with one based on no principle. Why one should be able to buy tobacco on Sunday but not a plant pot, according to the Jubilee Centre, I do not know.

Mr. James Lamond: We have been made aware that the Minister does not like letters from hon. Members, but surely he will not brush aside 6,600 letters as a small vociferous minority. How can the Government expect to be believed when the chairman of the Conservative party preaches that there is a serious decline in moral and

religious standards, while in the same week the Government introduce a Bill such as this in the House of Lords?

Mr. Waddington: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I like many of the letters that I receive. Many letters have been written to us during the last month. I remind the hon. Member that about 7,000 representations were made to the Auld committee and that a vast volume of evidence was considered by the committee, the composition of which was never objected to at the time. All these matters were studied in great depth. We are studying carefully all the representations that we are receiving.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that many small retail outlets in my constituency and elsewhere, many of which are family run, consider that complete deregulation Sunday trading will seriously affect their prospects? Do not these proposals make a mockery of the Government's declared policy to create an environment in which small businesses such as these can thrive and prosper?

Mr. Waddington: Some of what has been said has unduly alarmed small businesses, but the experience overseas leads one to believe that small businesses can operate flexibly to meet demand in a way that large businesses cannot, and that is the explanation for the fact that the number of small businesses in Sweden has grown since deregulation in 1972.

Criminal Statistics

2. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of recorded notifiable offences were cleared up by the police in England and Wales in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The clear-up rate fell from 41 per cent. in 1979 to 35 per cent. in 1984, but the actual number of offences cleared up rose by 17 per cent. to 1·2 million.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that many of these cases are cleared up thanks to the public rather than the police? Therefore, is it not essential that we maintain the public's confidence? Is the Minister aware that a recent MORI poll showed that three out of five people believe that there should be more police accountability through local councils? Would not such a move improve policing?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure the hon. Gentleman is right in the first part of his question, and that success against crime depends upon co-operation between police and public. As to the second part, I point out that, in addition to the figures that I quoted, 75 per cent. of all offences of violence against the person are cleared up, and 91 per cent. of murders.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is much that the public could still do to help the police, particularly through such organisations as Crimewatch and by instantly alerting police of problems and not passing by on the other side of the road, as seems to happen so often?

Mr. Hurd: We are only at the beginning of crime prevention as an effective cause. My hon. Friend mentioned Crimewatch. I agree with him that the number of schemes has doubled during the year. We hope that there will a great many more.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what is the clear-up rate of offences of insider dealing on the Stock Exchange, bearing in mind that of 100 such offences reported by the Stock Exchange to the Director of Public Prosecutions, only two were proceeded with in the courts?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot answer the hon. and learned Gentleman's question without notice.

Mr. Kaufman: In view of the serious decline in the clear-up rate during the period of office of this Government, why are they cutting the amount of money to be spent on policing in the next financial year?

Mr. Hurd: We are not doing so; we are increasing it. In statements in the country the right hon. Gentleman has quoted a figure of 2·5 per cent., which he alleges is a decrease. He is not comparing like with like. He is comparing the likely outturn this year, which includes an obviously unplanned but large amount for police overtime during the miners' dispute, with our plans for next year. We are planning for an increase. What is more, the provisional figures that we published in the autumn statement will be looked at again between Departments to take account of events and needs since then.

Prison Population

3. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population of England and Wales at the most recent convenient date; and by what percentage this has risen since the same date in 1979.

Mr. Hurd: On 20 November 1985 the prison population was 46,930. On 30 November 1979 it was 43,036. That represents an increase of 9 per cent.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Secretary of State aware that, per head of the population, the United Kingdom sends more people to prison than any other major Western European power, with the exception of Turkey? Is he aware also of the dramatic increase in the number of people in the United Kingdom who have been sent to prison during the last 10 years? Is he aware further that it costs £12,000 to send a person to prison in the United Kingdom? As four out of five prisoners are sent to prison for non-violent crimes, would it not be more sensible to give non-custodial sentences to those who are guilty of less serious crimes?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman seems to suppose that I send people to prison. I do not send people to prison. The courts send people to prison, having listened to the evidence. For serious cases it is right that there should be serious sentences, which often means custodial sentences. I agree with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that for the less serious cases the courts should look carefully at alternatives before awarding custodial sentences.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the staffing levels in a prison in my constituency have fallen to the point where it has become almost impossible for the prison to continue the regime for which it was set up? May I ask him to look at this matter with great care?

Mr. Hurd: I shall look at the point that my hon. Friend has raised. In general, we are providing this year for an increase in prison staffing.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that the record prison population over which his Government preside imposes considerable strains on both prisoners and staff and that this problem should be dealt with by developing alternatives? Any response which means the closure of prison workshops, as has been suggested, will be bitterly resented and opposed by those both inside and outside the prison service and be regarded as a return to the custodial and punitive penal system, from which we thought we had got away a long time ago?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman knows that there have been many problems with prison industries—over the products, the firms with which contracts have been signed and the staff requirements involved. We are reviewing the matter, but we have not yet reached a decision.

Mr. Greg Knight: Does the figure that my right hon. Friend has given include those who have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment but who for the time being are unlawfully at large? Is he aware that in Derbyshire no fewer than 72 people have absconded this year from just one prison—Sudbury? Should this not be a cause for concern? Will my right hon. Friend look into it urgently?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly.

Plastic Bullets

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the chief constable of Greater Manchester about the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend the Minister of State discussed the availability of plastic baton rounds with the chief constable of Greater Manchester and the chairman of the police authority when he visited Manchester on 18 November. Both the chief constable and the chairman, together with the chief constables of West Midlands, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire and the chairmen of their police authorities, are due to attend a meeting at the Home Office this afternoon to discuss the matter with my officials.

Mr. Lloyd: Given that the Home Secretary has told the House that he values the relationship between the police and the public, does he accept that the Government and police response to the economic and social disaster in our inner cities of ever more authoritarian policing is inappropriate, because it alienates the public on whom good policing depends? As my constituents risk being killed by these extremely dangerous weapons, is it not right that Parliament should be allowed the opportunity to debate the issue before plastic bullets are released on to the streets of Greater Manchester or elsewhere?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that it will never be necessary for the police to use plastic baton rounds, on our streets. Earlier this year we had disturbances which were fierce beyond any precedents. When a chief officer of police concludes that he needs plastic baton rounds, and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary agrees, it is right that they should be available. If the Opposition disagree with that proposition, they have a remedy in their hands.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: While I share my right hon. Friend's hope that those bullets will never have to be used, does he agree that in the end the chief constable is responsible for protecting the members of his force in carrying out their duties and responsibilities? Will he therefore ensure that chief constables get every support in making any reasonable request for any equipment that they feel they need for that purpose?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. We are dealing with the protection of both police officers and peaceful citizens. No hon. Member would feel that it was right for the police to be exposed to the sort of attack that they endured at Tottenham without having some recourse, where necessary, to this type of protection.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Home Secretary accept that the vast majority of people in Greater Manchester do not want plastic bullets to be used, and are worried about the information that they have received about their use in Northern Ireland and the loss of life and injuries that they have caused? One of the major lessons from Northern Ireland is that if plastic bullets are to be used, the police must be extremely well trained in their use. At present, the problem in Greater Manchester is that there is no proper policing because of the number of policemen who are undergoing training. Does the Home Secretary agree that it is crazy to train policemen to use plastic bullets, which we all hope will never be used, rather than having policemen on the beat, giving the service that the people of Greater Manchester want?

Mr. Hurd: That is a rather confused supplementary question. The hon. Gentleman first says that training will be necessary, and then complains that it is taking place. It is easy to produce the figures for those killed by plastic baton rounds in Northern Ireland, but it is not so easy to produce the figures for those whose lives have been saved by them. Plastic bullets are much less dangerous than live bullets.

Sir Edward Gardner: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Police Act 1964 makes it clear that the responsibility for the control and direction of police forces remains with the chief constable? Does he further agree that that principle deserves his utmost support?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend, and I have made that clear.

Detainees (Police and Court Cells)

5. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the highest number of persons held in police and court cells on one night so far in 1985; and what was the number of *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* juveniles held in police and court cells at the latest available date.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): The highest number of prisoners held in police and court cells so far in 1985 was 260, on the night of 18-19 February. That was a direct result of short-lived industrial action at Wormwood Scrubs about the handling of prisoners suffering from AIDS. On the night of 4-5 December there were 137 prisoners in police cells, many of whom were there because of industrial action at HM prison Pentonville.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Is it not disgraceful, wrong and immoral for a so-called civilised society to hold unconvicted and unsentenced people below ground in dungeon-like conditions, with no access to washing,

education and recreation facilities or visitors, and, in the process, to turn police officers into turnkeys? When will the Home Secretary live up to the promise of his predecessor to abolish the routine use of court and police cells to hold innocent people by the end of 1983?

Mr. Mellor: The ending of the routine use of police cells has already occurred. In the seven weeks from the beginning of October — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked a question, and he might at least have the courtesy to listen to the answer. We appreciate that he is a bit highly strung at the moment, but I hope that he will listen to the answer. From the beginning of October this year, until the third week in November, never more than 40 people were held in police cells. We are going through an exceptional few days. In 1983, 280 prisoners, on average, were held each night in police cells. By the end of the 1984-85 financial year that figure was down to fewer than 20. That is a formidable step in the right direction, which no amount of jeering from the hon. Gentleman can overcome.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of those one-night imprisonments are for drunkenness? Does he agree also that it would be as well to try to find other arrangements to relieve the police service of these cases and to give proper counselling and advice to the people who fall into that trap?

Mr. Mellor: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend, whose interest in those problems is well known, that the number of people prosecuted for alcohol-related offences is falling dramatically as a result of the diversionary policies that we have been pursuing.

Civil Defence (Local Authority Communications)

6. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received the final report of the working party on local authority communications.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, but I expect to receive it shortly.

Mr. Aspinwall: What steps are being taken to provide direct communication links between county control centres and local BBC radio and television stations?

Mr. Shaw: As my hon. Friend will be aware, operations under the civil defence provision include the completion of the experimental trials of the communications equipment. We expect to be able to complete them for internal communications between the control centres and the local authorities, but we have no plans at the moment in relation to the broadcasting authorities.

Trespass

7. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to deal with difficulties relating to civil and criminal trespass arising from roving convoys of persons and vehicles.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has no present plan to introduce legislation on trespass. However, proposals in the Public Order Bill should help to deal with certain of the difficulties to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the incredible damage caused, costing Staffordshire ratepayers about £80,000, when a peace convoy recently invaded common and open spaces in that part of the world should be stopped, and that the criminal law is a way of dealing with such problems? An essential feature of open space and common land law is that it should be available to all people equally. People entering such land, entrenching themselves, and going from there marauding and stealing other people's property is a matter appropriate for the criminal law and should be stopped at once.

Mr. Shaw: I fully understand my hon. Friend's anxiety about the events that occurred in Staffordshire. He will be aware that in the Public Order Bill, subject to its passage through the House, there are provisions enabling conditions to be imposed upon static assemblies. I hope that the improvement he seeks will be achieved in that way.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my hon. Friend agree that while trespass has not been a criminal offence, the time has now come to deal with the so-called animal liberation people and those representing so-called animal rights organisations, and to amend the criminal law to cover them when they trespass on private land and cause criminal damage and personal injury to people engaging in their lawful pursuits?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is correct. People seek to disrupt and enter private land and cause major damage to property and some injury to others, and I assure him that the police and the Government are considering carefully what can be done to toughen the law in that direction.

Licensing Laws

8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the licensing laws.

Mr. Hurd: I want to examine among other things the full report of the Office of Population Censuses and Survey's study of drinking in Scotland before deciding whether relaxations should be introduced in the permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is high time we relaxed our licensing laws, bearing in mind the success of the experiment in Scotland? Is he aware that such a relaxation would have wide support throughout the country?

Mr. Hurd: I have an open mind on that matter. I hope that my hon. Friend will not find me cowardly if I say that I should like to feel a little more sure than I am this afternoon that if we moved in that direction we should have substantial support, not just in both Houses of Parliament, but throughout the country.

Mr. Skinner: What's all this here then! Is the Home Secretary saying that despite the comments of the chairman of the Tory party the other day about departing from Christian values, the permissiveness of the 1960s, and so forth, he will not only vote for Sunday trading, but will relax the licensing laws as well? I do not know what the Tory party is coming to.

Mr. Hurd: If having a drink in a pub offends the hon. Gentleman's idea of Christianity, he is a long way away.

Mr. Skinner: It is Tebbit, not me.

Sir Bernard Braine: In view of the known connection between levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol abuse,

and the known connection between alcohol abuse and crime, road accidents, marital break-up and child abuse, as a Select Committee has testified, will my right hon. Friend take note that any change in the licensing laws which does not take account of those important and known facts will be bitterly resisted by some of us?

Mr. Hurd: Well, there we are. I think that confirms that I was right to be a little cautious in my earlier reply. It is surely right that we should look at the full evidence from Scotland when it becomes available to see what has happened there since drinking hours became more generous.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that one reason for the large number of sérious traffic accidents late at night is what is known as the stop tap syndrome? Does he agree that at the very least closing hours should be drastically amended to avoid that syndrome?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman is on to a good point. Police in some cities confirm that one of their problems is due to a large number of pubs in a relatively small area all closing at the same time.

Mr. Gregory: When will my right hon. Friend be in a position to recommend changes? Is he aware that there was widespread surprise that the Queen's Speech contained no proposals for change? Is he further aware that changes will lead to increased employment and that the Secretary of State for Scotland will confirm that the incidence of alcoholism has diminished enormously in Scotland since licensing laws were relaxed?

Mr. Hurd: I believe that the Scots intend to go public with the full report in February. We shall need to consider the situation fairly quickly after that.

Mr. Soley: Does the Home Secretary accept that it will be much easier to look at this issue effectively if it is part of an overall package to cope with the problems of alcohol abuse, including reversal of the Department's action in closing detoxification centres, which has resulted in more alcoholics being turned out on to the streets, despite the denial of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State some minutes ago?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's question goes rather wide. We shall have to consider whether opening the pubs for a little longer will increase the intake of alcohol to a damaging extent rather than simply allowing people to do a little more of their drinking in pubs and a little less at home with drink bought at supermarkets.

Criminal Statistics

9. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and the percentage increase in the number of offences of criminal damage recorded by the police between 1979 and 1984.

11. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and the percentage increase in the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police between 1979 and 1984.

14. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and the percentage increase in the number of violent offences recorded by the police between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Notifiable offences recorded by the police increased by 963,000, or 38 per cent., between 1979 and 1984. In the same period, recorded offences of violence against the person increased by just over 19,000, or 20 per cent., and of criminal damage by 177,000, or 55 per cent.

Mr. Fatchett: To what extent does the Minister see those shocking figures as representing the failure of Government policy?

Mr. Mellor: Plainly, it is disappointing that the increase during our period of office has been in line with the increase in the years since the last war, which has averaged about 6 per cent. in recorded offences. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Government policy is geared to ensure that more crimes are cleared up, and 200,000 more offences were cleared up last year than in 1979. Our policy is also geared to ensure that the criminal justice system has the necessary resources and that there is enhanced public confidence in the system. I believe that we have made considerable strides towards that aim, although we should all like to see a decrease in recorded crime figures.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister recall advertisements by Saatchi and Saatchi on behalf of the Conservative party in 1979 claiming that the Tory party would be more effective in combating crime than would the Labour party? If so, does he now agree that those claims were grossly untrue?

Mr. Mellor: Far from it. I suspect that any opinion poll that is taken—we know of some that have been—will show much greater confidence in the Conservative party on matters of law and order than in the Labour party. As long as the Labour party tolerates people such as Bernie Grant and Ted Knight, that will continue to be the case.

Dr. McDonald: Does the Minister agree that the figures that he has just announced to the House show that such confidence, if it does exist among the public, is totally misplaced? Should he not now, on behalf of the Government, accept responsibility for the vast increase in crime and recognise that it is at least in part due to high unemployment, cuts in housing expenditure and inner city deprivation?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Lady is railing against the facts. I have already given an account of our view on the relevance of the increase in recorded crime of our policies. I appreciate that it is frustrating for the hon. Lady that the public see the election of a Labour Government as likely to lead to a reduction in law and order in Britain, but I suspect that that will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Hickmet: Law and order in Britain is maintained by respect of the rule of law and of the police. The Labour party is clearly anti-police, as shown by its attitude on police committees controlled by the Labour party. It is also shown by its attitude to some of the inner city riots and responses by some Labour council leaders. What effect does my hon. Friend think that that example will have on the youth of the country and those who engage in crimes of violence?

Mr. Mellor: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. The example is a very bad one.

Mr. Kaufman: Is it not a fact that the Government came to office on a pledge to fight and reduce crime, but that crime has risen massively under every heading?

There are now 1 million more serious offences a year than there were when the Government came to office. Is it not a fact that, despite the attempts of the Home Secretary to mislead the House this afternoon, in real terms the Government are reducing the amount of money that is to be spent on policing? Is that not the effect of the public expenditure White Paper and the autumn statement? Why do the Government cut the money for policing when we have 1 million more serious offences a year under Thatcherism?

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry to have to correct the right hon. Gentleman, but if he compares what was scheduled to be spent and what is due to be spent next year, he will find that the increase that is budgeted for is 6 per cent. That is a 2 per cent. growth in resources for the police in real terms. No Government can undertake to abolish sin, and we have not sought to do so. We have said that under this Government the forces of law and order are much better able to respond than under Labour. If the right hon. Gentleman looks back to 1977, when police morale was at its lowest and there was even talk of police strikes, he will find that that is the case.

Channel Islands

10. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Lord Glenarthur's recent official visit to the Channel Islands.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My noble Friend visited the islands of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark during the period 13 to 16 November. The main purpose of his visit was to acquaint himself with the islands and to meet informally the lieutenant governors and representatives of the island authorities for general discussions on a range of matters of mutual interest and concern. He found the visit to be most useful and informative.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister not aware, from the petitions and many letters that he has received, of the great concern on the islands about tax evasion by companies such as Gomba and the repressive housing laws? The noble Lord was quoted in an interview in the *Jersey Evening Post* as saying that everything in the garden was lovely. Is the noble Lord unbelievably naive, or is he covering up for the unpatriotic British, including some Tory Members, who are using the tax havens to make money?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the Minister answers, I say to the hon. Gentleman that it is unworthy to talk about unpatriotic Members.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Foulkes: What did I say that upset you, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I think that it upset the House. "Unpatriotic" is not a word that we use of each other here.

Mr. Foulkes: I shall withdraw "unpatriotic" and insert "Conservative".

Mr. Shaw: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the islands are responsible for their own financial affairs and for the supervision provided for by their own legislation. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is satisfied that he has adequate powers to protect the interests of Her Majesty's Government.

Manchester University (Ministerial Visit)

12. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the chief constable of Manchester on his response to the independent inquiry panel report on the policing of the then Home Secretary's visit to Manchester university on 1 March.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It would not be right for me to comment, or take any other action, until the investigation being conducted by the deputy chief constable of South Wales has been completed and the results have been considered by the Police Complaints Authority and, if appropriate, the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that it was extremely arrogant of the chief constable not to agree to a proper public inquiry into the principles involved in the policing of that incident, and that it was particularly arrogant of him to refuse to co-operate with the inquiry that was set up or to comment on the serious allegations that were made? Is it not clear that inquiries by the Police Complaints Authority can have little credibility when it has taken it so long to come forward with any information at all?

Mr. Shaw: It is anything but arrogant for the chief constable of Greater Manchester police to take note of the fact that the provisions of part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are in force and that he should, therefore, comply with the decision of the Police Complaints Authority to investigate police complaints in accordance with the Act. That seems to be a wholly appropriate step for him to take.

Mr. Favell: Is my hon. Friend aware of a leaflet, of which a sponsor was the Labour party, circulating in the union at Manchester before the Home Secretary's visit, exhorting members to

> "Stop Leon Brittan from speaking in our union on Friday 1st March: meet on the union steps at 6.30 pm for a mass picket to keep him out"?

On the back, the leaflet said; "Paint him red!", as they did to the Secretary for State for Defence. Is my hon. Friend proposing to help the Labour party make Manchester university a no-go area for anyone holding views different from themselves?

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. Hon. Members might care to note that in the case to which the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) drew attention there was a major police presence, but when the Minister of State paid a visit he deliberately required that there be no such police presence and he was forcibly prevented from addressing the students' union in that university. Is it not an astonishing fact that the freedom of speech that we cherish so greatly in the House is not available in the University of Manchester?

Drug Misuse

16. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the Government's campaign against drug misuse.

Mr. Mellor: The next stage in our continuing education and information campaign, which is now being

independently evaluated, will be the release shortly of video packages for professionals and young people. We are continuing to give the highest priority to our comprehensive strategy against drug misuse, and will shortly be introducing our Bill to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking.

Mr. Sackville: Is my hon. Friend aware that last year a sum of £300,000 was forfeited to Greater Manchester police on the conviction of two drug traffickers and that that money is still frozen? Will he give an assurance that the legislation that is introduced will not produce a legal bunfight, but will be workable, and that money forfeited will reach the public purse?

Mr. Mellor: It would be a rash Minister who said that any piece of forthcoming legislation would avoid a legal bunfight. In so far as it is possible to do so, we shall use our best endeavours to that end.

Mr. Corbett: Given the increasing misuse of hard drugs, will the Home Office increase, or decrease, the amount of money presently provided to some of the voluntary agencies that help with rehabilitation?

Mr. Mellor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, £17 million has been allocated for that purpose and 143 organisations have been supported, of which 60 come from the voluntary sector. I expect that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health will have more to say on that before too long.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that many of the voluntary groups that are doing excellent work with drug addicts find that their future is threatened by the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC? What representations has he made to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to secure the funding of these groups after 1 April?

Mr. Mellor: I do not accept the premise on which the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question is based.

Cinemas (Safety)

18. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to issue the Cinemas (Safety) Regulations 1985 and accompanying guidance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Having listened carefully to the central bodies representing the disabled, with which we shall be holding further discussions, we hope to reach a mutually acceptable agreement soon on what might be included in the non-statutory guidance which will accompany the regulations. We shall not propose restrictions on the admission to cinemas either of unaccompanied blind persons or guide dogs. The only restriction contemplated for wheelchair users is that wheelchairs must not be placed where they might obstruct exit routes.

Mr. Hannam: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's announcement on behalf of organisations representing the disabled, which were extremely concerned at the original proposals in the guidance notes. Will he give every possible assistance to ensure that cinema managers carry out the wishes laid down in the guidance notes, so that the disabled can be given as much access as possible to cinemas?

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome of this development. I note what he has to say about cinema management. However, I must remind him — I am sure that he is aware of this — that the management is responsible ultimately for the safety of its patrons. It decides whom it will admit, within the conditions of its licence.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does my right hon. Friend agree with our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that many social evils of our time derive from the permissive society promoted by liberal politicians in the 1960s and 1970s? If so, what are the Government's plans to combat these evils? Will the Government abandon their posture of neutrality on some issues and deliberate policy on others, which cause many to believe that our Christian way of life is in great danger?

The Prime Minister: I think my hon. Friend will agree that the speech of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the permissive society was far from neutralist. Indeed, it gave a firm lead in the direction in which I think my hon. Friend wishes to go. The Government have supported private Members' Bills on issues such as controlling video nasties and indecent displays. I hope that we shall continue to take that attitude.

Mr. Frank Cook: We are well aware of the Prime Minister's reputation of being extremely reluctant to withdraw from any opinion which she has expressed. I ask the right hon. Lady—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—to cast her mind back to 27 November 1984, 53 weeks ago today, when—this is where I shall read——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that this is when the hon. Gentleman will ask his question.

Mr. Cook: I crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. I was about to say that I shall express my attitude to that which appears on the piece of paper in my hand. On 27 November 1984 the Prime Minister expressed her hope that the Government would never forget the good work, loyalty and allegiance of those who have served this country. I ask the Prime Minister to consider what form that hope will take following the results of the Australian Royal Commission on nuclear tests at Maralinga.

The Prime Minister: The report to which the hon. Gentleman refers has only recently been published. We are studying it carefully. It comprises 16 chapters, 201 conclusions and seven recommendations. The Australian Government have stated that they will discuss with Her Majesty's Government those recommendations which affect the United Kingdom. I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman has read and absorbed the report so quickly.

Mr. McCusker: If the principles which govern the Prime Minister's attitude to disputed British terrritory are a desire for peace and reconciliation, why does she not enter into negotiations with the Argentine Government with a view to an Anglo-Argentine agreement which will have at its core an Anglo-Argentine conference, jointly chaired by a permanent Minister for the Malvinas and one of her own Ministers, with a permanent secretariat at Port Stanley, which will be able to discuss every matter concerned with the Falkland Islands? After all, there would be no sacrifice of sovereignty, would there?

The Prime Minister: I think, with respect, that the hon. Gentleman is right off beam. The people of Northern Ireland, like the people of the Falklands, to our way of thinking shall decide by majority where their future lies. That is and will remain enshrined in law.

Q2. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the extreme Left, which has hijacked Manchester council, will not succeed in its plans to hijack Manchester airport?

The Prime Minister *rose——[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have the message. Members must ask questions for which the Prime Minister has responsibility. I really do not think that she has responsibility for that matter.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us why the memorandum of understanding on British participation in star wars has not been submitted to the British Parliament for consideration?

The Prime Minister: It is still being negotiated. It is not customary to submit a memorandum of understanding to Parliament. It is customary to negotiate it and then for the Government to sign if they consider that the results are satisfactory.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us whether there is to be any conclusion of such negotiations tomorrow? Does she recognise that there is a need and a strong desire on both sides of the House for Members to be able to express views and to ask questions? If negotiations are continuing, can she tell us whether the memorandum involves or will involve any binding agreement, whether any financial commitments have been made by the United States of America, and whether the Government are securing safeguards against the loss both of technology and of technologists in the event of an agreement being concluded? Why, in any case, is there a rush to sign now? Nobody else is showing such sycophantic haste as the right hon. Lady.

The Prime Minister: Some of the details — for example, the use of intellectual property which results from any research which we undertake under an SDI memorandum of understanding — are still being negotiated. It is very important to secure the right to that intellectual property. I am not in a position to say whether the agreement will be signed tomorrow. Its details are still being negotiated. I hope that it will be signed before Christmas.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend give thought later today to the fact that when the Greater London council recently decided to invest nearly £2 million in a fleet of 53 dial-a-ride minibuses, it chose to buy French vehicles despite the availability of comparable British vehicles? Is that what Socialists mean by supporting British industry?

The Prime Minister: I hope that, so long as British industry is competitive with others, people will support it fully.

Dr. Owen: Is it right to continue to hide behind the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 and make it impossible for British service men exposed to nuclear radiation to challenge the British Government in the courts, whereas Australian citizens are able to use the courts to challenge the Australian Government? In the light of the Royal Commission report, will the Prime Minister now lift this ban on action being taken by British service men, many of whom have suffered grievously as a result of the tests?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, a survey on British service men who took part in the tests in Australia was set up in 1983. I am not in a position to give the right hon. Gentleman any more information, because that survey is continuing.

Mr. Spearing: Is the Prime Minister aware that last week a Minister of the Crown, before a Select Committee, said that the forthcoming possible withdrawal from UNESCO was a decision that would be taken by Her Majesty's Government without any pressure whatever from the United States? In view of the fact that change has already taken place, and that Britain, as the leading member of the Commonwealth, could, with her Commonwealth partners, achieve even greater change in the future, and that any withdrawal from UNESCO would be to the detriment of Britain's influence in the world, will the Prime Minister say why she disagrees with those points?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, a statement on the Government's decision on UNESCO is to be made later this afternoon. It was a decision taken in British interests.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in recent months many hon. Members on both sides of the House have become anxious and distressed about the constant bickering between Her Majesty's Government and the Church of England? If it is too much to hope that my right hon. Friend can abate the intense keenness of some of my colleagues to make instant comments on Church publications, could she, when she meets the Archbishop of Canterbury, ask him whether some of the statements could be made by more broadly-based politicians, not only by those on the Left, and whether their remedies could be more spiritual and less economic?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for the reasonableness of his question. Everyone should read the report and make up his mind on the recommendations.

Q3. **Mr. Adley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: I welcome the letter that my right hon. Friend sent yesterday to the leader of the Liberal party, in

which she referred to misdemeanours by a few people in the City. Is she aware that many Conservative Members are concerned about those activities? Will she assure the House that she and her Ministers, where practicable and proper, will bring whatever pressure they think it is right to bear on the City to enforce self-regulation? If that will not work, there are those of us who will be looking very carefully at the Financial Services Bill when it is published.

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, matters of fraud are for the police, and prosecution is for the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions, not the Government. The Government are anxious that there should not be any shortage of resources, and we are reviewing that matter immediately.

As my hon. Friend is aware, the Financial Services Bill will be published shortly. In White Paper form it was broadly welcomed by the House as a whole. My hon. Friend will also be aware that the Government set up the fraud investigation group earlier this year to help to get effective investigation and prosecution of major fraud cases. The Government have asked Lord Justice Roskill to look at the law and procedure in major fraud cases, and his inquiry is expected to report early in the new year.

The Government are as anxious as anyone in the land to see that cases of fraud are brought to court and convictions secured where the evidence so permits.

4. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: During the break from her engagements, will the Prime Minister examine the take-over bid that is being made by Elders for Allied Lyons? Is she aware that 68,000 jobs at Allied Lyons are at risk? Does she agree that there is something wrong with the capitalist system when it permits foreign bankers to have rich financial pickings at the expense of workers' jobs? Will she ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to recommend to the Office of Fair Trading that the matter should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

The Prime Minister: It is clear from the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question that this matter must be considered first by the Director General of Fair Trading. When he has received his advice, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will decide whether to refer the matter. I hope and believe that that decision will be made soon.

Q5. **Mr. Forth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the police continue to attract the support and confidence of the British people? Does she further agree with the contempt that many Conservative Members hold for mad Bernie Grant and the Haringey militants, who are trying to throw the police out of the Broadwater Farm estate? Does she also agree that the residents of Broadwater Farm estate would rather have police protection than military anarchy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, wholeheartedly. The latest antics of Mr. Grant show how very much the Left is still against the police. I think that is a tragedy. I understand that the Commissioner's view is that the police are entitled to be present in the numbers they think necessary. He believes it right that the police — [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Opposition Members will try to prevent from speaking anyone who stands up in support of the police. The Commissioner believes it right that the police should be free to decide what is needed to provide the local people —[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—with the protection to which they have a right. I notice that some hon. Members do not like free speech.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the three statements, unless they arise directly from and are not an extension of Question Time.

Mr. Thurnham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should be grateful if you would allow my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to answer my question — [HON. MEMBERS: "No".] This is a matter for which the Government have direct responsibility, and it stems directly from an answer given on Monday afternoon by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman had thought out his question carefully, because it was printed on the Order Paper. But the House knows that questions must be related to the Prime Minister's responsibility. She has no responsibility for any action that militants might take——

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has no responsibility for any action that militants might take at Manchester airport.

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take Mr. Churchill first.

Mr. Churchill: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Government clearly have responsibility for legislation in the House that could prevent the Marxist Left on Manchester city council from taking over Manchester airport under the guise of a sham——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Indeed, that may be so. Had the hon. Gentleman asked that question, it would have been in order.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The most important feature of that question was not only that was it planted but that the Prime Minister had a readymade answer to a question for which you said she has no responsibility. The Prime Minister and the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) were cheating the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that it is wrong to say that questions are planted when they are on the Order Paper.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask on whose authority business questions have been relegated to being taken after a statement when our normal procedure is that they come before statements?

Mr. Speaker: If the Government ask to make a business statement, that is in order and it takes its proper place.

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. How can it be ruled that the Prime Minister is not responsible for the question when the question was written before the answer? *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Thurnham: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Golding *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) must put the question in the proper form. If he reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that he did not.

Mr. Thurnham: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a meeting tomorrow of the shadow joint board for Manchester airport, and we should be most grateful to hear an answer to the question that I put.

Mr. Speaker: Not today.

Mrs. Clwyd: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will understand why I raise this point of order at this stage. It arises out of Question Time. I do so because I was named on the Order Paper for absenting myself from a Private Bill Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has given me notice of this point of order, and it does not arise out of this Question Time.

Mrs. Clwyd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a busy programme today. There are three statements and some important business. I will take points of order if they are legitimate and arise out of this Question Time. I will take other points of order in their proper place at the end, where I always take them.

Mr. Golding: The response of the House to the mistake that I made in my point of order was more eloquent than if I had put it correctly.

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking any more points of order at this stage.

Mrs. Clwyd *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking any more points of order. I ask the hon. Lady to resume her seat, please. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister *rose*——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Clwyd: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order.

Mrs. Clwyd *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I will take the hon. Lady's point of order, as I have said, at the end of the statement; and I will take the point of order of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) at the end of the statements.

Mrs. Clwyd *rose*——

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

The Prime Minister: With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the European Council held in Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December. My right hon. and learned Friend——

Mrs. Clwyd *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Lady's Committee will meet at 4 o'clock?

Mrs. Clwyd: No; it is meeting now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: In that event, as an exception, I shall take the hon. Lady's point of order.

Mrs. Clwyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to press the point, but it raises an interesting matter on which I should like your ruling.

First, I was absent from the Committee for which I was named on the Order Paper because I was down on the Order Paper to ask a question in the Chamber. I should like your ruling on whether Committee business takes precedence over the business of the Chamber. I would like that information for my constituents and for other hon. Members. It is important that we should know whether it is less important to examine the Executive than to be in Committee. I should like your ruling because, according to the rules of Committee, we are subject to penalties if we absent ourselves from a Committee. I think that you should give a ruling on the matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is of interest to the whole House. The hon. Lady gave me notice of her point of order, so I am able to give her the ruling for which she asks. She will know that the House has always regarded attendance at Private Bill Committees as of the utmost importance. Under Standing Order No. 122 of the Private Business Standing Orders absences from these Committees must be reported to the House. The form of words of the report matches the wording of the Standing Order, which is:

> "A member of any such committee shall not absent himself from his duties thereon, except in the case of illness or by leave of the House; and if any member is not present within one hour after the time appointed for the meeting of the committee, or if any member absents himself from his duties thereon, the member shall be reported to the House at its next sitting."

That is the Standing Order.

European Council (Luxembourg)

3.39 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about the European Council held in Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs accompanied me to this meeting. I have arranged for the conclusions of the Council to be put in the Library of the House.

The European Council reached agreement in five main areas. The first was the completion of the Community's internal market. This has been an important United Kingdom objective for a long time, with the strong support of British industry and business. The target of completing the Common Market by 1992 will be established in the treaty, and we agreed that there should be greater use of majority voting on a number of treaty articles dealing with goods and services. But unanimity will be retained for all decisions on taxation. The free movement of persons and the rights and interests of employees.

We also retain the right to take national action where required to protect public, animal and plant health.

The United Kingdom's position and the position of this Parliament are thus properly protected on such vital questions as frontier controls in relation to terrorism, crime, drugs and immigration from outside the Community; and on essential controls in health—for example, on rabies. The Luxembourg compromise, whereby a member state can invoke a very important national interest to prevent a decision being taken, is unaffected.

Secondly, the European Council agreed that the treaty should be brought up to date by new articles on technology, environment and the regional fund. Action has hitherto been taken in these areas on the basis of the general article in the treaty. The new articles will provide a more precise basis for action in these areas in future. Unanimity will be preserved for all-important decisions.

Thirdly, we agreed on procedural changes to improve consultation with the European Assembly. There will be better arrangements to enable the Council to take account of amendments to Community legislation suggested by the Assembly. But in all cases the last word on such legislation will rest with the Council. There will be no transfer of power on these matters from this House to the Assembly.

Fourthly, on monetary co-operation between member states, an amendment to the treaty was agreed which describes what has already been achieved in the Community framework, without entering into new commitments.

Finally, agreement was reached on a separate treaty of co-operation in foreign policy on the basis of the draft presented last summer by the United Kingdom. This formalises existing arrangements for consultation among the Ten on foreign policy matters and looks to a steadily closer co-operation.

The European Council's decisions on all these matters remain subject to general reservations from Italy and Denmark. The proposed amendments to the treaty will go forward only if these reserves are lifted. The United Kingdom has reserved its position on the voting arrangements in a proposed new treaty article on working conditions. We insist that unanimity be preserved, in view of the risks that this article might be used to impose unfair burdens on our small and medium-sized business.

The European Council also discussed the economic and social situation and confirmed existing economic policies designed to reduce inflation and encourage sustained growth. On deregulation, the Commission gave an undertaking that in future all new proposals would be accompanied by an assessment of the effects on business and job creation; that the most important existing regulations would be re-examined to simplify them and to reduce the burden on industry; and that there should be a regular procedure for monitoring progress towards this objective. The United Kingdom's initiative earlier this year has thus been formally adopted.

In my statement in this House following the last European Council in June, I made it clear that we would have been ready then to take the steps necessary to complete the internal market, to improve decision taking, to formalise foreign policy co-operation and to improve procedures for consultation with the European Assembly.

Those objectives are now embodied in the conclusions of the Luxembourg European Council together with some tidying up of the treaty to reflect the Community's development. The amendments to the treaty have to be approved by each sovereign Parliament and accordingly will be submitted to this House.

I believe that the conclusions on completing the Common Market and reducing the burden of regulations will be of long-term benefit to British firms selling their goods and services in the European Community. Together with the arrangements to reduce the scale of Britain's budgetary contribution agreed last year, they will be an important step towards enabling this country to realise more fully the benefits of our membership of the European Community.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Is the Prime Minister aware of the widespread feeling that yet again a summit has evaded the obligations and opportunities to tackle effectively unemployment in Europe and to promote Europe's role in international affairs? Does she recall saying to the House on her return from the Milan summit in July:

"I saw nothing before us that would require an amendment to the treaty"—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. *189*.]

Why has she now performed a U-turn and agreed to procedures for amending the treaty as well as conceding the national right of veto in important sectors?

At Luxembourg, did the Prime Minister bother to pursue reform of the common agricultural policy, which produces food stockpiles that not only obviously outrage the British people but continue to distort seriously Community funding? Did she raise the question of the huge gap between social fund remittance and payments which, according to Commissioner Varfis, will ensure that the worst losses will be inflicted on the British people in 1986? Why does the Prime Minister continue to promote the idea of European foreign policy co-operation but ignore the views of our partners in the Community over issues such as the Falklands and South Africa, and today spitefully rejected their unanimous plea for us to remain in UNESCO?

The Prime Minister: We had a debate on economic matters and considered a substantial report by the Commission. It will be considered in more detail by the

[The Prime Minister]

finance Council. All member Governments present endorsed the approach of the Commission which was to pursue policies to keep inflation down and prudent financial policies, and thereafter to pursue deregulation and to take steps to bring the internal market into being.

As to the amendments, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, most of what has been done now could have been achieved without treaty amendment. Many of the others wished to go by treaty amendment. I was not one of those, but as they wished to do so they were entitled to. The detailed drafting of the amendments shows that all our interests are protected. Many amendments, such as that on monetary matters, merely describe the state that we have reached in the Community. It was interesting that those who wanted treaty amendments most were those who have put a reserve on the results.

As to the CAP, the treaty is not the obstacle to reform. There is nothing wrong with the treaty provision for the common agricultural policy. The matter comes up each time, but, as we were dealing with treaty matters, reform did not arise.

As to foreign policy co-operation, I expect that there will continue to be differences, but we shall try to work together as much as possible. As the right hon. Gentleman mentioned the Falklands, I remind him of the support that we got from the Community when the Falklands compaign was beginning, support for which we were profoundly grateful.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Is not the best way to bring monetary affairs within the scope of the Community and the treaty to achieve free trade in financial services and free capital movement throughout the Community? Can my right hon. Friend reassure us that the summit agreement has made, and will make, progress on that front?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is aware that we pointed out to some of those countries that wished to go much further than we did that in practice we have released exchange controls and have freedom of capital movements, while some of those whose rhetoric was to the fore in the Milan Council have not done either of those things as yet, and some will not do it now. As my right hon. Friend made very clear, we were right. The treaty amendment is very modest. However, I doubt whether every country will free exchange controls, although Germany is anxious that capital movement should be freed.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): Does the Prime Minister regard the result of the European Council as a significant advance towards majority voting and more effective decision making? Is it again, in her view, just a question of "that much", or is this a significant advance?

The Prime Minister: If the articles that are enumerated in the treaty are passed, it will be a significant advance for the internal market. As the debate and discussion continued, it became obvious that those countries whose rhetoric had been the highest were among those who put a reserve on, for example, majority voting for transport matters in the Community. They are of great importance to us. As the right hon. Gentleman is very much aware, there was a big gap between the rhetoric and what they were prepared to agree in practice. We had a small reservation about one matter. Other countries had reservations about the whole matter.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Was it not a little daft to make significant concessions in order to achieve a piece of paper on the so-called completion of the market, when France has today imposed a complete ban upon all lamb imports and apparently we cannot do a single thing about it?

Was it wise for the Government to concede the veto on article 28 relating to changes to the common external tariff? Will not this mean that the majority of the member states can go ahead with a protectionist regime and that there is nothing that Britain can do about it?

The Prime Minister: On my hon. Friend's last point, he is aware that trade matters are for the European Community. We agree that sometimes by unanimity and sometimes by majority. Some of them are already agreed by majority.

As for my hon. Friend's question about lamb, that was not a matter for treaty amendment, so we were not considering it.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Will the Prime Minister clarify her view about the long-term objective of political union within a fully federal united states of Europe, about which a great deal is regularly said in the Commission and elsewhere? Is she aware that an overwhelming majority of the British people would not only reject it but would believe that the policies designed to deal with unemployment in Britian could not be carried through under the treaty as it now stands?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe in the concept of a united states of Europe, nor do I believe that it would ever be attainable. The whole history is completely different, so I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about that matter. I am constantly saying that I wish that they would talk less about European and political union. The terms are not understood in this country. In so far as they are understood over there, they mean a good deal less than some people over here think they mean.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated upon a personal diplomatic success in ensuring that there is a high degree of practical content in these institutional agreements. One of the most striking features of the discussions seems to have been the silence of other delegations on the much discussed question of the revision of the Luxembourg compromise. How does my right hon. Friend envisage the future operation of majority voting procedures in the Community?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is very much aware, the Luxembourg compromise will still be applied even when there is majority voting, provided that a very important national interest is involved. He will also be aware that at Milan we said that we should write down that interest so that it could be clearly defined and seen by other delegations. However, my hon. Friend is right. Other delegations did not pursue that matter, so presumably the Luxembourg compromise will operate as it does now by the declaration of a particular point that is of very important national interest.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): What advantages does the Prime Minister now see in amendments to the basic treaties to extend the legislative powers of the

European Assembly and the competence of the Commission which she did not appreciate when she made her statement against treaty amendments after the Milan summit?

The Prime Minister: Most of the changes that have been made under the text on the European Assembly, which are modest, could in our view, have been done by discussion without amending the treaty because the last word will continue to remain with the Council. Only two changes in the text would not have been undertaken otherwise. First, where there is an application for new accessions from a different country to the Community, the Assembly could, by withholding its consent, stop that application. Secondly, where there is an application for a new association agreement between third countries and the Community, the Assembly could, by failing to give its consent, stop it. Those are the only differences, except that we shall consult more with the Assembly before decisions are taken.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Could my right hon. Friend say whether this modest step in the direction of majority voting, which is surely inevitable if the 12 nation Community is not to be paralysed, is itself threatened by the possibility of one of the signatories to the summit agreement applying a veto to its implementation?

The Prime Minister: Yes. If Italy and Denmark maintain their general reserve, the matter could not be passed by each sovereign Parliament. Italy has undertaken to see what the European Assembly's views are before she makes up her mind. Denmark has certain constitutional problems, which she might be able to resolve, in which case, if Italy could go ahead, we could go ahead and bring the matters before the House.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Is it not the case that the Prime Minister has made a statement to the House on a meeting which she did not want to take place, on an agenda which she did not want to discuss, and on agreements which she did not want to make? How did that come about?

The Prime Minister: The meeting would have taken place anyway because — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman misses the point. If it had not been called the "intergovernmental conference", the same people as sit on the European Council would have met at the same place at the same time.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Although I welcome the agreement as far as it goes, may I ask my right hon. Friend if she is of the view that protection and promotion of national interests should be synonymous with joining more wholeheartedly with our European member neighbours on monetary and economic policy, particularly on full membership of the European monetary system? Will my right hon. Friend consider whether it is time for us to be in the vanguard rather than the rearguard of such movements?

The Prime Minister: I have said, and it remains our policy, that we shall join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system when we believe that the time is appropriate. We do not believe that it is so at present.

As for being in the lead on monetary matters, as I said earlier, there are many matters on which we are well in the lead, both in the absence of a foreign exchange control and in capital movement. It would be a great benefit to further monetary co-operation if some of the states who are members of the EMS would follow our lead.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): While in Luxembourg, was the Prime Minister informed by the French Government that they would ignore the communality of the so-called complete Common Market by putting a ban two days later on the import of British sheepmeat? Will she tell the sheep farmers of Wales what the Government will do about the ban?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will take up the matter, because we negotiated the agreement on lamb, and it is beneficial to the hon. and learned Gentleman's farmers in Wales and to farmers throughout the country. The hon. and learned Gentleman's comments reflect my earlier point that other countries have an enormous gap between their rhetoric about what they want to do and what they do in practice. The whole time, part of our task has been to diminish their expectations, and to bring them down from the clouds to practical matters.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Since there is no pretence that United Kingdom lamb is banned from being exported to France on health grounds, will my right hon. Friend inform the Commission and the Council of Ministers that she will not place before the House any motion to ratify the Luxembourg agreements until the French comply with the basic elements of the original treaty of Rome in allowing free movement of agricultural produce of that sort?

The Prime Minister: If that action trespasses against the Community's law, it will be a matter for the Commission to take to the European Court.

With regard to the point about not putting matters before the House should Denmark and Italy not lift their reserve, I must point out to my hon. Friend that some of the matters, especially those relating to the internal market, would be helpful to our insurance business and financial services setting up in Europe, because one vote against has stopped many people from establishing themselves in Europe as they can in this country. It would be wrong to hold that up because it would not help the problems to which my hon. Friend correctly refers.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the Prime Minister say in what circumstances in future negotiations she will invoke the Luxembourg compromise?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. One has to wait for the negotiations. As the hon. Member will be aware, we sometimes have to consider the Luxembourg compromise, in particular, with regard to agriculture.

Mr. Michael McNair Wilson (Newbury): In her statement, my right hon. Friend referred to the Community attitude to terrorism. Did the Irish Prime Minister use the Council meeting as an opportunity for him to sign the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, as promised at the time of the Anglo-Irish agreement?

The Prime Minister: The European convention on the suppression of terrorism is not the Community's convention. The Taoiseach and I met and reviewed the position following the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement and confirmed that the agreement would be implemented as planned. I hope that the signing of that convention will take place.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Prime Minister reconsider her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) about the European Assembly's powers? Is she aware that in the communiqué issued yesterday article 149 of the present treaty, which contains five lines, was replaced by a new article of about 35 lines? It refers to the Assembly's increased powers of consultation and recommendation. Does not the inclusion of such a proposal in the treaty constitute a change in that Assembly's powers and require an amendment to the European Assembly Elections Act 1978 passed by this House?

The Prime Minister: Increased consultation with the European Assembly was taking place in any event. It was proposed by us at the Milan Council but without treaty amendment. It has now been put into a treaty amendment, but in that amendment the last word stays with the Council, as was made clear by the President's communiqué.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Was my right hon. Friend able to make progress with our European partners on the pledge contained in the document "Lifting the Burden" on raising the VAT threshold to £50,000? Does she agree that that would remove a serious burden from small firms?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will be aware, our VAT threshold for small firms is considerably higher than those in the Community. We are strongly advocating the retention of our limit. I agree that we should like it higher, although that view is not shared by everyone in this country. At the moment, we insist upon retaining our level, although in its calculations the Community says that it is too high.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): How much did the summit cost? How much will it add to the £4,726 million net that the British taxpayer has had to find in the first 10 years of Britain's membership of the Common Market? Those are the questions that people ask in Bolsover, not all the gobbledegook that we have heard from the Prime Minister. Is it not a rather strange state of affairs that we have a Prime Minister who constantly tells the British nation that there will be no meetings at No. 10 with beer and sandwiches, but at the moment when they decide to have a Common Market summit, with all its banqueting, junketing and claret—even though it is a meeting that the Prime Minister does not think is important—she gets on the first aeroplane?

The Prime Minister: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will convey to his most distinguished constituents of Bolsover the fact that the Government are in favour of having only two European Councils a year instead of three, and that I hope that we shall implement that next year.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I sympathise with my right hon. Friend's efforts to play down this non-event at Luxembourg on the ground, as she put it, that it would have happened anyway. May I remind her that before going to the summit she and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary reiterated time and again that in their view there was no need for any changes in the treaty of Rome? How does she justify the change of policy which, presumably, need not have happened?

The Prime Minister: We could have made most of the changes without amendments to the treaty. We could have done it by agreement among the same people, who would be called a European Council instead of an intergovernment conference. If one belongs to a Community, one has to take into account other people's views, particularly if one wants some of the changes that are being made to enable some of our people to establish themselves in the Community, which they cannot now do. We wanted something from our European partners and they wanted something from us. It seemed a reasonable compromise.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): With reference to the question put earlier by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition about how the treaty modifications affect unemployment, will the Prime Minister tell the House whether the modifications in relation to the environment, the regional fund and technology will affect stricken regions such as Cleveland? Is the Prime Minister aware that Cleveland has the highest unemployment rate in the country? Are the treaty modifications designed to increase and improve the flow of funds to areas such as Cleveland?

The Prime Minister: The treaty modifications are called cohesions. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, there were two funds operating under the treaty which were contained in the treaty. The third fund, the regional fund, had not been a matter for the treaty. We put the regional fund into the treaty and we put into it that the areas which have been subject to industrial decline and change should also rank for payments from that fund and for consideration in any review of the three funds. We have retained the status quo on that matter. Again, it could have been done without the treaty. The amendments on the environment and technology show more precisely the activities which were previously taking place under article 235.

I believe that the changes in the internal market can help a number of people. The general policy to try to have more job creation is set out in the economic report which is being considered by the European Council, and whose general thrust was approved by us.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): My right hon. Friend deserves congratulations on achieving a significant, but in some respects still modest, agreement which takes the Community further forward. Does she agree that after 12 years of membership, following 12 years of negotiating entry, it is high time that the United Kingdom pitched in with much more integration and co-operation with the other member states to create general extra prosperity for all member states? Accepting the House's endorsement of the measure when it is presented to the House in due course —which I am sure will happen—does my right hon. Friend also accept that this is a first step which should be used to continue in the future the process of co-operation and integration, involving the European Parliament at the margin more and more? As a gesture of Christmas monetary confidence, would it not be a good idea to join the European monetary system without delay?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. One does not do such things at Christmas or any other time unless it is in Britain's interest to do so. I believe that it is right to have more consultation and co-operation with the European Assembly, but it is difficult enough to reach decisions with 10, let alone 12, members of the European Economic

Community. If the decision has also to take place in conjunction with the European Assembly, we should never have any. I am sorry, but that is what I believe. Therefore, we have not given more powers to the European Assembly. In general, we have kept the final word with the Council. The European Assembly has extra rights to consultation and to make amendments.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Prime Minister has reported on the limited progress made at the Council, which will involve some alterations to the treaty. Was any progress made on the articles in the treaty which are awaiting fulfilment, specifically article 138 on the uniform electoral system to be used for elections to the Assembly? If not, why not?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir, because I believe that they are neither desirable nor would they be agreed.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): Does the Prime Minister agree that the best way of reinvigorating our economy and that of Europe and thereby creating more jobs is to create companies in Europe capable of holding their own in international competition? Does she agree that the steps that the Government have taken to complete the European market are the best way to provide the kind of home market that is available to competitors based in the United States and Japan?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. At our insistence, an extra clause was added to the article on technology stating that technological co-operation will work to the advantage of job creation only if the producers can see the whole of Europe as a single market similar in size to that of the United States. We believe that that would make more jobs available to the British people.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will allow questions to continue for a further five minutes, but I remind the House that there are other statements to be made.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made some robust and reassuring remarks about the European union. Will she clarify any speculation by stating categorically that during the time of her premiership she will not ask the House to agree to a European act of union?

The Prime Minister: I do not understand what is meant by a European act of union, but I assure my hon. Friend that I would never commend to the House a federation equivalent to a United States of Europe.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that lurking near the top of her statement today and of other statements that she has made is the obvious pressure placed upon her by other Common Market nations for more integration, more interference and more power for the European Assembly? Will she state clearly that her opinion is against any such action?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. We often hear such talk at Councils. On each occasion, the Government's task is to bring the rhetoric back to reality, which is that other countries—with one or two exceptions—tend to take the same view as we do. Indeed they sometimes do not observe the conditions of the treaty as well as we do and they frequently put reserves on particular matters that are in their interest to a greater extent than we do.

The Government are wary of greater integration except on matters such as the internal market which are to our advantage. We are also very anxious to protect British interests where they differ from the rest of the Market—for example, in animal health and farm matters where, because we are an island, we have and shall retain different systems of protection.

With regard to the question of further interference, I firmly hold that any treaty changes must be a matter for each and every sovereign parliament.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Prime Minister has laid great emphasis on the need for a spirit of compromise, particularly with regard to greater integration. Does that mean that the House will hear in future of a possible Anglo-Spanish agreement in line with the Anglo-Irish agreement? If there is such a prospect, what provision will be made for a process to self-determination for the Gibraltarians?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the position of the Gibraltarians is protected in their constitution and will continue to be protected.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend expect the European Parliament to consider the proposals at its meeting next week? [HON. MEMBERS: "Assembly, not Parliament."] The Prime Minister will know that I do not share the obsession of my colleagues with the distinction between Assembly and Parliament. Will there not be a paradox if we do not accept the verdict of the European Parliament to which we seek to give more consultative powers?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that there will be a paradox. The European Assembly is different from our national sovereign Parliament. Any changes to the treaty are a matter for each and every sovereign Parliament to which we as a Government are responsible. I think that it is reasonable to consult the European Assembly. My hon. Friend may have been to the Assembly more often than I, but it is the differences between the European Assembly and a national sovereign Parliament which impress me more than the similarities.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the agreement which has been reached on assessing the effects of Euro regulations and directives on businesses will be very welcome, especially to small firms? How will the proposal be implemented if, for example, a particular directive is seen to be unduly burdensome for small firms?

The Prime Minister: The President of the Commission is setting up a unit within the Commission which will examine every new directive or regulation and assess the costs that would be added to businesses before the directives are implemented. The unit will also look at existing regulations in that light and report to the relevant groups considering them. That is a good move, though I confess that I expressed a certain amount of scepticism about it because when the unit was proposed regulations were being made which were needlessly detailed and would add considerable cost to small businesses and others. The Government have rightly resisted such

[The Prime Minister]

proposals and will continue to resist them. By setting up the unit, the Commission is making an effort. I hope that it will produce the results that we want.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Does my right hon Friend agree that there is so much opposition from Labour Members, particularly from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), to closer monetary and economic co-operation within Europe because such co-operation would be a permanent safeguard against the implementation of full-bloodied Socialist policies in this country?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that there can be any safeguard against that happening except to make sure that it never does.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is it not clear that in foreign policy matters and on all important issues each member state acts according to its own national interests? Is not the pretence and rhetoric of a common policy on foreign affairs dangerous in that it leads to muddle and misunderstanding?

The Prime Minister: The leading article states:

"That being members of the European Community, we shall endeavour jointly to formulate and implement a European foreign policy".

Of course, each member state has its own particular national interests by virtue of history and of economic and geographical differences. If differences exist, we maintain them and act in our own interests, but it is equally in the interests of all member states to act together if we can on certain matters because we are very much stronger by so doing. One of the reasons for coming together in Europe was to be the most powerful market in the world and to have more power in negotiating trading matters with other nations. Sometimes it is in our interests to act separately and sometimes it is very much in our interests to act together.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Following my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), is she aware that many hon. Members think that the threshold for VAT, at £19,500, acts as a deterrent, especially to small businesses? While it is true that some thresholds within the Common Market are lower than ours, does my right hon. Friend agree that the rates in those cases are much lower than 15 per cent.?

The Prime Minister: There are a number of differences between us and the Community on tax matters. That is why we have been so anxious to limit the Community's capacity to make more taxation regulations. I want to maintain our VAT threshold, but the Community is already at us because it thinks that our threshold is too high. It was because of those differences that we insisted at the intergovernmental conference that changes in taxation should come about only by unanimous rule. We do not want to get into more difficulties of the kind involved in the threshold directive.

Business of the House

4.20 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House if he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 DECEMBER—There will be a debate on the Channel fixed link on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Afterwards there will be a debate on a motion to take note of European Community documents relating to hormone growth promoters. Details of the relevant documents will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Gas Bill.

Remaining stages of the European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER—Opposition day—(2nd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Housing Crisis and Urban Deprivation".

Motion relating to the Crown Prosecution Service (Transfer of Staff) Regulations.

There will be a debate on a motion to take note of European Community documents relating to the European regional development fund. Details of the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER—There will be a debate on a motion to approve the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Motion on the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order.

FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 16 DECEMBER—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Remaining stages of the Education (Amendment) Bill.

Motion on the Education Support Grants (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations.

It is expected that the Chairman of Ways and Means will name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that it will be proposed that, subject to the progress of business, the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Friday 20 December until Monday 13 January.

[Debate on Monday 9 December

Relevant Documents

(a) 7948/84	*Draft Directive to amend Directive 81/602 on use of hormones in animals*
(b) Unnumbered	*Amendment to Document No. 7948/84*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 78-xxxv (1983-84) paragraph 1

(b) HC 21-ii (1985-86 paragraph 1

Debate on Wednesday 11 December

Relevant Documents

(c) 9563/84	*Report on European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*
(d) 9506/85	*Tenth Report on ERDF 1984*

(e) 8253/85 — *ERDF: accession of Spain and Portugal*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(c) HC 5-i (1984-85) paragraph 2
(d) HC 21-i (1985-86) paragraph 2
(e) HC 5-xxxi (1984-85) paragraph 4]

Mr. Kinnock: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that at Prime Minister's Question Time the Prime Minister said that the memorandum of understanding on British participation in the strategic defence initiative research was still being negotiated? Will he give an undertaking that before such an agreement is signed we shall have at the very least a statement from the Secretary of State for Defence, but preferably a debate, so that the views of the House can be properly put on such a vital matter?

Secondly, why is Monday's debate on the Channel fixed link to take place on a motion for the Adjournment, and not on an amendable motion, as the latter procedure would have allowed a much clearer declaration of views and presentation of arguments?

As proposed amendments to the EEC treaties will require legislation, will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to provide proper time—I refer not just to the length of time, but to the need to debate these matters at appropriate times of the day—for consideration of any changes?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is mounting concern in all parts of the House and outside about matters relating to the City of London and its role in the British economy? Will the right hon. Gentleman provide time for a full debate on those matters before Christmas and in Government time?

Why have the remaining stages of the Education (Amendment) Bill and the motion on the Education Support Grants (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations been put down together for debate on Monday week? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this is an entirely inappropriate way to go about that business because, although the issues are related, they are separate matters and should come before the House separately? Will he reconsider the timing of that brace of debates?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 14 November I asked for a debate on the wild allegations by the Minister of State, Home Office about hon. Members who were legally helping visitors to secure entry to this country at ports of entry? When related matters were raised yesterday, the Leader of the House suggested that they should be raised on next week's business and that he would treat the matter seriously. When are we to have a debate during which the House can discuss the original allegations and related matters of interest?

Finally, why are details of the licence which will give the privatised British Gas Corporation a 25-year monopoly and establish the price formula and provisions for standing and other charges to be published only one day before the Second Reading debate on Tuesday? That document must surely exist already. Why are the Government afraid to release it this week so that it can receive proper consideration?

Mr. Biffen: I shall take the various points in reverse order.

With regard to the debate on the Gas Bill, I appreciate that the schedule is very tight and that it is inconvenient that the licensing document could not be made available earlier. There is, however, nothing sinister or wayward about the timing of the release of that document so that it can feature in the Second Reading debate.

As for the recent allegations about observance of the immigration rules, I said in the context of the remarks of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that I would look into the matter, as it was alleged, among other things, that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office had made documents available to a newspaper. I understand that he has since written to the hon. Lady making it clear that that was not so. I am sure that she will be pleased to have that information. I have been in contact with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about the desirability of making a statement on the wider issue, and he hopes to be able to do so before the Christmas recess.

On the education matters, there is clearly a difference of view between the right hon. Member and myself. I should have thought that the similarity of the documents probably outweighed the disparate aspects, but if the right hon. Gentleman feels deeply about it perhaps we may look at it again through the usual channels.

As we are moving towards publication of the Bill relating to financial services, the debate on that measure will be an important occasion for the consideration of many of the wider issues concerning the City, as the right hon. Gentleman has requested. I cannot give a guarantee from the Dispatch Box today about the precise timing of that debate, but again that matter can be pursued through the usual channels.

I take the right hon. Gentleman's point about the desirability of allowing proper time for reflection on any proposed changes to European Community treaties.

As for the debate on the Channel fixed link, I believe that to proceed by way of a motion for the Adjournment is legitimate when the Government are still taking part in the consultative process. When the Government have decided what feasible proposals exist, we can consider the matter further.

As for the desirability of a statement or debate before any signature is put to British participation in the strategic defence initiative, we shall, of course, be happy to discuss that through the usual channels.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): In view of the appalling ill-treatment of political prisoners in Poland which led my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to send for the Polish ambassador a few days ago to make a vigorous protest about a situation which, incredibly, seems to have worsened since the summit meeting at which President Reagan properly raised the question of human rights, may I make a plea for a foreign affairs debate before Christmas in which the House can express its strong feelings about such barbarities and the damage that they do to the whole issue of détente?

Mr. Biffen: I shall raise that point with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, and I am sure my right hon. Friend will understand that I have every sympathy with his argument. I am not the possessor of that much Government time between now and Christmas, and my hon. Friend might like to take the opportunities that are provided by the debates that will arise on the Adjournment.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the right hon. Gentleman say when there will be a debate on our prayer opposing the Local Government Reorganisation (Transitional Provisions) Order 1985, about which I wrote to him on 2 December? When will there be a statement on the possible loss of up to 2,000 jobs in the *Daily Mirror* group of newspapers?

Mr. Biffen: I shall be in touch with the hon. Gentleman about the order. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the importance of the second point made by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his reply on the Financial Services Bill? I ask him to give this the utmost priority. Does he agree that it is essential that we have the Bill as quickly as possible so that we can set up effective regulatory bodies, so that any suggestion of misdemeanour within the finance services can be dealt with immediately and thus avoid and obviate unfounded rumours that can do only damage to the City of London?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes his point effectively and supports other hon. Members who have also made that point. I take full account of the importance of having a debate as early as possible, but I cannot guarantee when.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement next week, or at least before the Christmas recess, on whether the Government are prepared to allow a free vote on the Shops Bill? Is he aware of the increasingly strong feeling, not least on his own Benches, that it would be outrageous for such a Bill, if it ever gets through the other place, to be run through this House with a three-line Whip?

Mr. Biffen: I am tolerably modest in ambition, and I have no ambition to take over questions which can properly be answered only by the Patronage Secretary.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): If my right hon. Friend is considering acceding to the request of the Leader of the Opposition for the House to discuss abuse by certain hon. Members with regard to immigration, will he bear in mind the fact that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) yesterday made a complaint against my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office and alleged that he had passed confidential correspondence to the press? Is my right hon. Friend aware that that was quite untrue and that the hon. Lady must have known that because her secretary had been told that morning by the Home Office that the Minister had had nothing to do with it? Will my right hon. Friend consider how the rights, interests and good name of Members can be protected from such accusations, even if the Member concerned is a Minister? There should be an opportunity for a Minister to reject such complaints of improper conduct.

Mr. Biffen: As I have already said, I understand that my hon. and learned Friend has written to the hon. Lady. She is not in the Chamber, and I shall not raise the level of controversy in her absence. The letter was sent in good faith, and I am sure that it will be received in good faith.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Will the Leader of the House consider having a debate, not immediately, but early in the new year, on various aspects of nuclear policy that are now causing concern? I refer to the figures given on the Yorkshire Television programme this week on incidences of cancer and leukaemia that have never been made public, to the Australian Royal Commission, to the fact that there are still discharges from nuclear installations, to the report that the country is short of plutonium for the nuclear weapons programme and also to the impending report of the Sizewell inquiry. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that involves the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy? Will he make the Government's policy clear on a matter that is causing increasing public concern?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman persuasively reminds the House of the great importance of the nuclear topic and that it covers many areas of Government responsibility. I shall consider his remarks, but the right hon. Gentleman is a formidable parliamentarian and I am sure that he will be able to find his own ways of raising the matter in the House.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my right hon. Friend find time to debate the fact that the cost of the proposed joint defence school of music on the coast has now shot up to £10·6 million, and that it would be better to allow the Royal Military School of Music to remain at Kneller Hall in Twickenham, where it produces the finest and most excellent Army bands in the world?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to endorse the voice of Twickenham. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the points that my hon. Friend has so eloquently made. I think he will find that an investigation is being carried out by the Public Accounts Committee, and it may be possible for him to give evidence to that Committee.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Can the right hon. Gentleman yet foresee the date on which the motion for the recess is likely to be moved?

Mr. Biffen: No, but I appreciate that there will be interest in the House that that information be made available as soon as possible.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Can my right hon. Friend say when he will ask the House to renew the ten minutes rule on speeches, as that limit proved to be a great success?

Mr. Biffen: I hope to be able to do so shortly after we return from the recess.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Will the Leader of the House find time after Christmas for a full debate on the future of the British merchant fleet? I am sure the right hon. Gentleman is aware of the decline that we have experienced in recent years both in gross registered tonnage and in the number of vessels. I hope he agrees that it would be in the interests of the country and the House to have a full debate on the market opportunities, and also on the fiscal policies, which are crucial if we are to halt the decline, or possibly encourage a growth, in the number of vessels under the British flag.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman draws the attention of the House to an immensely important part of the national economy. I do not wish to mislead him into thinking that there is likely to be Government time

available shortly after Christmas for such a debate, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to the points that he has made.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): In view of the immense publicity that has been given by the Church of England to the inner cities of what it calls Britain, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate on the inner cities of Scotland so that we may remind the Church of England that Britain is not England? In Scotland we live in the centre of our cities, such as Perth, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. We thrive there and, thanks to the Government, they are prosperous and restored.

Mr. Biffen: I am loth to get into more controversy concerning the established Church, but it seems that the Opposition, who are casting themselves as rather more ecumenical than the Church of England, have exactly the debate that my hon. and learned Friend wants which will enable Scotland to be included.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Yes. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Boyes: I wondered why I was not being called until last.

Does the Leader of the House recall that during recent business questions I informed him that the Supreme Court of Military Appeal was considering the fate of the Turkish Peace Executive? The court met, and adjourned until later this month. I must stress again to the right hon. Gentleman the importance that the Turkish authorities give to the voice of the United Kingdom. The right hon. Gentleman informed me that the Foreign Secretary would hear what I was saying. I have had no contact whatsoever with the Foreign Secretary. May I appeal to the right hon. Gentleman to get the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on this important matter, because the fate of many people who are in prison for doing nothing more than wanting peace in the world is at stake? They have suffered for long enough in lousy conditions in a rotten gaol.

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into the matter and have it referred once again to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I shall draw attention to the point that has been made. I know that, understandably, the hon. Gentleman takes the issue very much to heart, so I suggest that he tries his luck with one of the debates arising on the Consolidated Fund.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). I had not forgotten him; it is merely that I am so used to seeing him on the Front Bench.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As the flavour of the month in a small part of the House, unpalatable to the majority, seems to be proportional representation, would it be possible for the House to debate the subject? As parliamentarian of the year and Leader of the House, will my right hon. Friend give us a lead, and does he agree that, even in the unlikely event of a hung Parliament and a referendum, he, like me, would oppose proportional representation root and branch?

Mr. Biffen: No. I have always assumed that proportional representation will be negotiable in the most fascinating political circumstances. I would never put that card face up so early in the game. For that reason, I have no wish to use Government time to have the matter debated. Now that Opposition time for debate is available below the Gangway, we shall see how much importance those hon. Members attach to it and whether they will bring the matter before the House.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): May I remind the Leader of the House that in the 1983-84 Session the Select Committee on Social Services carried out a major inquiry into child care, and that some of the recommendations that we made were recently reiterated in connection with the tragic case of little Jasmine? For example, we recommended that family courts should be set up. We are still waiting for the Lord Chancellor to present his proposals. We proposed that more black foster parents should be found, and that there should be three years' training for social workers. The Government's reply was received in July 1984, 18 months go. Will the Leader of the House now undertake to give a day to debate the report and the reply at the earliest opportunity — if possible before Christmas and, if not, immediately after the House returns from the Christmas recess?

Mr. Biffen: Clearly the issue is of considerable and topical importance. I shall draw the hon. Lady's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, who will be answering questions next Tuesday. However, it also could be one of the topics that might interest the House in the Adjournment debates following the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Will my right hon. Friend assure me that no agreement has been reached in principle by the Government with the French Government on the nature of a fixed link across the Channel? May I add my encouragement to the suggestion that we should debate the Financial Services Bill as early as possible, preferably before Christmas, to ensure continuing confidence in what is, particularly at this time, a most energetic and encouraging market?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for his point about the Financial Services Bill. There is no doubt that this measure is of great importance in its own right and in trying to establish a better situation in the light of some of the recent developments in the City. On my hon. Friend's first point, I am in no sense qualified to answer a point of policy. It is an issue that should be raised on Monday.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): With regard to Monday's debate on the Channel fixed link, is my right hon. Friend aware that concern is felt in all parts of the House about the usual Channel link fixers, who have arranged for the debate on a motion for the Adjournment, which is unamendable? Is he aware that the so-called consultative process to which he referred is in danger of becoming a farce, because journalists have been told that on 15 or 16 January the winner of the fixed link contract will be announced? If that is so, the decision will have been made with indecent haste and unnecessary secrecy, and without all the facts being presented to the House. Parliament is in danger of being fobbed off.

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept that. It is a caricature of the Government's position. There is nothing extraordinary

[Mr. Biffen]

about great decisions being taken on the basis of motions on the Adjournment. If it was enough to bring down Neville Chamberlain, it is enough for many of the other decisions in the House. We must see how the debate goes on Monday. There is no doubt that it will be an important part in the consultative process of making decisions and judgments on the issue.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): May I remind my right hon. Friend of a question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) about the racial awareness unit courses being conducted by Leicester city council? Is he aware that today, in response to questions by the *Leicester Mercury*, the leader of the Labour group, Councillor Peter Soulsby, said that he would deny the opportunity to all council employees in Leicester to carry on working if they declined or refused——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman asking about business next week, because he must?

Mr. Bruinvels: The point is that many of my constituents who work for the council are feeling threatened, and I am asking my right hon. Friend to find time next week for a debate on an important matter. Citizens of Leicester who work for the city council are being denied the opportunity to work if they refuse to go on a racial awareness unit course, which is a scandal. Should not my right hon. Friend find time for such a debate?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I admire the skill, tenacity and effectiveness with which he brings it before the House and, indeed, before the public in Leicester. I fear that there will not be Government time next week for such a debate, but we are moving into that part of the Session where there are more opportunities than usual for Back-Bench Members. I wish my hon. Friend every success in that direction.

UNESCO

4.46 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Britain played a prominent part in the creation of UNESCO. We continue to support the ideals and objectives contained in its constitution, but the House will be aware of the Government's long-standing doubt about the effectiveness with which UNESCO has been pursuing them. Among our concerns is the degree to which its work has been harmfully politicised; the organisation has been used to attack those very values which it was designed to uphold. Then there has been inefficient management. That has led to programmes which contain vague and meaningless studies, duplication with the work of other agencies, and lack of discrimination in the creation of projects. There have been serious weaknesses in staff management, and excessive expenditure and staffing at the Paris headquaters.

Although we have put forward firm proposals for reform and worked hard, particularly at the recent general conference at Sofia, to secure their adoption, the results, in our judgment, fall well short of what we believe could justify continued British membership. The Government have therefore decided that the notice to leave given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in his letter of 5 December 1984 to the Director-General will not be withdrawn. The United Kingdom will cease to be a member from 31 December 1985.

That decision is in no way aimed at the United Nations system as a whole. But we are determined that our support for the United Nations should be seen as support for effective and efficient organisations. Unfortunately, UNESCO is not such a body.

We shall not be cutting back on international co-operation in the fields now covered by UNESCO. The money saved from our contribution will be used through the aid programme to further educational, scientific and other activities designed to benefit developing countries, particularly in the Commonwealth. In this way there will be more support for education, for the most part to be carried out through the British Council. We have particularly in mind increased allocations for training in this country for students from poor countries in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. In science, we shall certainly continue to support the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the international geological correlation programme, and make other arrangements for assisting international science, including, for example, programmes in soil and water management in arid and semi-arid countries in Africa. We shall give further details to the House in due course.

Because of the importance that we attach to the underlying principles of UNESCO's work, the Government plan to maintain observer status in the organisation. It is sad that an organisation which began with such high hopes and to which this country has contributed so much should have gone so wrong. We have to deal with what the organisation has become. We must

resolutely ensure that the resources saved for the aid programme, as a result of leaving UNESCO, are spent in the most useful way.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): We have just heard a shabby and disgraceful statement. It is a kick in the teeth for the Third world and it is another step on the road to Britain's isolation in the world. Will the Minister confirm that all informed commentators reported that, at the UNESCO conference in Sofia, substantial progress was made towards the reforms demanded by the British Government? The need for reform was the basis of our notice of withdrawal. That notice should be rescinded, not confirmed.

Will the Minister concede that all the countries of the Commonwealth, our EC partners, all the members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Commission for UNESCO, and all but one of the speakers who participated in our debate on UNESCO, urged the British Government to stay within UNESCO? Does he accept that the decision announced today shows that the Government's so-called consultation was a farce, a sham, and a fraud?

Will the Minister confess to the House that yesterday Mr. John Kerr, the political counsellor at our embassy in Washington, informed Mr. Milton Korner of the US State Department of this decision? That was done before the House and even the Cabinet were informed. That proves that the withdrawal is another pathetic capitulation to United States pressure. The Minister claims that the money released will stay with the overseas development budget. We support that, but it is no substitute for the effective, multilateral co-operation of UNESCO.

The Minister's heart is not in this statement as he clearly disagrees with what he is forced to say. I am surprised that he is able to continue in office. I assure the House, the country and, above all, our friends in the Commonwealth, the Community and beyond that after the next election the Labour Government will restore Britain to its rightful place in UNESCO.

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman said that this is a kick in the teeth for the Third world. The details that I gave in my statement about what we will do to support science, education and culture in the Third world shows that that is simply not the case.

The hon. Gentleman claimed that there was substantial progress at Sofia. There was some progress, but not enough in many important areas; and the results of Sofia were disappointing.

Of course, there have been strong expressions of opinion against the decision to leave UNESCO, but equally strong opinion has been in favour of this decision, including the opinion of some distinguished scholars.

What the hon. Gentleman said about information given in Washington is untrue. Throughout the whole of the operation we have never been subjected to pressure from the United States Government to leave UNESCO.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): The indignation generated by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is far beyond what is reasonale and rings false. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the many distinguished academics and others who have been in favour of withdrawal? No one can accuse such people as Ralf Dahrendorf, Lord Blake or Sir Alan Cockerell of being nasty, narrow nationalists.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Select Committee hoped that it would be possible to reform UNESCO from within? We are sorry to hear that the Government do not think that that is possible and are only partly assuaged by the fact that much of the resources previously made available to UNESCO will be devoted under the national banner to the same admirable purposes.

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend is right about the rather spurious, exaggerated indignation shown by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). It is true that a number of distinguished scholars have supported our decision, including, apart from those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw), Lord Annan. I read with care and attention what the Select Committee, which is chaired by my hon. Friend, had to say.

Although I accept that there has been some reform, it is our judgment that the degree of reform achieved is insufficient.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The reasons that the Minister gave today will not be believed outside the ranks of his own party. It is known that the United States wished the British Government to leave UNESCO, and to that extent reinforced the Government's hostility to the international organisation. Britain's decision to withdraw comes at a time when President Reagan, at the recent summit with Mr. Gorbachev, has announced that the United States would enter into educational, scientific and cultural arrangements with the Societ Union with a view to building a more peaceful world. At that moment the Government decide to kick the principle of universality out of their own thinking.

The damage will be done to Britain, and it will be a price that we shall have to pay. We were one of the prime founders of UNESCO and played a notable part in making it meaningful. We are perfectly able to continue to operate within UNESCO if the Government are not hostile to its real purpose, which is to build peace in the minds of men.

Mr. Raison: The right hon. Gentleman has a mania of finding conspiracy wherever he looks. We have been under no pressure from the United States Government to make this decision. They have pursued their policy quite independently of our own. I say firmly to the right hon. Gentleman that, although we have decided that this international organisation is not doing its job effectively, that in no sense means that we are opposed to international organisations or the United Nations.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): As a former senior official at the United Nations, this is a sad occasion for me. It is sad because the Government are absolutely right, not because they are wrong. UNESCO has become a disgrace to international organisations. It has a reputation which is perverted from its original intentions. I look forward to the day when this nation can rejoin a truly United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend speaks with considerable authority, both as a scholar and as a former servant of the United Nations. I suggest that Opposition members listen carefully to what he says. If conditions change radically, we shall be able to think again about the matter in the future.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): This was pre-eminently a Cabinet decision and I am sure that the Minister, to his credit, was almost certainly opposed to it. It would have been more appropriate if the decision had been announced to the House by a member of the Cabinet who believed in this foolish and short-sighted decision.

How can the Government pretend that they wish to advance political co-operation in Europe when they ignore the unanimous advice of our partners on a matter such as this?

Mr. Raison: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has an extremely important meeting in Madrid this afternoon and therefore cannot be here. I am the Minister who has had responsibility for dealing with UNESCO throughout the past two years and it is right that I should be making the statement.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I accept and welcome my right hon. Friend's assurance that the money saved will be spent in other parts of the aid budget. However, is it not a fact that the decision will be bitterly regretted throughout the Commonwealth? Is it not in real danger of being misunderstood as the turning of Britain's back on the developing world?

Mr. Raison: I respect the views of my right hon. and learned Friend, but I put it to him that the measures that I have announced on which we shall spend the money that will be saved by leaving UNESCO will be of direct practical value to and will be welcomed by the Commonwealth. I accept that opposition has been expressed by Commonwealth countries, but it is notable that they did not raise the matter at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau, when they had every chance to do so.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House exactly how much practical good will come as a consequence of this decision? Does he realise that the lack of the British subscription will cut some of the most valuable work that UNESCO undertakes, that many of the abuses to which he objects will continue regardless and that we shall lose all the influence over the future of UNESCO which we have been able to exert over the past year? It cannot be true that the sort of work that UNESCO has done can be undertaken by the British Council, however good that organisation may be.

Mr. Raison: Much of the work that UNESCO is doing is not worth doing, whereas all the things that we intend to do with the money that will be saved will be thoroughly worth while.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his announcement will be received with deep sadness and will be greeted by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends with a certain degree of bitterness? We shall leave our friends in UNESCO to argue our case and continue the battle that my right hon. Friend began so well and pursued with such vigilance. The case that the British nation wishes to be argued embraces the philosophies, language and cultural traditions which we enjoy and have been able to spread throughout the world through the auspices of UNESCO. We shall leave our friends alone and they will bitterly regret our absence. I ask my right hon. Friend to accept that it cannot be in Britain's interests to reduce our influence in such an important international organisation.

Mr. Raison: I understand that my hon. Friend feels strongly about these matters. However, we worked extremely hard, as I think is recognised on both sides of the House, to secure reform within UNESCO, right up to the conference at Sofia. When it came to the crunch, the degree of reform that we were able to achieve in certain very important areas was, in our judgment, not enough. That is why we have made this decision.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Does the Minister understand that many Members on both sides of the House consider this to be a dark day for Britain and the Third world, and that the Government's decision will do nothing to further education interests? Will he tell us what areas of dissatisfaction he believes were not satisfied by the reforms over the past year? Will he confirm that the British Council has not requested that money should be transferred to it and that it believes that the money would be much better spent through UNESCO?

Mr. Raison: The British Council has expressed no formal views on this issue. Our dissatisfaction covers a number of grounds, but three of the most important are the failure to achieve the progress that we believe to be essential on the so-called major programme 13, the failure to achieve an effective switch of resources from the more useless activities to the more useful, and the fact that no one can possibly say that the deep-seated management problems which afflict the organisation have been resolved.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Since when have the views of academics invariably been synonymous with common sense? This decision is surely a victory for common sense. As one of the contentious issues has been UNESCO's push for a new world information order, will my right hon. Friend consider diverting some of the funds that would otherwise have gone to UNESCO to the coffers of the BBC's overseas service?

Mr. Raison: The views of academics are as varied on this issue as are the views of many others. It is our intention that the money saved by withdrawing from UNESCO should pass through the aid programme to fulfil functions in the realm of education, science and culture that can properly be funded by that programme. I cannot give my hon. Friend an assurance that the money will go to the BBC's overseas service.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Which countries in Europe and in the Commonwealth support Britain in the disgraceful decision that has been announced this afternoon?

Mr. Raison: Singapore has announced that it is leaving as well.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I believe that the Government have made a regrettable decision which can be blamed in part on the past neglect of UNESCO by successive Governments. Does my right hon. Friend think that this decision will make it easier or more difficult for the reform party in UNESCO to bring about the dismissal of Mr. M'Bow when his time comes up in a couple of years?

Mr. Raison: It is impossible to make a firm judgment on what the impact will be in that direction.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is ironic that a

Government who introduced full-cost fees for overseas students and who have been cutting students' grants should use the UNESCO peg on which to hang their policies? Does he further accept also that the Council for Education in the Commonwealth has registered its formal opposition to the decision? Is this not another example of Britain turning in on itself and a sign of national creeping xenophobia? Is it not a bad day when an organisation such as the Heritage Foundation can have so much influence on the House and on the American Government, too?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman should try to forget the influence of the Heritage Foundation, which has been grossly exaggerated in this matter. The announcement that I have made this afternoon offers the clear prospect of additional help to Commonwealth students, especially from poor countries, who come to Britain to receive the advantages of our extremely good education system.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if Opposition Members genuinely want to improve educational, scientific and cultural assistance to the Third world, they should be congratulating him on his brave decision today? The Third world will receive far better value for money in those areas by our direct assistance than our funding of Mr. M'Bow and his bloated bureaucracy in UNESCO.

Mr. Raison: I believe that my hon. Friend makes a good point. Many of UNESCO's activities are not cost effective, whereas the scholarships and technical co-operation that we provide are highly cost effective and well regarded. I am sure that they will be used to good effect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): How many students from overseas will be able to come to Britain in 1986 as a result of this decision? How far will it go to restoring the number of overseas students that the Government have cut since 1979? What consideration has been given to the British educational book trade? The moneys that are spent on education in other countries may go to English-speaking countries other than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Raison: I cannot say exactly how many students will come to Britain through the new programmes or measures that we are taking. I shall keep the House informed.

It is not possible to give a definite answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about books. It is not possible to say that the books that are produced by British publishers and sold to UNESCO will cease to be sold to the organisation in future. That remains to be seen.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend accept that I am absolutely delighted that more Commonwealth students from foreign countries will be given help to come here? It is crucial to our future relations with the Commonwealth both industrially and culturally. Will he, as soon as possible, give us a little additional information as to how those students will be selected?

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. I assure her and the House that I will try as soon as possible to give details of the ways in which we will implement our policy.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): There will be very deep resentment by many of the religious bodies throughout the country at the announcement that has been made today by the Minister. Is it not a fact that the very first UNESCO meeting took place in this city at the behest of our Government, and that it costs us a very small amount of money, possibly about £5 million a year, to be a member? Can we justify and pretend to ourselves that we are going to kid the Third world that the decision made today will really help the needs of those people?

Mr. Raison: I hope and believe — perhaps hope rather than believe — that the religious bodies will think very carefully about whether we can use this money more effectively for the kind of purposes that they support through the British aid programme rather than through UNESCO with all its inefficiencies.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): First, I assure my right hon. Friend that I support this sad but inevitable decision of the Government.

Are there not two lessons to be learnt? First, any international organisation, however noble its aspirations, can very easily be wrecked on the reefs of Left-wing extremism. Secondly, our constituents, although they may have the most profound sympathy for the Third world, resent it very much when institutions of this kind, largely supported by Western money, are employed by their representatives to launch a continuous, damaging and unscrupulous attack on the values of the West which keeps the whole show on the road.

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no doubt that one of the problems has been the way in which through the years UNESCO has been used to launch the kind of attacks that my hon. Friend has described. Those attacks come not only, as it were, formally at the public meetings and conferences of UNESCO, but very often through the documentation that is prepared under the auspices of UNESCO.

As to his comment about Left-wing extremism wrecking organisations, the Opposition have very good reason to know that that applies not only to international bodies, but to domestic bodies.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Since it is known that the Minister has argued privately against the decision, does he not feel humiliated by having to tell us of this shameful decision, which clearly has been taken — as everybody knows — at the behest of the United States? Does he not realise that if this is a victory, it is a victory for all the bigots, all those who are against the United Nations and its associated bodies, and that we, as a country, should indeed be hurt and shamed by what he has announced today?

Mr. Raison: I defy the hon. Gentleman to produce any evidence whatsoever that this decision is in response to pressure from the United States.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): In his capacity as chairman of the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO, will my right hon. Friend accept that I and most of the other members of the United Kingdom National Commission will be very sorry at this decision, but that we will stay in the arena of debate and will seek to work for the restoration of Britain to full status in UNESCO?

Mr. Raison: I recognise that my hon. Friend is a member of the National Commission. I did, of course, attend the long discussion that took place in the National Commission the other day, and I listened carefully to what

[Mr. Raison]

it had to say. The part that its members may play in future discussions about these matters in their own private lives is, of course, essentially for them.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Minister agree that, whatever the views of any individual or Government, there is one thing in common — that reforms in UNESCO are urgently necessary? In view of that fact, do not Her Majesty's Government's actions constitute an abdication of international responsibility which will be seen as such by people inside the Commonwealth and by nations and foreign offices throughout the world? In that respect, will not Britain's influence be diminished? Is he aware that the Prime Minister said earlier today that this decision was in Britain's interests? Will he tell us what interests will be gained by this decision?

Mr. Raison: We have worked throughout for reform in UNESCO. I think that that is recognised on all sides. However, the fact of the matter is that a year ago we gave notice of our intention to depart unless we could honestly see that a sufficient degree of reform had been achieved by the end of the year. It is our judgment that that degree of reform has not been achieved, and that is why we are fulfilling the notice that we gave a year ago.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): I support this afternoon's statement, but will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that in no circumstances will the additional resources going to the British Council be seen as a substitute in the future for giving money to the British Council per se?

Mr. Raison: I am confident that I can give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will my right hon. Friend say how much is being saved by this action? Will he confirm that all that money will be spent on Third world countries? Can he also tell the House what action he will be taking to strengthen the British Council?

Mr. Raison: Our estimate of what our subscription would have been next year is £6·4 million. As I have said, that money will be devoted to programmes connected with the purposes of the aid programme.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he will have retained the admiration which is felt for him on both sides of the House by the way in which he has handled the very painful decision he has had to announce today? Is he further aware that it is never a good idea to walk out, as the Social Democrats have discovered, because one consigns oneself to oblivion and weakens the strength of the reformers who are left? Does he recall the French saying that those who are not there are always wrong?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind personal words, but I remind him that in fact there have been instances of reform in the past which have followed from the departure of a country. I am thinking of the ILO.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that only about 30 per cent. of UNESCO's staff are out in the field and that the other 70 per cent., or about 2,500 people, are in the headquarters in Paris where the director-general, Mr. M'Bow, has surrounded himself with little Yes-men who share his prejudices and whom he has jumped up over the heads of experienced senior staff whose morale has declined catastrophically? Has not the rot gone too far so that the only answer now is major surgery?

Mr. Raison: In fact, the figure for those who work in Paris is higher than that given by my hon. Friend. I believe that 75 per cent. of the staff are working in Paris. There is absolutely no doubt that many things are wrong with the management of the organisation. We have sought to reform them. Some progress has been made, but not enough, and that is why we are leaving.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, contrary to claims that UNESCO has reformed itself, Radio Prague and other bastions of liberty have in recent weeks openly boasted that UNESCO has remained true to its "Socialist principles"? In particular, the new world information order, which surely is as abhorrent to Western ideals of democracy as UNESCO spending 70 per cent. of its budget in Paris, is abhorrent to our belief that aid should be directed at peoples of the Third world, not at the bureaucrats in the capital cities of the world.

Mr. Raison: I am not aware of the point that my hon. Friend has made about Radio Prague, but it is certainly very telling.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Will my right hon. Friend say what consideration, if any, was given by the Cabinet to the expression of opinion by the House, and what the result was of that consideration? How will this country influence developments in UNESCO after 31 December this year? Why is it that no other European country has announced its intention to withdraw from UNESCO? Finally, will he set out the precise requirements precedent to this country rejoining UNESCO, so that at least UNESCO and the rest of the world will know what has to be fulfilled and so that we can once more participate fully in international affairs?

Mr. Raison: The Government in their consideration of this matter thought carefully about what was said in the debate in the House the other day. I have said that other European countries are not going down the path that we are taking, but this is a matter on which each country has to make its own decision, and we have come to the one which we believe to be right.

With regard to stating this afternoon the conditions precedent which we would have to seek if we were to contemplate rejoining the organisation, I think that it would not be appropriate at this stage to set them out.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As a non-academic, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this decision and ask him to note that the heart-on-sleeve doctrine of Labour Members is that it is better to spend money on international bureaucracies — provided that they are of the Left — than on human beings in need. Would it not be reasonable, if we were ever to rejoin this wretched organisation, to require it to live in the Third world, not in the middle of Paris?

Mr. Raison: My hon. and learned Friend makes a forceful point. One of the problems with UNESCO is that

it is over-concentrated in Paris. That has been pointed out for some time, and not enough has been done to reverse it.

BILLS PRESENTED

Building Societies

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by Mr. Ian Stewart, Mr. John Patten and Mr. Michael Howard, presented a Bill to make fresh provision with respect to building societies and further provision with respect to conveyancing services: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 December and to be printed. [Bill 19.]

Public Order

Mr. Secretary Hurd, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Solicitor-General and Mr. Giles Shaw, presented a Bill to abolish the common law offences of riot, rout, unlawful assembly and affray and certain statutory offences relating to public order, to create new offences relating to public order, to control public processions and assemblies, to control the stirring up of racial hatred, to provide for the exclusion of certain offenders from sporting events, to amend section 7 of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875, section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, Part V of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 and the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, to repeal certain obsolete or unnecessary enactments, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 December and to be printed. [Bill 40.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put the Questions on the three motions together.

Ordered,

That the Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

The the draft Employment Protection (Variation of Limits) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Limits of Basic and Special Awards) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which arises from what you said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). Will you give further consideration to the problems arising from private Bills, particularly with regard to the fact that for most of the last century and early this century there was no alternative procedure for someone to promote a measure such as the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill other than by means of a private Bill in this House? Since 1949, there have been planning procedures and the opportunity to hold a planning inquiry.

It is most unfortunate that hon. Members are now required to sit for long periods in private Bill Committees listening to what is, in effect, a planning inquiry. It causes considerable difficulties for hon. Members and is not satisfactory to the general public, in that hon. Members cannot be expected to give the same detailed attention to the procedure as is given by a planning inquiry inspector sitting with assessors.

In the past, it was the usual custom for such Committees to meet at the convenience of hon. Members, but the practice which seems to have developed of late is that the Committee meets at the convenience of the promoters of the Bill and the objectors to the Bill. I understand that in the case of the Felixstowe Docks and Railway Bill the promoters and objectors were consulted as to the days on which it would be convenient for them to sit. I understand also that the managing director of the Felixstowe dock insisted that the Committee should meet this week so that he could go to Japan either today or tomorrow.

If hon. Members are to be reported to the House for non-attendance at such Committee sittings, they should be consulted as to the sitting days. The four hon. Members asked to serve on the Bill should have been consulted, especially as two of them had questions on the Order Paper. They should not have been reported for not attending the Committee when they were not consulted about sitting days or times and had no opportunity to make representations on the matter.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will give careful consideration to the point, because I think you indicated that there is no sanction on hon. Members if they do not attend a Committee other than to be reported to the House. I understand that if hon. Members wished to do so they could absent themselves from the Committee, thus destroying the quorum and making the proceedings unworkable. I hope that you will look carefully at all these matters, and either refer them to the Procedure Committee or perhaps make a statement to the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may well be correct in what he says, but it is a matter for the Procedure Committee. As he well knows, I am bound by the Standing Orders and I have to enforce them. Private Bill Committees sit in a semi-judicial capacity. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to have the Standing Order changed, he should take the matter to the Procedure Committee.

The Standing Order lays down that hon. Members who are absent from a private Bill Committee are reported to the House. That is the only penalty. The hon. Gentleman might like to take up the other matter elsewhere.

Orders of the Day

Education (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

5.25 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Isle of Ely): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I reported to you that the terms of the Bill are so far removed from the Act which it seeks to amend that it cannot in practice or in equity be called an amending Bill. Perhaps you would consider that point. The Bill bears no resemblance to the concept of education support grants which were introduced so that curriculum training could be brought in. The original Act is being distorted to tackle the problem of lunchtime supervision.

Mr. Speaker: I do not have responsibility for the drafting of Bills. This is a Government Bill, and the purposes of it are set out in the Bill. It is a matter for debate in the Chamber. If the hon. Gentleman does not like the Bill, he has his remedy.

5.26 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Two years ago I introduced to the House a Bill to empower the holder of my office and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to pay specific grants, known as education support grants, to local education authorities. That Bill became the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984, and gave my right hon. Friend and me power to promote expenditure for or in connection with educational purposes which it appeared to me or to my right hon. Friend that local education authorities should be encouraged to incur in the interests of education in England and Wales.

The regulations made with the approval of this House —the Education Support Grants Regulations 1984 and their amendments—prescribe a variety of purposes for which education support grant may be paid. All local education authorities have responded positively to invitations to put forward proposals for approval for grant support. Their bids have greatly exceeded the resources available. In the 1985-86 financial year, about £30 million of expenditure has been approved for support in England and £2 million in Wales. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales sitting by my side. We expect later this month to announce approvals for a programme of £40 million in England and £2·6 million in Wales for 1986-87.

The 1984 Act included, in section 2(1), a provision that the total of expenditure approved for education support grant in any one year should not exceed one half of 1 per cent. of the amount determined by the holder of my office as representing, in his opinion, the appropriate amount of expenditure for local education authorities to incur in the year in question for educational purposes. We thought it right at that time to impose such a limit.

Some local authorities were anxious about the amount of expenditure which the Government might expect to re-deploy to the specific purposes prescribed for education support grant. We wished to reassure them that the amount would be small, and deliberately arranged that the limit could be increased only through primary legislation.

Clause 1 raises the limit in section 2(1) of the 1984 Act to 1 per cent. This will allow an additional £52 million of expenditure to be approved next year in England and £3 million in Wales. We have a specific purpose in seeking that increase, namely, securing the supervision of pupils in schools at midday.

As I informed the House on 8 November, the Government intend to make available additional resources to assist local education authorities to achieve their long-standing aim of securing reliable and adequate supervision of pupils at midday in the interests of the orderly and efficient conduct of schools. In 1985-86 there is sufficient headroom within the existing limit to pay grant on this new activity. However, for later years we need the headroom which will be created by the amendment in clause 1.

Clause 2 excludes remuneration paid to teachers exclusively for midday supervision from the remuneration which is the subject of the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965. The principal effect of the clause is to make it quite clear that remuneration for midday supervision is not to be subject to review by the Burnham committee or determination by the holder of my office.

The increase in the limit on expenditure for education support grant purposes from 0·5 per cent. to 1 per cent. of the planned total will permit my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and me to use the additional headroom for any purpose prescribed in regulations. However, we recognise the continuing concern of many in the House and in local government about the balance between the power of Ministers to pay specific grant for purposes of national importance and the discretion of local authorities to meet local needs as they believe best.

My right hon. Friend and I intend, pending the outcome of the review of local government finance, to keep expenditure approved for education support grant in respect of activities other than midday supervision within the original limit of one half of 1 per cent. We intend to increase relevant expenditure for local authorities by £40 million next year in England and Wales to provide for midday supervision. This is "new" money, over and above our existing plans for education for that year. The Government will also add £28 million to aggregate Exchequer grant for 1986-87 to cover the 70 per cent. of that expenditure which they propose to reimburse through education support grants. I say "aggregate Exchequer grant" advisedly: I fear that the memorandum to the Bill makes a technical error in referring to this sum as added "to the aggregate amount of Rate Support Grants."
Thus 70 per cent. of the cost of new arrangements will be met by the taxpayer and 30 per cent. by the ratepayer. We will also increase relevant expenditure by £10 million and aggregate Exchequer grant by £7 million in 1985-86 to cover the cost of new arrangements for midday supervision where these can be introduced within this financial year.

The additional money will come from the £1,250 million envelope which the Government have said they are willing to make available if a satisfactory agreement can be reached on teachers' duties and on a new salary structure. I made it clear in August when I announced the Government's conditional offer of more resources for a new salary structure that part of those resources might be used to pay for midday supervision.

Teachers have long clamoured to have midday supervision removed from their duties. This duty was never popular with teachers. In 1967, a working party was set up to consider, and make recommendations on, the

position of teachers in relation to all aspects of the school meals service. Its recommendations for change were accepted by the then Secretary of State and by the local authority associations and teachers' unions, which were represented on the working party.

The 1945 regulations were amended in 1968 to remove the provision which authorised LEAs to require teachers to supervise pupils taking school meals. Since 1968 teachers have undertaken midday supervision in schools, but have insisted that they did so voluntarily and were free at any time to withdraw their services. That withdrawal of goodwill, as they called it, has come to be used as a weapon of disruption available at almost no cost to the teachers, but which can cause disruption to education in schools. It has been the source of sporadic difficulties for many years, but the current dispute over teachers' pay has led to escalation to the point where few secondary schools are unaffected. The work of schools has been seriously disturbed.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): I would not normally intervene, but this is an important point. The Secretary of State has explained the circumstances that arose in 1968. He has made it clear that, in law, teachers have no necessity—the right hon. Gentleman called it duty—to undertake supervision. He cannot say that it is a withdrawal of goodwill, because they are not required to undertake that supervision. The hon. Gentleman should say that the teachers have shown goodwill since 1968 by undertaking to carry out these duties.

Sir Keith Joseph: The regulations were amended by the then Government. However, it is not for the hon. Gentleman or for the holder of my office to pronounce on what a court would find was implied by the contract between a local education authority and a teacher. That matter is for a court to decide if an employer wishes to test the case. I simply state that the regulations were amended in 1968.

Our principal and overriding aim in offering additional resources through education support grant is to ensure that pupils are effectively supervised at midday. We expect that these resources will be used to employ supervisors charged with that responsibility, under the overall authority of the head teacher or his deputy. These supervisors will be employed under separate contracts relating exclusively to midday supervision, under which no payment will be made if the contract is not honoured. These arrangements will not rely on the voluntary participation of teachers.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): A teacher in my constituency came to me and made the point that teachers are not only responsible for teaching in class, but have other responsibilities as well. In his view, it is important that teachers are there during the lunch period, because that is part of the school, and their presence forms part of the impact that teachers can make on pupils. Why does my right hon. Friend not require teachers to be there at lunchtime? Many teachers have relatively short days and very long holidays. Why can they not take responsibility for lunchtime supervision as well?

Sir Keith Joseph: I respect the view of my hon. Friend's constituent. It will be for teachers to choose to do so if the local education authority wishes to offer them the opportunity to become paid supervisors of the midday period.

We do not intend to prescribe the details of new arrangements beyond what I have said. Individual authorities are best placed to determine matters such as staffing numbers and rates of pay in the light of their local needs and circumstances. The local education authorities have considered these matters, and a few of them have introduced, or are about to introduce, arrangements along the lines that we envisage. Moreover, authorities already employ many assistants to share in the task of midday supervision.

New arrangements will bring clarity to a long-confused situation for teachers. It will be for LEAs to decide whether teachers should be given the opportunity to participate, and up to teachers to decide whether to accept that opportunity by entering into a separate contract for midday supervision in addition to a normal teaching contract. At all events, those teachers who feel that they need a break to come fresh to their classes in the afternoon will not be pressed to participate in supervision. Teaching is often stressful, and I am sure that many teachers will be pleased to be relieved of that burden.

In conclusion, I believe that it is in the interests of all concerned with education in our schools—teachers and parents, but most especially pupils — to secure more effective arrangements for supervision at midday. The Bill will enable education support grants to be used to that end, and I commend it to the House.

5.38 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): We oppose the Bill for three reasons. As I made clear on Second Reading of the Education (Grants and Awards) Bill 1984, we are not against the principle of specific grants, but we are against the way in which the education support grants are being funded. We are opposed to the Secretary of State removing money that the local authorities previously spent as they thought fit in the light of local circumstances and to the Secretary of State using that money for the purposes that he thinks fit.

The Secretary of State said that for 1986-87 the Government will be adding £28 million to the rate support grant to support the payment of supervision of pupils at midday. However, the right hon. Gentleman must accept that the LEAs will have to provide £12 million out of their resources. To receive a 70 per cent. grant, they must provide 30 per cent. from their money. In addition, because the Bill increases the amount of educational support from 0·5 per cent. of the total education grant to 1 per cent., the local education authorities will lose control over a further £12 million of what would otherwise have been their money.

As the Secretary of State reminded us, he said on 8 November in answer to a written question that he did not intend to use the extra 0·5 per cent. for anything other than midday supervision, but that was pending the outcome of the present review of local government finance. There is no guarantee that the payment for midday supervision will continue to be covered, for the most part, by additional rate support money. Knowing the Government, it is highly likely that it will have to come from the resources of local education authorities.

As the Secretary of State knows, local education authorities are financially hard pressed. The right hon. Gentleman said in a press release that the autumn statement will allow local authorities an extra 5 per cent. in cash over the sum allocated to the service in 1985-86.

[Mr. Giles Radice]

That is one way of putting it, but it is misleading. We should consider what LEAs are spending in 1985-86. The Government are planning to reduce expenditure from the £11,000 million which the LEAs are spending in the current year to £10,935 million. They are planning a cash cut of £65 million which, allowing for inflation, is a real cut of 4·5 per cent.

The Secretary of State should provide local education authorities with additional resources to do something about the alarming deficiencies in educational provision, the shortages of books and equipment, the mismatch of teaching skills, and the inadequate repair and maintenance of so many schools, about which the Government's advisers—Her Majesty's inspectors—have so frequently warned. In previous years, when I made similar criticisms, the Secretary of State has made much play with the so-called unallocated margin available to LEAs to spend on education. But there is no unallocated margin for 1986-87; at least, one has not been announced. The truth—it is fully recognised by parents—is that the Secretary of State is doing little or nothing to tackle the growing crisis of provision in our classrooms. Against that background, and the tightening of educational resources, we condemn the Government's failure to provide new money to cover all education support grants.

The second main reason for our opposition to the Bill is its timing. Of course, there is a strong case for a fully staffed ancillary service for lunchtime supervision. The Secretary of State was right to say that teachers' unions have called for this in the past. We recognise that many head teachers have been under great pressure during the teachers' dispute, because in many schools they must cope almost singlehandedly with supervising duties. We also recognise that some LEAs are anxious to introduce schemes to pay for separate midday supervisors under separate contracts. But the fact that the Secretary of State is rushing through a Bill during the dispute, and without consulting teachers, is bound to be considered provocative. Teachers are also likely to resent the fact that the £40 million approved expenditure will come from the new money which the Secretary of State said was available, under certain conditions, for teachers' pay.

Our third reason for opposing the Bill is that we reject the Government's priorities. There is a glaring contrast between the Secretary of State's eagerness to rush through Parliament the Bill to pay for lunchtime supervision and his complete inactivity in solving the teachers' dispute. Since the right hon. Gentleman's initiative in early August, when he revealed at last the sum of money—it was inadequate—behind his structure package, he has confined himself to wringing his hands.

The Government have recently made strenuous efforts to improve their presentation. In October, we had the Prime Minister's extraordinary one-day conference at Downing street, to which she invited, among others, the controversial Ray Honeyford and those educational reactionaries, Baroness Cox and Dr. John Marks. In November, there was a widely leaked meeting of senior Ministers, including Lord Whitelaw and the chairman of the Tory party, to discuss tactics. According to newspaper reports, they decided to sit it out, hoping that parents would turn against the teachers and forget about the Government's inactivity.

Thirdly, there was the appointment of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) as Minister of State, Department of Education and Science. I congratulate him on that appointment. However, I must say that his duties are somewhat ill-defined. It seems to many observers that the hon. Gentleman has been appointed as a glorified public relations consultant to the Secretary of State. He has been hired to put a more attractive gloss on the Government's education policies, especially in relation to the teachers' dispute.

We all know that the Secretary of State could do with a facelift, but I must tell the Minister and the Secretary of State that no amount of fancy presentation can make up for lack of policy and action. The teachers' dispute has lasted for more than 10 months——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Thanks to the National Union of Teachers.

Mr. Radice: —and parents and teachers alike are crying out for the Government to take action that will result in a just solution. I very much hope that the meeting of the teachers——

Mr. Marlow: Is this in order?

Mr. Radice: I am in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am discussing the reasons why we shall oppose the Bill, and I am explaining——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The Chair will decide when an hon. Member is out of order. The hon. Gentleman should not take note of comments made from a sedentary position.

Mr. Radice: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your extremely wise advice. I shall remember that in future.

I very much hope that the meeting of the teachers' panel today will lead to the reopening of negotiations with employers——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Tell the teachers that.

Mr. Radice: I do not know whether the hon. Lady has been following the dispute. I suspect that she has not.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Lady has been following this dispute with the greatest possible care because she is extremely interested in education, but she regrets very much that the monopoly power of the NUT has prevented the other unions from getting a word in edgeways and discussing the package put forward by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Lady is not entirely up to date with events. The NUT has lost its overall majority on the teachers' panel, and I understand that at today's meeting there was a decision to reopen negotiations——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Precisely because of that.

Mr. Radice: —not on the structure package, but on the previous informal offer by the employers. I must tell the hon. Lady and the House that, even if there is a settlement before Christmas, as I hope, no one can seriously believe that such an agreement can be more than an interim solution. The main teachers' unions have already drawn up plans—or are in the process of doing so—for a new claim for next year which the LEAs will be unable to satisfy from their resources.

The dispute could continue to disrupt our schools during next year. It is because I view that prospect with

such dismay — I hope that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) does, too — that I make no apology for urging the Government yet again to set up an inquiry into teachers' pay. The Government and the Secretary of State have continually ducked or avoided my requests for such an inquiry. They may be doing that because they wish to keep the option open. If that is the case, why not set up the inquiry now instead of waiting until our education system crumbles? Perhaps the Secretary of State finds it embarrassing to appear to give way to an Opposition demand. I promise that if he sets up an inquiry I shall stop asking for it.

The Bill is not only ill-timed; it does nothing to tackle the desperate shortage of money and crisis of provision in our schools. Above all, it will do nothing to bring an end to the teachers' dispute, which should be the Secretary of State's top priority. For those reasons, we shall oppose the Bill.

5.50 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I recognise that the Bill is undoubtedly overshadowed by the teachers' dispute, but the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) seemed to have to wallow considerably in that dispute in order to make any kind of reason for the Opposition's intention to vote against the Bill. When one examines the Bill, it is rather difficult to justify that.

The Bill touches upon the dispute; there can be no argument about that. The fact that the problem of lunchtime supervision is being addressed in this way says a lot about the ineffectiveness of the usual machinery for resolving what might be thought to be a fairly routine matter. It also seems to say even more about the nature of the teachers' contract that such an ingredient should be missing from it. The Bill is obviously tied up with the teachers' dispute to some extent, but it reinforces my view that the Government are right to insist that pay and conditions of service must be brought together. Simply because that combination has not yet been achieved does not mean that there is something so unique about the teaching profession that it is an unattainable combination.

Any professional person used to negotiation can find a way of bringing those matters together in a sensible manner. Therefore, if there is continuing reluctance on the teachers' part to admit of that possibility, it may have something to do with the fact that they recognise that their rule book may be being bought out.

There may be a lesson for teachers in the Bill. I should have thought that today demonstrated to them that the Government are prepared to buy and are prepared to put good money on the table — money which is new to teachers. Forget whether it is new money in the sense of the total education budget; this is new money that is being offered to teachers. At the same time, the Government are prepared not only to tackle that matter but, in so doing, to deal with an issue which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, has been a bone of contention with the teaching profession for a long time.

Teachers should note that and recognise for a change that there is some goodwill on the part of the Government. They seem so utterly disbelieving of the fact that the Government are capable of any genuine or generous act towards them and that is extremely worrying. Many in the profession will recognise that much of the work to which my right hon. Friend has set his hand is educationally valuable. But when it comes to teachers' remuneration and conditions of service, they seem unable to see any good whatever in what the Government say. It is about time that they began to recognise that there is some goodwill and they should be negotiating in that spirit.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that pay and conditions of service are vital and much under discussion and that the problem of pay brings us to the centre of the argument? Should not there now be an inquiry into pay provided that it is linked with conditions of service? If the two can come together, will he join me in urging our right hon. Friend towards such an inquiry?

Mr. Haselhurst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall answer that in a slightly different way from the manner in which he has raised it.

I am disturbed that teachers are not even prepared to negotiate despite the willingness on the part of the Government to put money on the table, and the Bill represents a part of the money which the Government are prepared to put on the table.

I do not speak with the responsibility which my right hon. Friend and his colleagues have to carry, so I can advert to other ways in which the dispute may go. I would be inclined to say that if teachers would for one moment suspend their disbelief and look at the possibilities of what is being offered, it might well be that through negotiations about new money directed towards certain purposes an outcome could be reached which might be more generous in 1985 terms than they previously believed.

I would not say right from the start of negotiations that there could be any concessions on the main elements which the Government are seeking. There should not be. It would not be realistic for extra money to be put up front from 1985 simply in order to get that dispute out of the way. We would not have advanced the cause of the teachers' profession in any way by such an exercise.

We must get matters right in the long term. If teachers went into negotiations with the Government, they might, as the price of the final settlement, find a package which was agreeable to them now as well as in the medium and long term. Therefore, I can only say to them that they should not exclude any possible results of a negotiation when there is such evidence of the Government's willingness to negotiate with a sizeable sum of money available for all to see.

If there is a lesson for the teachers in the Bill, the Government might also derive a lesson from what they themselves are doing. Here we have an instrument of primary legislation being used to tackle an aspect of a complex dispute. My right hon. Friend might begin to see that there might be merits in that method of proceeding in connection with other aspects of the dispute. It might be that, if appraisal were to be pursued by legislation, the costs associated with a system of appraisal might also be tackled by primary legislation.

Other aspects in the dispute could be tackled by primary legislation, if that is the only way that the Government can impact upon what is proving to be a most intractable problem. That may be a lesson for the Government or for the teachers.

Legislation might be time-consuming, but it can do what the Government want it to do with the approval of the House. Teachers might conclude that it was better for

[Mr. Haselhurst]

everyone's sake, not least their own, if they got on with the negotiations and there would then be less need for us to consider recourse to legislation.

As I have said, it is hard to see what, in terms of the sheer mechanics of the Bill, the Opposition can be arguing about. There is a problem and it is a problem of lunchtime supervision, and there is a means through education support grants to deal with that problem. I can see nothing wrong in using the ESG system in that way. We are still talking of a maximum ceiling of 1 per cent. of educational expenditure.

The question arises whether the Government are right to tackle the problem separate from a dispute of which it forms part. I can say only that if the Opposition seek to divide the House it must be an illustration that they are fully behind the teachers in the dispute. If they were just concerned with dealing with this problem, they could not possibly object to the measure. Quite apart from the urgent need to overcome the problems flowing from unsupervised lunch periods, the measure is to be welcomed if its effect is to remove one of the obstacles on the road towards a settlement of the pay dispute. If only the teachers recognised that that is the Government's approach—an attempt to remove the obstacles—perhaps they would join hands with the negotiators and the Government to ensure that the other obstacles were removed as well.

6 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Unlike the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), I can see very good reasons for opposing the Bill. I believe that it is an abuse of education support grant funding. The Bill is depressingly irrelevant and illogical, and its title is a deception in that the measure bears no resemblance to the concept of education support grants.

The Select Committee report on which the notion of such support grants is supposed to be based stated that there were two possible justifications for the amount of centralisation involved. I remind the Secretary of State that the Select Committee never envisaged that the money would be found by withdrawing funds from the local education authorities but thought that this would be new money to give the Secretary of State the power that he needed to invoke innovation.

The Committee's first suggestion was legitimate pump priming, which it described as:

"Such experimental or innovative schemes which it"—

that is, the Department of Education and Science—

"considers of potential national importance".

I would argue that lunchtime supervision is not covered by that.

The second justification was the removal of some elements of educational expenditure from the block grant, justifiable where short-term exigencies have resulted in what the Committee described as

"A dangerously inequitable distribution of activity in an area which has important medium and long term implications".

I remember well that the Committee had in mind the disparity in the provision of teacher training from one area to another; it was certainly not lunchtime supervision.

The DES consultative document issued in March 1983 which launched the Government's proposals for these grants stated that the powers involved were:

"To assist LEAs to innovate and respond swiftly to new demands on the education service, to promote qualitative changes and improvements in standards of provision in areas of particular importance and to encourage them to redeploy their expenditure".

That does not include lunchtime supervision.

During the Second Reading of the Education (Grants and Awards) Bill the Secretary of State summed up the purposes of the Bill as

"assisting in the financing of pilot projects within a limited number of authorities, the results of which could be of potential benefit to all authorities".—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 630.]

The clear implication was—this is borne out by the kind of projects since funded and about which so many of us have asked questions that have been properly answered—that ESGs were to fund curriculum developments. I seriously question whether lunchtime supervision can be discussed in the same terms.

It seems to me that the problem of the midday break has, at least as the Minister understands it, about as much to do with curriculum developments as with parking parents' cars in the school car park. Both functions are probably necessary, but I do not believe that they qualify under ESG.

The situation is made worse by increasing the proportion of LEA money reclaimed for use at the Secretary of State's own discretion, especially as the actual proportion of the budget—excluding teachers' pay—over which the LEA has control is only about 30 per cent. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, most of that money is already committed.

The Secretary of State is thus asking for control over a larger piece of the education cake to be used for an entirely different purpose than was intended by the Act that he is seeking to amend. As well as having very little to do with curriculum development, this Bill has nothing to do with what actually goes on in schools at lunchtime. It deals with supervision in isolation from the other activities that take place, or do not take place, when there is no dispute. We are at risk in finding schools in which the teachers will be on strike when it comes to teaching, but will be available and working when it comes to lunchtime supervision.

For the past few years, the Government's expenditure plans have picked out school meals as the area of the largest target saving. Those plans have been proved to be unrealistic, largely as a result of the increase in poverty among families with school age children. The school meals service is being systematically undermined.

The Black report was unequivocal about the importance of school meals to the poorest children, as was the NACNE report about the role of diet in health. There are also questions about food allergies and children's behaviour. For example, there seems to be a relationship between some additives and hyperactivity, and those additives are found in precisely the foods that children will choose if unguided. However, no element in lunchtime supervision will be educative.

Now we have the Fowler report that threatens the entitlement of children of poorly paid families to a full school meal by giving the school meal element of family credit to the working parents. We could redeem the irrelevance of this Bill by doing something about health education, and that would count as curriculum development. However, the Bill does not make clear the sort of supervision that the Government want to see.

The DES working party to which reference has already been made was clear that variety would be essential. It

says that there were certainly schools where provision would have to be more generous than the norm, for instance,

"because of special problems arising from the school buildings or school organisation, or in a secondary school where there is an unusually low proportion of older children".

What sort of ratios are the Government thinking about, and what role do they envisage for head teachers? What does the Secretary of State feel about the need for national agreement such as the head teachers have called for? In choosing the mechanism of ESG, presumably he has rejected this. It would be interesting to know.

Does the right hon. Gentleman envisage supervision by teachers or non-teachers? If predominantly the latter, is he satisfied that lunchtimes can legitimately be taken out of the context of the school day as a whole and that non-teachers will be able to command the authority of children as do the teachers? The head teachers do not believe that that will be so.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish) *rose——*

Mr. Freud: I shall not give way, because I am trying to finish within my allotted time.

If this Bill is the first recognition that pay and conditions must go together, or if at the very least it is intended as a slightly clearer definition of teachers' duties —as the alliance has been arguing since the start of the dispute — why not tackle that issue rather than play around by amending an Act and changing its substance in a way that is hard to understand? This measure does not tackle the issue of low pay among teachers. Will the payment of lunchtime duties be used as an excuse to keep basic rates of pay down, along the lines of, "If you want more money you have only to supervise school lunches"? If that is so, we are falling into the trap of merit money to which the alliance is so opposed.

This is the Secretary of State taking direct action because LEAs have not managed an agreement on his terms and by his deadline, when in fact his interventions are the main cause of that failure.

The biggest criticism of the Bill is that it does not make sense. The Secretary of State is in an untenable position. On the one hand, he tells us that he will pay for lunchtime supervision for this financial year from the money that is still spare from existing ESG, but that prompts one to ask what he would have done had this not occurred. On the other hand, he is telling us that for the next financial year lunchtime supervision will be paid out of the £1·25 billion that he has made available.

To start with, it looks as if those two facts are explained by the different years to which the two sums apply, but that is not the case. The Secretary of State is indulging in double counting, because he is also increasing the ESG for the next financial year—the same year that is to be paid for from the extra money. Lunchtime money is either new and comes out of the £1·25 billion, or it is not and comes from LEA money via the ESG precept. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman is actually taking LEA money to pay for lunchtimes but he is telling us—and I refer to his written answer of 8 November — that payment for lunchtimes is coming from his new money.

We have an amending Bill that destroys the concept of the original Act. It is irrelevant to the main issue of low pay in the education service. It has been drawn up without consulting the teachers, and the heads have said that the Government have seriously underestimated the sums needed, and it does not make any sense. For these reasons, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will oppose the Bill.

6.10 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I am disappointed but not surprised that both Opposition speakers could not find a single word of welcome for a measure that teachers have wanted for years. I welcome the Bill and believe that it takes from teachers a burden which they have grumbled about for years. Dinner duties have been as unwanted as they have been unpaid. For the first time, teachers will be able to have a lunch break away from school and pupils, and, like many other employees, they will be able to move away from their place of work and have a reasonable break. Those who wish to supervise — and I hope many will choose to do so — will henceforth be remunerated.

I strike a gentle note of caution, however. At a meeting of the National Association of Head Teachers yesterday concern was expressed about the mechanics of the payments that will be made to teachers for supervising dinner duties. It would seem that this requires some clarification. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will mention that in his summing-up. It is important that we ensure considerable teacher participation in these duties.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has obtained £10 million for midday supervision for the balance of the year and £40 million for next, and his action should be applauded. I am disappointed that Opposition Members could find no word of commendation for an action that has been wanted for a long time. The funding comes from the £1·25 billion that is on offer to teachers. If nothing else, this measure proves the tangible existence of that money, a point that appears to be doubted by some members of the profession.

Parents will welcome the Bill. Children will not be sent home at midday because of inadequate or insufficient supervision and that will remove a major source of worry from parents, particularly now that winter is with us. Parents will be assured that children will not be locked out of schools during inclement weather. That has to be a substantial benefit. What is more, children will not be getting into mischief at lunchtimes. A further aspect that will commend itself to many hon. Members is that working mothers will not have to take time off from work and lose earnings to ensure that they will be available to look after their children should they be sent home from school.

When enacted, the Bill will enable local authorities to recruit staff, and that includes teachers. If local authorities do not and schools close, parents will know where the responsibility for that action lies. They will know exactly who to blame should that happen. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has ensured an important safeguard for children, and one that will certainly be appreciated by their parents.

If the dispute has to continue, the Bill will help to ensure that it does not bear so heavily on the children, particularly young children. It should be welcomed for that reason, if for no other, by both sides of the House. I have the utmost respect for the majority of teachers. I am aware that theirs is not the easiest of jobs. Teaching teenagers in some schools must be difficult, and in some cases it must be purgatory.

Mr. Greenway: Come off it.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend will have an opportunity to say his piece. Many teachers do a most worthwhile job, but it is not always the easiest of jobs. When he reflects on that, I am sure that my hon. Friend will not quarrel with it.

I am familiar with teachers' work. I was educated within the state system, as were my children, and I visit schools regularly, as I am sure do the majority of hon. Members. I am aware that a teacher's job is much more than long holidays and free periods. I am aware of the additional work that is done at home at nights and in teachers' free time. I also recognise the voluntary work they do in school societies. That knowledge adds to my welcome to the Bill. It enhances the professional part of a teacher's work and removes from teachers a disagreeable chore.

The Bill should be seen as an outrider to the best package ever offered to the teaching profession. That £1·25 billion is the largest sum ever obtained from the Treasury for the nation's teachers. It is £1·25 billion spread over four years and for teachers' pay, not buildings or books. It is on top of the increments that teachers may quite properly expect over those four years. It improves promotion prospects and helps to reduce the problems caused by falling rolls. I find it surprising that this measure is not more widely welcomed by Opposition Members and by members of the profession. Some uninformed comments about the Bill, which gives teachers what they have desired for years, seem to suggest that it is a cross between a Trojan horse and a poisoned chalice. It is neither; it is nothing of the sort.

For years teachers' unions have been concerned that their members have been asked to do voluntary duties supervising school dinners. The cry has been, "Either pay us or remove the duties." The unions have complained that this unpaid work was unconnected with a teacher's job. In short, it was unpopular, unwanted and unpaid. One would have thought that my right hon. Friend's decision to make available £10 million in this year and £40 million in the next four years would have been welcomed with paeans of praise, but, sadly, no such luck. The unions now appear to be complaining that the Bill knocks the knives and forks from their hands. They accuse my right hon. Friend of foul play because he is giving them what they have asked for for years. This Bill is a clear commitment to a hard-working profession.

6.17 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I start by declaring an interest as a consultant to the National Union of Teachers. Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), I am sure that many teachers in his constituency, and no doubt many others who read his words, will be pleased by the praise that he has heaped on the heads of teachers and on their dedication to their work. It was clear from what he said about visiting many schools that he enjoys close contact with the teaching profession in the state system, which is not true of all Conservative Members.

Given that the hon. Gentleman feels that way, he must be puzzled by the anger throughout the teaching profession about the Secretary of State and his behaviour towards it. He must ask himself, because he has such obvious respect for members of the profession, why there is such enormous anger. A month or two ago I went to a well-attended march through the centre of London. It was full of dedicated teachers who felt deeply angry about the Secretary of State's actions.

It is not our job this evening to discuss the dispute. However, the Bill comes before the House with the background of the dispute behind it. There has been no consultation with the trade unions. One would have thought that it would be normal for the Government to consult trade unions on a matter of this kind. — *[Interruption.]* Consultation with the employers was also important but, because of the current dispute, consultation with the unions about the Bill was very important.

I agree with the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth that dinner duties are very unpopular. They were very unpopular with me. It is extremely hard work. I knew that the quality of the lessons that I had to teach in the afternoon suffered because of the nervous energy that went into the supervision of not just midday school meals but the playground, too. The fact that there was no respite meant that one's performance as a teacher was not as good as it should have been.

In addition to causing nervous strain and being very tiring for a full-time teacher, midday supervision needs great skill. People need to be well qualified to carry out that duty. One of the National Union of Teachers' complaints about the sum of money that is to be made available for this purpose is that it is inadequate. Local education authorities will be unable to recruit and employ people who are competent to do this difficult job. I speak from first hand experience. The importance of this job should not be underestimated. If the Secretary of State genuinely wants to answer the demand of teachers that this job should be done by those who have no teaching responsibilities, it is important that it should be funded properly.

The action that the Secretary of State is taking is highly provocative. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) made it clear that the Secretary of State could have spent this money upon many other things. The dispute is not just about pay or the treatment of individual teachers. The profession is genuinely concerned about the way in which the state education system is being treated by the Government. I do not need to go through the factors that are causing concern. Buildings and school books are just two examples of the way in which the education service is being starved of money.

We know why the Secretary of State is introducing this Bill as his top priority. He sees it as a weapon in the dispute, without answering the demands of teachers or recognising that the profession is dedicated to the needs of those whom it is its job to serve. When one hears the speeches of Conservative Members, one gets the impression that they feel that teachers must have a new contract of service because they are not doing enough. However, since I was a member of the teaching profession, teachers have voluntarily taken on more and more duties. That is the sign not of a profession that is trying to get rid of responsibilities but of a profession that is anxious to take them on.

The answer to the problem is not legislation of this kind, which is designed to weaken the hand of teachers in the current dispute. The answer to the settlement of the dispute lies with the Secretary of State. I receive many letters from parents in my constituency who demand that the Secretary of State should accept his responsibilities. They recognise that the Secretary of State must resolve this

dispute. The blame does not lie with the teachers, as is so often suggested by Conservative Members. That is the reason why the union is opposed to the Bill, why I shall be voting against it, and why I fully support the opposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North to the Bill.

6.24 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): All right hon. and hon. Members respect the professional experience of the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett). I, too, was a teacher for many years. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the afternoon performance of teachers suffers if they have to perform lunchtime duties. However, if children are not properly supervised at lunchtime, they are less receptive to education in the afternoon. It is a difficult question of swings and roundabouts. If I had to choose, on balance I would always prefer supervision, even if I had to carry it out myself.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) was speaking, I chiacked slightly when, as somebody who is not a member of the profession, he referred to teaching. He said that it must sometimes be purgatory to teach teenagers. Although it is very difficult to teach teenagers, I would ask my hon. Friend to think again about that.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Greenway: May I just make my point? It is a difficult, challenging and demanding job, but to the dedicated teacher it is never purgatory.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Greenway: Yes, but I have only two minutes.

Mr. Pawsey: All I want to say is that my hon. Friend has never sought to teach my sons.

Mr. Greenway: No. I am interested to hear that my hon. Friend, who is not a qualified teacher, may have found it difficult.

Mr. Pawsey: I have six sons.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend may have found it difficult because he is not a qualified teacher. The £50 million that has been set aside for a full year needs to be re-examined. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State when he replies to the debate to reassure the House that this sum will be enough. Lunchtime supervision covers not only school meals, but the running of clubs and libraries. Playground supervision is enormously demanding. Supervision of that kind must also be provided and paid for.

Supervision is also needed in the area around schools. One cannot expect secondary schoolchildren to stay on the premises throughout the lunch break. When they leave school premises, difficult children might enter blocks of flats or other buildings and cause trouble. Consequently, suitable supervisors need to be in the area around schools so that they can deal with trouble if it should arise and get the children back on to the school premises. I wonder, therefore, whether £50 million will be sufficient. I wonder, too, whether this matter has been thought through in the way that I have described.

A substantial element of supervision by teachers at lunchtime is essential. Supervision of the kind that I have described can be managed if there is a strong teacher element, or if it is managed entirely by teachers but it cannot be managed without any teacher help at all, even though head teachers and their deputies would, I know, do a noble job. Teacher supervision is required, because they alone have the expertise to handle children. They alone can provide the educational opportunities that ought to be available at lunch time in any school. Very few people who are not teachers would be able to provide the expertise and educational opportunities that ought to be available in a good school at lunch time.

In my school, 1,500 school meals were provided each day. This meant that at any one time there would be 500 or 600 children in the dining hall, either queueing for lunch or eating lunch. If suddenly a crisis or quarrel erupted, it required enormous expertise to sort it out and prevent its escalation. It will be difficult for people who are not well qualified to provide that necessary expertise. There is a complete mix of children of all levels of intelligence, from all sorts of social backgrounds and ethnic minorities, as well as from the indigenous community. They should be relaxed, but if there is trouble, as there certainly will be, notably on rainy and windy days, it takes some handling. I hope that the supervision will be adequate.

School dinners are good for children. It is a good time for extra education in social mores and extra learning in clubs and other areas. Often it is the only square meal a child has in a day, which should also be remembered. I disagree with some Opposition Members, notably the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), who said that school meals were under serious attack. They have never been better. As children have much more choice, there is much less waste. In the past I have seen buckets and lorry loads of good food taken from schools where it was thrown at children who did not want it.

The teachers' dispute undoubtedly influences the position. The teaching profession is the greatest profession of all, and it is what counts. To settle the dispute we may need to press hard for an inquiry, and the time has come to do so. The inquiry must not be into pay alone, because it will not settle the question for ever. It is essential to link conditions with pay. I hope that we shall have an inquiry before long and settle this miserable dispute.

6.32 pm

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): It is unfortunate that we had three Government statements today which took up a large part of the time for debating this important measure, so I intend to be brief. I shall omit my words of support for the financial statistics which my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) presented lucidly and forthrightly. They are the main factors in the debate.

The first two Government Back-Bench Members to speak missed the point, but I am glad that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who has much more practical experience, came to the nub of the matter, and I hope that the Minister will take note of what he said.

The Bill demonstrates yet again the Government's crazy sense of priorities in dealing with education problems The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) dealt with that matter. The best that can be said about the Bill is that it is feeble and inadequate, and the worst is that it lacks understanding, and is malicious and, above all, provocative. For anyone who

[Mr. Jack Dormand]

has any interest in the importance of education it is inconceivable that these proposals should be introduced now, during the teachers' dispute.

Teachers have long pressed for a fully staffed ancillary service for lunchtime supervision. In 1968 the school meals agreement between the Government, local authorities and the teachers' unions recommended minimum levels of supervisory staff. In 1967 during the dispute about school meals supervision I was the education officer for Easington where the dispute was centred. I still have vivid memories of it. One is that the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) cross-examined me in the High Court. Although it was a hotly contested dispute which ended in a legal decision, I never had any doubt that a fully staffed ancillary service must be the objective.

Since then progress has been undermined by the Government, not least by today's measure. The goodwill and co-operation of teachers is continually demonstrated in many ways. It is proper, therefore, to recall that, despite the court's decision 17 years ago, a large number of teachers voluntarily supervised pupils at lunchtime. That is why I intervened when the Secretary of State kindly gave way while introducing the Bill. That is a measure of teachers' concern. It must never be forgotten that supervision is voluntary, and the withdrawal by teachers of that work during the present dispute is perfectly proper and, what is more, perfectly understandable.

Some innocents on the Conservative Benches — we have not heard any of them today—and, I was about to say, devious characters, but I shall absolve them of that accusation, will say, and have said, "Why are the teachers grumbling? We are proposing to provide the ancillary staff for which they are asking." The answer is that the £40 million allocated is completely inadequate for funding a fully staffed service. That was the burden of the argument of the hon. Member from Ealing, North. It shows that the Government are not taking the matter sufficiently seriously. Moreover — some of my hon. Friends may disagree with me on this—it will be no easy task to find staff of the right calibre. They will have to possess the right kind of personality, be sympathetic to and knowledgeable about children, and, above all——

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Trained.

Mr. Dormand: I shall come to that point in a moment — have an authority which will make lunchtime the orderly, civilised and pleasant occasion that it should be. Such people are few and far between, as I know from the difficulties that I had in recruiting them many years ago.

To recruit such people will require adequate financing and training. If we do not face that fact, we shall not meet the desired objectives. Anything short of that will be self-defeating. It is essential that the scheme should include the training of supervisory personnel, which will also require money. It is obvious to everyone except the Government that, if lunchtime supervision by ancillary staff is to succeed, it must meet two criteria. First, there must be sufficient money for it, and, secondly, it must be separate from any moneys identified as being available for teachers' salaries. The proposals in the Bill do not meet those criteria. That is another sign of the Government's hasty and ill-considered attitude towards an important part of the education of our children.

When historians come to write the story of present-day Tory Governments, two words will be used more than any others — confrontation and provocation. We have a perfect example of those two attitudes in the Bill. The £10 million for this financial year and the £40 million for the next financial year are to be clawed back from the new money that the Secretary of State has made available for teachers' salaries between 1986 and 1990.

I have to tell the Secretary of State, as if he did not already know, that to take £50 million for the payment of meals supervisors will increase not just the anger but the determination of the teachers in the present dispute. Such provocation will do nothing to resolve the present salary dispute; it will exacerbate it. Not just teachers, but parents will see through the Government's transparently sham gesture.

I am one of those people who believe that few things in this life are of more importance than education. From my many years' experience, I know that, however good the facilities, the equipment and the buildings, the ultimate success rests with the teachers. The Government have consistently failed to recognise that, and they are compounding that with the Bill. If they insist on carrying it through, they will increase the antagonism of the teaching profession, it will create a distrust which will take years to eradicate and, perhaps more importantly, leave a mark on thousands of children in our schools. For the Government to indulge in what I can only describe as the sleight of hand shown in the Bill is not just a disgrace; it is a demonstration once again of the low priority that they place on education. I urge the Government to think again.

6.41 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I shall concentrate on two points because many of the other issues that I wished to mention have been discussed by my hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) made a substantial point when he talked about an inquiry into the teachers' pay dispute. I am sure that that would receive a great deal of sympathy from my hon. Friends.

I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) that the Bill shows where the Government's priorities lie. The National Confederation of Parent-Teachers Associations has just presented to us a damaging report on education in terms of classroom relationships and the fabric of education. If the Government have money to spend, it should be spent on dealing with some of the problems to which the report drew so much attention.

At best, the timing of the Bill is inept. The Government have not gone in for the necessary consultation with the teachers and the employers. My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) said that when the Government's history comes to be written, terms such as "confrontation" and "provocation" will be used. One word that will never be used about the Government is "consultation".

The Government have introduced a measure that does not seem to give much thought to dealing with many of the detailed problems related to the midday supervision. It might be useful if the Government were to listen to the hon. Member for Ealing, North on this occasion. He talked about many of those problems. Who will train the supervisors? What will the relationship be between them

and the teachers? What will be the nature of the disciplinary relationship? None of those questions has been answered by the Secretary of State.

At worst, the Bill's timing is provocative because the Secretary of State is saying that this measure will weaken the bargaining position of the teachers' unions. That is the Bill's purpose. The parents have the right to ask the Secretary of State one simple question: what are the Government doing to protect our children's education? I speak as a parent who has suffered because his children cannot enjoy a regular education. I want to know what the Government will do to ensure that my children and many others will receive a regular education.

I shall remind the Secretary of State of the position in the city that we both have the pleasure to represent in the House of Commons. In Leeds, 21,000 pupil half-day sessions have been lost between September and mid-November. Not one child or school has not suffered from the dispute. What is the Secretary of State doing about that? The Bill will not resolve the problems. It will exacerbate them and make the difficulties that much greater.

On many occasions, the Secretary of State has claimed that he is the friend of parents and children. His action in introducing the Bill points to the opposite conclusion. The Government are not worried about parents or children. They merely want to use them as pawns in the teachers' dispute and in a confrontation with the teachers' unions. For those reasons, I shall vote against the Bill.

6.45 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am pleased to be taking part in the debate, but I am a little sad that I had to cancel a meeting with Tameside teachers to be here. They made it clear that they were happy to rearrange that meeting on the basis that I would strongly express their views to the Government. They feel bitter because the Government have done nothing to solve the dispute in the nine months that it has continued. The Secretary of State has made any resolution of the dispute more difficult by making frequent provocative statements.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), I welcome the Minister of State to his new position. I hope that his appointment is not just cosmetic and a facelift, but that he will introduce a new policy and a new way of solving the dispute. If he manages that, I hope that he has the same success as the Secretary of State for the Environment who went in to bolster up the image of a Department and soon took it over.

Will the Minister explain why the Government are seeking to amend the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984 to bring in this proposal? It is muddling the legislation, and it is a parliamentary device to avoid scrutiny. The Government want Second Reading today. I gather that they want the Committee stage of the Bill to be taken on the Floor of the House. They want to rush the Bill through late at night in the week before Christmas.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman cannot call this late.

Mr. Bennett: Not now, but the hon. Gentleman should wait for Committee and Report.

It is unfortunate, because there are important issues to consider. We must consider how head teachers and their deputies will organise supervision at lunchtime. I hope that the Minister will tell us what will happen about choir practices, preparing children for the Duke of Edinburgh's award, and all the other things that take place at lunchtime. Do they come down to teaching or supervision? The tragedy of the past nine months has not been that a little more custard has been spilt on the floor in the dining rooms or one or two more spoons have been twisted by the pupils; it is all the other lunchtime activities, which I regard not as supervision but as an essential part of education.

The activities that I have mentioned have disappeared. What will be the relationship between the sums of money provided for in the Bill and those activities? Will there be national pay rates and conditions of service for lunchtime supervision, or are the Government trying to pick off areas of high unemployment where people are desperate for jobs in the hope that those people will take the work at extremely low rates of pay?

What will happen in those areas where over recent years the lunchtime has been reduced? It has become almost a lunchtime gobble. The food is eaten, but little else happens. Many schools would be better with a much longer lunchtime. Will the legislation make it possible to bring back many of the things that went on during the lunchtime? When will the Minister stand up for education and obtain a little more public expenditure for it? Since 1979, as a proportion of GDP, spending on education has decreased each year. If we were spending now on education the same as we were in 1979 as a proportion of GDP, we should be spending about £2·2 billion extra. Such money would go a long way not just towards solving the dispute, but towards helping many other education issues.

I ask the Government to consider carefully how they should try to solve this dispute. Digging their heels in and insisting that they will not move from their position will not solve the problem.

This measure is an insult to teachers. The Government have totally destroyed the morale of teachers, and they now have a major task to rebuild that morale. The first thing they must do is to find a means of settling the dispute with honour and to the satisfaction of teachers. Until the Government do that, the Opposition will vote against miserable little measures like this Bill.

6.51 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Chris Patten): I shall on this occasion be mercifully brief. I remind the House that the main aim of this small but valuable Bill is to secure adequate and reliable supervision at midday in our schools and so safeguard the education of pupils. The Government hope, through the Bill and associated proposals, to bring an end to the disruption at midday that has plagued our schools in recent months.

In taking this action the Government are responding to an argument which has been put by teachers increasingly, forcefully—except perhaps in recent days—for the best part of the past 40 years. I am therefore surprised that the Bill should be seen as being vindictive, and all the other words associated with "vindictive" in "Roget's Thesaurus".

I am also surprised that the Bill should be seen as an attack on allegedly helpless teachers. I do not deny that we are seeking to remove from the teachers a weapon which they have deliberately used during the dispute at virtually no cost to themselves. They have been able to use this weapon only because it is something which they now do

[Mr. Chris Patten]

voluntarily. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) made an important point, and the Government are responding to that and placing the teachers' right to a break at midday beyond debate.

The hon. Members for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) and for Easington (Mr. Dormand) said that the Government's action was provocative. They did not mix their metaphors to the extent that my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) did when he called the proposal a cross between a Trojan horse and a poisoned chalice. I was delighted with my hon. Friend's metaphor. Opposition Members have said that the teachers wish to continue doing the work voluntarily, so that they can stop doing it whenever they wish. That is an extraordinary proposition, and there is not much principle or professionalism about that. The Government cannot accept that argument, nor could any local education authority employer.

It is not sensible to suggest, as the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) did, that the supervision can be carried out only by teachers. More than 80,000 people who are not teachers are already employed to assist in supervising children and many adults are responsible for the safety and welfare of children in other situations.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East claimed that the money in the proposals was not new money. I can put his mind at rest and say that it is new money, as it is additional to our existing plans for educational spending. As from next year it will be new money, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the education support grant. I am afraid that, unusually, he was slightly selective in his quotation. One of the purposes of ESG when it was introduced was to help

"LEAs to respond swiftly to new demands on the education service".— [*Official Report*, 14 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 630.]

That is what the Secretary of State said on the Second Reading of the Education (Grants and Awards) Bill. The need to substitute for the help which teachers are no longer willing to give is a new demand to which local education authorities need to make a swift response.

I should like to echo the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth and commend the very hard work and sterling efforts of many head teachers over recent months which have helped to keep many schools open. I realise the strain that they have suffered and acknowledge that they have behaved with great commitment. The new arrangements should provide head teachers with sufficient assistance at midday to discharge this responsibility without undue fuss. In future they will have staff whose contractual duty is to supervise at midday. This should greatly ease their position, but they will naturally retain overall responsibility for the running of the school.

The head teachers have been offered the opportunity to comment on the draft of the circular that is in the Library. The Government intend to send that circular to all education authorities outlining the arrangements if the legislation is passed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) wondered whether £40 million would be sufficient in the circumstances. Even if one compares that sum with what is spent at present, or with the proposals put forward following the Rossetti committee, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, the figure of £40 million seems adequate. The additions were arrived at after careful consideration of the number of extra supervisors who might be required in schools of different sizes and the likely range of costs implied. The £10 million to be made available for the remainder of this year and the £40 million for 1986-87 will suffice to allow adequate new arrangements to be introduced.

In response to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I confirm that the arrangements will be worked out by local education authorities. If the Government had decided to introduce a national scheme, the hon. Gentleman would doubtless have criticised us for centralising the education service. The Government are proceeding in a very sensible way.

The main thrust of the argument from the Opposition, as recounted by the hon. Member for Durham, North, is that the Bill is the Government's only response to the distressing dispute which has done and is doing so much damage to the education service. That argument is a travesty of the truth. For over a year the Government have been pressing for a new deal for teachers based on higher pay in return for a definition of teachers' duties and a new salary structure. Negotiations have consistently been blocked by the leadership of one union, which talks grimly of keeping the disruption going until the next election. So much for professionalism.

Last August the Government put £1·25 billion on the table to facilitate a new deal. If that is inflexibility, all I can say is that that is the sort of inflexibility which most other professional groups and public sector pay workers would be very happy to endure.

The Government's offer to the unions in September, which unlocked the £1·25 billion of new additional money, was rightly described by one of the local authority employers—not a Conservative employer—as the most radical and imaginative ever for teachers. It was a deal which would have given teachers two increases this year and an average end-of-year increase of 8 per cent. That deal would have given two out of three teachers a very substantial amount of extra money indeed on top of their normal pay awards.

Even allowing for the margin of linguistic excess to which Oppositions are committed by ancient tradition—one could call that the Kaufman factor—to describe the offer made last August, in view of the way the National Union of Teachers has behaved, and the whole history of the dispute, as examples of a hardhearted Government acting inflexibly, is ludicrously intemperate and ludicrously wide of the mark.

We want to see the teachers get back to negotiation. We want to see an early end to this bitter, damaging and totally unnecessary dispute, on terms which are fair and honourable all round and on terms which will last and which will ensure that we do not go through all this again. I wish I were convinced that that was the view of the leadership of the National Union of Teachers. In the meantime, until we get such a settlement, we are acting in the Bill to remove a long-standing grievance. The Bill, therefore, like the Government's behaviour throughout the dispute, deserves the support of the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 87.

Division No. 18] **[7 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Francis Maude

NOES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Committee tomorrow.

EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL [MONEY]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise any increase in payments out of money provided by Parliament resulting from substituting '1 per cent.' for '0·5 per cent.' in section 2(1) of the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

7.12 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I beg to move,

That the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order 1985, dated 24th October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is required by section 66 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to issue codes of practice governing the exercise by the police of their powers of stop and search, the search of premises and the seizure of property, and the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of persons by the police. Section 67 requires him to lay these orders before Parliament for its approval, and to bring them into operation by statutory instrument.

The codes before the House tonight have gone through a long period of gestation and consultation. The first drafts of some of them appeared as long ago as 1982, and they have been subject to substantial discussion and amendment, first during the passage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which fell with the election of June 1983, and then during that of its successor, which entered the statute book a year ago.

The official "consultative" text of the four codes was published in January this year, since when we have received comments from a wide range of groups and organisations, including those representing the police service, the legal profession, civil liberties interests, and particular community groups. We have sought to take careful account of those views in preparing a final draft of the codes, which were laid before Parliament on 23 October. Inevitably comments from different groups were occasionally in conflict with one another, but our objective has been to reconcile those different approaches as far as possible. The approach that we have adopted has been that of the Act itself—to present a balanced package which gives the police the powers that they need in dealing with crime, but which also provides workable and effective safeguards for the citizen who comes into contact with the police.

It is the Government's intention to bring the remaining provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act into force on 1 January 1986. They deal with police powers and procedures and with rules of criminal evidence. If Parliament approves the codes of practice, they too will come into effect on 1 January. We are coming to the end of the long process of reforming the law on police powers, which began with the establishment of the Royal Commission on criminal procedure in 1978, and there can be no doubt about the importance of what has been achieved. Taken together, the Act and the codes represent a major change in a vital area of national life—the way in which our society is policed.

It might help to remind the House that it was concerns at the inadequacy of police powers, combined with concerns at the inadequacy of controls over police powers, which led to the establishment of the Royal Commission. One of the major events triggering public disquiet at police methods of questioning suspects was of course the Confait case. In 1975 three young men who had earlier been convicted of grave offences, including murder, manslaughter and arson, had their convictions quashed by the

Court of Appeal because it formed the view that the police investigation had not been conducted satisfactorily and that the suspects' confessions were unreliable.

Sir Henry Fisher's inquiry into the case pointed to a number of weaknesses in the way in which the police had kept records of their investigation and had interviewed and obtained confessions from the suspects. The Fisher report concluded that no police officer had deliberately falsified the record. The police had tried to record as accurately as possible their questions and the answers given by the suspects. But established procedures had not been followed in a number of important respects — in particular, the provisions of the judges rules and Home Office administrative directions to the police requiring juveniles to be interviewed in the presence of a parent or guardian, that leading questions should not be asked when a suspect makes a statement, and that suspects be informed of the rights and facilities available to them to get in touch with a solicitor or their friends.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): What steps does the Minister propose to take to enforce the codes of practice, because in recent experimental operations in the metropolitan area they seem to have been breached more often that kept?

Mr. Shaw: I fully understand that the hon. Gentleman is referring to events in the metropolitan area. He will be aware that the codes of practice are not yet in force, but when they are he should rest assured that in certain criminal evidence cases, for example, if they are to be produced in evidence, they will play their part as a full legal document. The codes of practice will become part of the police code, and thus any officer who fails to observe them will be liable to the disciplinary procedure.

The Royal Commission on criminal procedure was set up in the aftermath of the Fisher report by the then Labour Government, under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Philips. It was charged with the duty of considering whether changes were needed in the powers and duties of the police in investigating criminal offences; and the rights and duties of suspect and accused persons. It was also asked to review the prosecution system and any relevant features of criminal procedure. The Royal Commission reported in 1981 after carrying out a most thorough and helpful review of the criminal process. It presented a devastating analysis of the inconsistencies and inadequacies of the present law, which has grown up piecemeal to meet the need of particular circumstances or particular parts of the country. The commission highlighted clearly the uncertainties about the boundaries of police powers, which are neither good for the professionalism of the police, nor conducive to a climate of public confidence. To meet those defects in the present system, the Royal Commission proposed a series of major reforms. I need not remind the House that the Government's response reached the statute book after unprecedentedly detailed parliamentary consideration.

The process inherent in the Act—of identifying the powers that the police need in combating crime on our behalf, of spelling out those powers in terms that police and public alike can understand and operate, and of setting alongside powers the safeguards necessary to demonstrate that they will be used responsibly and only where appropriate—has underlaid the preparation of the codes also. The notion of codes of practice comes from the Royal Commission, which argued that the vagueness of the judges rules needed to be replaced with explicit and workable instructions, subject to parliamentary approval, but capable of amendment and variation as experience or changing circumstances require. We have sought to frame the codes in language easily understandable to police and public alike, but the fact that the codes are not drafted in parliamentary language in no way lessens their significance.

The provisions of the codes are binding on police officers in the all-important sense that breach of a provision renders the officer concerned liable to disciplinary proceedings, and that the codes are admissible, as I mentioned in response to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), in evidence in criminal and disciplinary proceedings. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the codes mean business and will have a real effect on the way in which the police conduct investigations.

Let me now describe the codes of practice. The code of practice for the exercise by police officers of statutory powers of stop and search applies both to existing police powers of stop and search and to the new power provided by the 1984 Act. It sets out the standard to be satisfied before the necessary reasonable grounds for suspicion may be said to exist to justify the use of the search power. It provides for how searches are to be conducted and it lays down the action to be taken after a search is carried out.

There is a careful balance to be struck here. The Government believe — in common with the Royal Commission — that stop and search powers are an important tool for the police in the detection of crime and the prevention of further offences. It will also be invaluable for the police to have a general power, short of arrest, for dealing with those they suspect of the carriage of stolen goods or offensive weapons: rather than arresting the suspect, as they would be empowered to do, the police will be able to confirm or deny their original suspicion by a quick search. That will be in everyone's interest.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): In coming to that conclusion, did the Minister take into account evidence from the Policy Studies Institute report on the Metropolitan police, the Merseyside crime study and the British crime survey, all of which suggested that stop and search was not an effective way of arresting and convicting people?

Mr. Shaw: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest in that matter; he has asked me several questions on it. We had some information about how such matters were handled by various police forces but, as is obvious to the House, we have concluded that stop and search will still provide an important power for detaining suspects and ultimately bringing people before the courts. I accept that there have been variable experiences, to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that paragraph 2.2 about stop and search omits the most important point—that the person who is stopped to be searched is not reminded of his right to silence?

Mr. Shaw: I was coming to that. I think that what I shall say will answer the hon. Gentleman's point.

The Government fully recognise the sensitivities involved in the use of such powers. Used inappropriately, or without a proper attempt to minimise the embarrassment

[Mr. Shaw]

inevitably associated with being searched in public, the power can damage police relations with the community, and lead to tensions with particular groups. Thus the 1984 Act itself provides certain safeguards designed to ensure that such powers are used accountably and only in the circumstances intended by Parliament; the code takes that process forward by spelling out in more detail what police officers are empowered to do and how they should go about the task. The code, I believe, will enable police officers to make full use of that important power, without any of the adverse effects that critics have predicted, although I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) about variable experiences.

The second code deals with the searching of premises and the seizure of property by the police. The Royal Commission referred to that as

"the power of the police to intrude on to private premises in order to enforce the law and to investigate crime".

The need for caution in that area is obvious. There can be few experiences more distressing than for one's home to be entered and searched, and that too is one of the sensitive areas of police powers, where the greatest care is needed if police relationships with the public are not to be endangered. But a proper power for the police to search premises in the investigation and detection of crime is equally essential. We cannot permit crime to be safely carried out in the security of private homes, or evidence of crime hidden there, because the police do not have proper powers to enter and search and seize illegally possessed property or evidence.

Existing police powers relate to a haphazard selection of offences and leave some curious gaps. For example, there is no power to enter and search the scene of a murder or kidnap, and most powers relate to items in unlawful possession, rather than to evidence of offences or offenders. The new powers in part II of the Act are an attempt to remedy that while establishing a general procedure governing all warrant applications by constables. As with that on stop and search, this code of practice takes forward the Act's provisions by providing detailed instructions for the police on applying for search warrants and production orders, and also for searching premises with the consent of the occupier.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): The Minister rightly emphasised the necessity for all police officers to be concerned about their relationship with the public, but nowhere does the code set out a method by which such operations should be carried out. For instance, it does not refer to police officers going to the wrong address, which often happens in London. There is never an apology forthcoming from the police for having made a mistake. When they enter premises, pieces of personal property are often slung or thrown from drawers on to the floor. The police go through the premises as if there were a burglary. No remedy for that behaviour is suggested. As with stop and search, it is a matter of opinion. The Minister says that the behaviour of the police is subject to disciplinary measures, but discipline depends upon opinion. That is not good enough.

Mr. Shaw: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. However, he will see that on page 30 of code B, paragraph 5C of the notes for guidance says:

"If the wrong premises are searched by mistake, everything possible should be done at the earliest opportunity to allay any sense of grievance. In appropriate cases assistance should be given to obtain compensation."

Therefore, there is a reference in the code to the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. Guidance has to be issued on interpretation. A guidance note will be issued to all police officers by a Home Office circular, which lends further weight to how the codes should operate.

Recent tragic events have demonstrated vividly the need for sensitivity in this area. The power to enter and search premises is essential to the police in the investigation of crime, but its exercise must be carefully controlled. Innocent people must not suffer as a consequence and every precaution must be taken by the police to ensure that it does not lead to unforeseen results. The terrible outcome of the searches in Brixton and Tottenham must and will keep that danger at the forefront of our minds. As the House knows, those events are still the subject of investigation by the Police Complaints Authority and we do not yet know the outcome or what steps the Government can take to ensure that they do not happen again. But it is—and it has always been—the Government's objective to provide proper safeguards on the exercise of police powers, and I can assure the House that the Government will look closely at the authority's findings to see whether they show a need to make additional provisions in the codes. If they do, we shall not hesitate to bring fresh proposals to Parliament.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): What the Minister said about ensuring that the police behave properly in accordance with the codes at the time of carrying out a search is entirely laudable, but, at the same time as issuing new circulars to police officers, will the Home Office ensure that it is drawn to the attention of magistrates that if they act simply as a rubber stamp when search warrants are applied for they are not doing their job? I am afraid that it is a fact, as I think the Minister knows, that some —no doubt a minority—magistrates are all too prepared to grant almost anything if the police apply for it.

Mr. Shaw: I appreciate the hon. and learned Gentleman's point. I have little doubt that when all the reports are in about the events that led to the incidents with which the House is so familiar, many lessons will be drawn from them, and that might be one.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): In the light of what my hon. Friend said about the incidents in Tottenham and Brixton, when police officers were armed when they entered the premises, would he think it appropriate, when a revision of the code of practice is considered, to insert a paragraph stating that armed police officers should say on entering the premises that they are armed, to avoid incidents such as the one in Brixton, which had such devastating consequences?

Mr. Shaw: That pre-empts the point that I was intending to make later. It is likely that the Police Complaints Authority, in its consideration of investigations into the incident involving the tragic shooting of Mrs. Groce, will make recommendations on firearms practice. I shall await the recommendations of that report before taking the matter further, but I appreciate the issue which my hon. Friend has raised.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The recent cases to which the Minister has referred involve serious matters. In one

recent case it is reported that the police took a young lad into custody and then used his keys to gain access to his parents' property. He was not under arrest at that stage. I accept that the Police Complaints Authority is investigating the case, but I ask the Minister to consider whether the guidance notes need revision to take into account the use of an individual's keys.

Mr. Shaw: I cannot speculate on the appropriate action to take in the light of the detailed report and the investigation of the incident which the hon. Gentleman has described. The hon. Gentleman will know that detailed reports are being made and are being carefully considered where necessary by the Director of Public Prosecutions as well as the Police Complaints Authority. No doubt we shall have the opportunity to discuss what these reports teach us about police practice and behaviour. All such reports will be considered and, if necessary, amendments will be made to the codes now before the House.

The present draft of the codes, even in relation to these problems and to searching, is as far as we can go at the present. Implementation will lead to major improvements.

After implementation, the police will be under a statutory duty to observe the codes' provisions, and failure to do so will be a disciplinary offence. This is no empty sanction and the police have not been slow to enforce their discipline. For example, in 1984, the last year for which we have full figures, 79 officers were dismissed or obliged to resign, 21 resigned after disciplinary charges had been preferred, 61 resigned while under investigation and 29 were reduced in rank. This was as a result of public complaints or internal disciplinary reviews. The House will be aware that part IX of the Act, which deals with complaints and discipline, has been in force since 29 April. This has established an independent system for investigating complaints against the police, and I am satisfied that it will provide an effective means of ensuring that the provisions of the codes are properly observed.

The code of practice for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers is the longest of the codes and represents a major landmark. It is designed to underpin the statutory provisions of the 1984 Act dealing with the rights of suspects who are detained and questioned by the police by setting out very detailed provisions governing the way in which suspects may be treated. The code replaces the judges rules, and the Lord Chief Justice has agreed that the latter should be withdrawn when the code comes into effect. The code reflects the traditional safeguards of our criminal justice system. Any person who attends voluntarily at a police station has the right to leave when he wishes, and any person who is at a police station under arrest has the right to have someone informed of his whereabouts, and the right to consult a solicitor.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that there is a gaping hole in the codes for those who attend police stations voluntarily? On page 38, guidance note 1A refers to the person who attends voluntarily and who should receive the same consideration. However, these rights cannot be enforced. Nobody can enforce these rights on behalf of the voluntary attender. It would be a good idea to have the code redrafted now to give the custody officer the duty of enforcing the rights of a person who attends voluntarily.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the code of practice will become a disciplinary matter for police officers in certain circumstances. Those who have the duty, as the custody officer has, to implement the provisions of the Act and the codes in relation to the treatment of those detained will have to carry out the provisions or face disciplinary charges. I accept that this is not a law relating to third parties. It is a description of how the police are to operate their powers of duty under the Act. It is a substantial improvement, but if it is not seen to be adequate, we shall carry out a review. I shall think about the issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised. If during the debate he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will be able to elaborate on the point.

The Act has provided for circumstances where the police may delay the exercise of these rights, and the code may reflect this, but the principle is unimpaired. The exercise of rights may be delayed but not prevented. I refer to the right to have someone informed of a person's whereabouts and the right to consult a solicitor. The code requires the police to detain suspects in decent conditions and to provide for their normal needs, including the attention of a doctor, should this be necessary. The requirement on the police to caution suspects before questioning them in the code — I trust the hon. Gentleman will recognise this — preserves the right to silence.

I spoke earlier of the Fisher report and the comments it made about the questioning of suspects to obtain evidence. It was especially concerned about the position of people who might be at particular risk because of their youth, mental illness or handicap, inability to understand English, or other disability. The code of practice places on the police a special duty when questioning such people. It requires the presence of a responsible adult who can look after the suspect's interests in any case where the suspect is young, mentally ill or handicapped, or where he may be unable for any other reason to understand the significance of questions put to him or his replies. This includes deaf people who may be unable to communicate by lip reading or writing. Some right hon. Members have recently expressed concern about the effectiveness of the safeguards for deaf people and I have met representatives of the British Deaf Association to discuss these fears. I must make it clear that the Government are concerned to ensure that no group in society is exposed to risk and that all receive adequate safeguards for their rights. The safeguards which exist at present appear to work satisfactorily — no complaints have been made which relate to the exercise of police powers in dealing with suspects who are deaf, and the Government are not aware of any difficulties which have arisen. I am prepared to provide further clarification or guidance in the Home Office circular to the police in respect of these individuals.

I have recently written to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) outlining the proposals that I would make. I understand that the proposals may have the support of the right hon. Gentleman, but no doubt the hon. Member for Hammersmith will refer to this.

The right to have an interpreter is given to those who have difficulty in understanding English, and I am taking steps to have the notice of rights, which the police are required to give to all detainees, translated into the languages of the immigrant communities.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Minister guarantee that similar rights will be given to Welsh-speaking people?

Mr. Shaw: I think that I shall have to say yes, because in the areas where police notices are usually displayed in Welsh they will have this notice displayed in that language. I do not know whether that is the answer which the hon. and learned Gentleman expected me to give.

A most important right of the suspect is the freedom to consult a solicitor. The statutory basis for this is in section 58 of the Act, and the code sets out how this right may be given practical effect. Section 59 provides for the creation of a 24-hour duty solicitor scheme. The purpose is to ensure that legal advice is available outside normal working hours so that the right to consult a lawyer is not made meaningless for those who are detained at night or during weekends. The House will be aware of the Government's commitment to the establishment of this scheme from 1 January when these provisions come into effect.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor announced the details of the scheme last July in another place. The House will be aware that the scheme entails a distinction being made between those being interviewed in connection with the more serious offences, which the Act defines as "arrestable" offences, where there will be no fixed limit on the amount of advice which may be given, and non-arrestable offences, where there will be a maximum. I am aware of the concern that has been expressed in some quarters, but I am sure that it is not justified. We have sought to ensure that proper provision is made for all suspects who wish to consult a lawyer at a police station.

I am aware of the concern that has been expressed in some quarters at the restriction that is represented by the £50 limit on advice that is given where suspects are detained in connection with non-arrestable offences. A limit of some form was unavoidable because the Government could not accept an open-ended public expenditure commitment. However, the figure chosen in the lower-tier cases reflects the cost of providing advice in the majority of such cases in the pilot studies which have been carried out.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): There is a potential problem with the £50 scheme. As I understand it, travelling time and travelling expenses are included in the £50. If a solicitor has to travel for 30 or 40 minutes to reach the police station, that will reduce the amount of advice that he can give on his arrival. Surely that is wrong. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree to reconsider the inclusion of travelling time and expenses within the £50 scheme.

Mr. Shaw: I am not sure that my hon. Friend is correct. It is my understanding that the provisions include payment for solicitors on the basis of £30 standby payment, £36 per hour for work done during out-of-office hours in dealing with arrestable offences and £27 per hour if the work relates to non-arrestable offences, which is a category within the £50 limit. Payment will be made for travelling time, time spent waiting and travelling expenses. Solicitors will be paid £10 for each telephone call in which legal advice is given. I put it to my hon. Friend that that is not an unreasonable offer. I trust that the House will agree that the provisions are fair and reasonable.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Is my hon. Friend aware that concern has been expressed that the duty of the solicitor will not extend to the relatives of detainees? At present, many relatives of detainees telephone duty solicitors to seek advice, which is understandable. In future, solicitors will not be able to obtain payment by the state for duties that they have undertaken in giving advice to relatives who are understandably concerned about those who are being held in custody.

Mr. Shaw: I understand my hon. Friend's point. He is talking about a third party being informed of the whereabouts and the condition, for example, of the individual who is detained. The Act, the code and the provisions that we are discussing deal with the conduct of police officers towards those who are detained in police stations. Third parties do not come within these provisons, but I note my hon. Friend's point. He will be aware that the duty of the custody officer will take account of the need to contact third parties if that is requested. Recovery of their costs does not come within the ambit of the duty solicitor scheme.

The final code deals with the identification of persons by police officers. It sets out procedures for holding identity parades and group identifications, for confrontation by witnesses, street identification, the use of photographs, fingerprints and body samples. The code deals with the circumstances in which force may be used to take fingerprints, and in which fingerprints, photographs and body samples must be destroyed. Identification evidence is often a vital tool in the investigation of offences and it is vital that it should be accurate and obtained in circumstances that leave no grounds for allegations that it is misleading or unfair.

The Government's aim in preparing these codes has been to ensure that they represent good professional standards of policing. We recognise that they have involved the police in a major training exercise, which is now nearing completion. This has itself produced benefits for them in giving them an opportunity to review the operation of their service, and in future it will greatly simplify the training of new recruits. I fully understand the anxiety many police officers feel at the introduction of these new procedures. Change on this scale is bound to be an unsettling experience. However, a number of forces have been operating the provisions of the Act and the codes which do not require legislation for some little time, and the message that is emerging clearly is that it is not as difficult to do as they feared it might be. Once they have become familiar with the new procedures, police officers in these forces have found that initial difficulties are resolved and they are able to implement the Act effectively. A good example of this is in Reading, where the town's police have been operating a trial run now for about a year. Their experience has been successful, and they are by no means alone.

The codes of practice should be seen as what their name suggests. They must reflect what is practicable. They are not engraved in stone for all time. They are subject to the statutory instrument procedure and are not part of the Act itself so that they can be set out in workmanlike language, rather than the formality of statute. I would not discount the need, in due course, as I hinted earlier, to add to the codes or to amend them in the light of experience and to meet new situations which may arise. The House can be

assured that my Department will keep their operation under close review and that we shall be ready to propose any changes that we are satisfied are necessary.

7.47 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I thank the Minister for the generous way in which he has used his time and for answering some difficult questions. We appreciate that.

The aim of the four codes is to provide clear and workable guidelines for the police as well as to strengthen safeguards for the individual. That is a worthy intention, but one that the Government have not lived up to as well as they could. That is why the Opposition are concerned about the codes. I am not convinced that they are as clear as they could be or as workable as they should be. I am certainly not convinced that they include the necessary safeguards. As the Government's law-and-order policies get into more and more difficulty and produce devastating effects on the people who live with the consequences of crime and inner city disturbances, the last thing that is wanted is guidance that is not as effective as it should be.

The Government have managed to cause concern among members of the public generally as well as among the police and lawyers. I shall take up some of those concerns in my remarks, but, first, I wish to thank the Minister for agreeing to a request from my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) concerning representations made by the British Deaf Association. My right hon. Friend asked me to convey to the Minister that he wished to be in his place tonight to mention that himself. Instead, he is with Mr. Speaker this evening. I have read the letter that has been drafted in response to my right hon. Friend's request, and it is clearly a helpful response from the Minister.

The Minister has said that the contents of the letter will be issued as further guidance to the police. I am not sure whether he intends at some time to incorporate them into the relevant code. I am concerned about having a code which contains footnotes that are not part of it and, in addition, having circulars sent round to police stations as additions. The Minister used the word "circulars". It seems that we shall have three levels of information in the codes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he has responded on behalf of his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). The information contained in Home Office circulars is the way in which we normally give guidance to each and every police officer on how he should carry out his duty under statutory provision, such as the Act, or the codes. It seems that that is the quickest and most flexible way of making officers aware of the issues raised by the British Deaf Association. I take on board the point that if in due course the codes are to be revised, we can consider bringing within them the kind of points that have been made.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful for that explanation. The Minister will understand the concern. A note can be sent round to police stations which, although it has some impact when it first arrives, can quite quickly get lost in the papers. In the long run we must look at the codes themselves.

That is linked to some concern that we have as a result of the Confait case, to which the Minister referred. I am anxious that the subnormal and mentally ill should have their rights explained to them, either by having a solicitor or a friend present or by being given a clear and straightforward oral explanation. We shall be examining the way in which the codes of practice are carried out with some considerable concern in view of the special circumstances of the Confait case. I shall have a little more to say about representation in a case like that where an unarrestable offence can become an arrestable one.

As the codes supersede the judges rules, they need to be clear and workable. In my view, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 increases considerably the bureaucratic load on the police without necessarily improving the civil rights of the person brought into the police station. In that way, I think that the Act gives us the worst of both possible worlds.

I welcome the statement that the code of practice must be made readily available at all police stations for the police, public and detained persons. Lay members of groups, such as Lambeth police consultative committee which had a considerable input in this regard, should make sure that the codes are easily available to any member of the public and any detained person who wishes to see them.

I return to the guidance notes, which are not part of the provisions of the code. Note 1A on page 13 says:

"It is important to ensure that powers of stop and search are used responsibly and sparingly and only where reasonable grounds for suspicion genuinely exist. Overuse of the powers is as likely to be harmful to police effort in the long term as misuse; both can lead to mistrust of the police among sections of the community. It is also particularly important to ensure that any person searched is treated courteously and considerately if police action is not to be resented."

I come back to my intervention in the Minister's speech. We know that the Merseyside study showed that, out of 1,000 stop and searches, only 43 resulted in arrest. There are other figures from a number of studies round the country which show a very low level of arrest and, I guess, a lower level of convictions resulting from stop and search. We must, therefore, be very concerned about the effect on police and public relations.

Considering the events immediately preceding the troubles at the Broadwater Farm estate, we note that there were a very large number of stop and searches prior to the outbreak of that trouble. We cannot assume that there was no connection between the breakdown in confidence in the police by people in that area and those actions by the police. This is an important point to which we should all pay great attention.

Mr. Greg Knight: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman carefully. Surely the notes for guidance, as he has quoted them, will help to prevent the recurrence of instances which he has given. Paragraph 1.2, in effect, says that the notes for guidance, although they are not part of the code, are there for the guidance of police officers and others about its application and interpretation. If in any ensuing court case there was an argument about whether the police were applying the code properly, lawyers would certainly refer to the notes for guidance, although it is accepted that they are not part of the code.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman's final words point to the problem. Many people are saying that in particular this note for guidance should be part of the code for precisely that reason. There is the lessening of civil rights in terms of the code and of the Act, whereas at the other end of the

[Mr. Soley]

scale there has been no lessening of the powers to detain and so on. That is what we mean when we say that the balance is not as it should be and, indeed, as recommended by many other groups as well as by my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself.

At one of the police conferences on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act earlier this year, one senior officer remarked:

"for instance, officers are required to give reasons for stopping people. But after a while, cases in court will establish acceptable phrases. And those reasons for stopping someone which are accepted in court will become the standard response."

Clearly there is an element of truth in that, but there are also dangers in it.

The percentage of stop and search leading to prosecutions, according to Home Office research, could have been as low as 4 per cent. in London and 1 per cent. elsewhere. It said:

"Black males aged 16-24 were likely to be stopped particularly frequently, it found."

The report concluded:

"Without a secure base of community support, the use of powers of this kind, however extensive or circumscribed, rapidly becomes hazardous and ineffective."

That must be of considerable concern to us. Where the codes have been implemented on an experimental basis in the London area, as I have indicated to the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight), we have seen that under pressure the safeguards go but the powers stay. If that continues when the Act comes into force on 1 January, the only thing that one can predict with any degree of certainty is that in certain key areas of our inner cities the relationship between the police and public will continue to decline, with all that that implies for the welfare of the community as a whole.

If I may take this a little further, the Minister will know that I tabled a series of written questions recently on the operation of the codes where they were being applied on an experimental basis. I asked how many people had been detained and how long it was before they were allowed to see a solicitor. The Minister replied:

"The information requested is not held centrally. On the basis of the information which is currently available, and whose accuracy cannot be completely guaranteed, we believe that six people were denied access to a solicitor for less than 24 hours, 14 for between 24 and 48 hours, and five for more than 48 hours. Access was denied because, in the opinion of the police, granting it would have caused unreasonable delay or hindrance to the conduct of the investigation. No further information is available."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 25.]

I am concerned that, unless the Minister is able to give us much tighter information on or after 1 January 1986, all the good intentions that he outlined in his speech about ensuring that the codes are examined as to the effectiveness with which they are carried out will come to nothing. Indeed, in reply to another written question, he said that the information was not available. It will be totally unacceptable to receive answers like that after 1 January because the Minister will not be able to carry out the commitment that he gave to the House to review the way that the code is working. We must have that information made available to us.

I turn next to some comments made by solicitors and lawyers who had some experience of the operation of the code during the troubles in Tottenham. I wish to make it clear that I refer to solicitors and lawyers who had particular experience at that time. I want also to put on record that not only the people and residents of Broadwater Farm but the police were in something of a state of shock that night. That needs to be registered.

I have been told by solicitors that adults and juveniles alike have been held for long periods without seeing a solicitor. One 20-year-old was arrested on suspicion of having a forged tax disc. His mother and his solicitor were not allowed to see him throughout the 24 hours for which he was held. That was in direct contravention of section 58 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

In another example, a 13-year-old boy was held for 55 hours, during which time a solicitor instructed by his mother was not allowed to see him. The solicitor reminded the police of the suspect's unqualified right to seek advice after 36 hours' detention. He was told that he was wasting his time.

Police involved in the Tottenham investigations have claimed the right to refuse to allow suspects to be represented by solicitors of their choice. Two firms of solicitors in north London have been told by the police that it would be improper for them to act. The explanation given by the police was that information might be passed on to other defendants represented by those firms.

The other side of the coin — it causes me some anxiety — is that evidence given confidentially to the Police Complaints Authority in the case of Mrs. Jarrett seems to have been given to police officers involved in the Tottenham cases. The Minister must surely be disturbed about that. There may well be an early-day motion about it. I know that the Police Complaints Authority is concerned. There is a two-edged problem to which attention must be given.

The police maintained their position even after the firms concerned told them that questions of professional responsibility are a matter for judgment by solicitors, who are subject to their own professional code. The firms also told the police that in their judgment no conflict of interest arose in the cases, so that, in the normal course of events, they should have been allowed to represent the people who sought their assistance.

One solicitor agreed to the remand of her client, who was a juvenile, into police custody for further interviews in her presence. When she arrived at the police station, as arranged, she was told that she would not, after all, be allowed to see her client or be present during the interview. Later, the police tried to persuade other firms of solicitors to take over the case, despite the fact that legal aid had been granted. The client had specifically asked for that solicitor to represent him, and the solicitor was certain that no conflict of interest would arise because of other cases in which her firm was involved. In effect, the police prevented her from carrying out the contractual and professional obligations owed to the client. The client's statutory right, under the legal aid legislation, to be represented by a solicitor of his choice was also violated.

The examples that I have given were supplied to me by solicitors, and they must give rise to concern. They are serious complaints by solicitors and other people in the legal profession in the north London area. I do not think that the Minister would want to accept those practices as the norm on or after 1 January 1986.

With regard to training, the Minister is well aware of the police concern about the complexity and bureaucratic nature of some of the rules and of the Act itself. I have long said that the amount of training given to the police needs

to be increased. The training offered to police officers is still inadequate, given the complex nature of their task. The police, who are not lawyers, are asked to interpret legislation in the course of their day-to-day duty, despite having had only minimum training. I understand that in some cases police have had only one day's training on the codes and the Act. That must be unacceptable.

The stop and search issue is important. It is crucial to policing by consent. One of the reasons why the Government are in such acute trouble on law and order is that they promised to deliver a "get tough" policy. They delivered such a policy, but it failed precisely because they took other actions which undermined the cohesion of the local community, certainly in the inner city areas. It was further undermined particularly by the effects of long-term youth unemployment. That aggravated the racial problem, because members of the black community suffer most from inner city decline and decay and from long-term youth unemployment. Linked to that is a loss of confidence in the police. When that occurs, we have the worst of all situations.

The police catch most of their criminals by relying on evidence given to them by the public. About 80 per cent. of their convictions are achieved in that way. If that source of information dries up, they will be forced to resort to practices such as stop and search and using sledgehammers to break down front doors to gain entry and look for people or evidence that may or may not be there. In those circumstances, the confidence of the community in the police will decline. In that respect the Government bear a dreadful responsibility. They, more than any other body, have been responsible for the complex and deadly combination of factors which have resulted in an escalating crime rate in the United Kingdom, together with inner city disturbances of a nature and intensity that Britain has not seen for 100 years. That is a damning indictment of Government policies.

The searching of premises has similar dangerous effects. In view of the evidence given at the Jarrett inquiry, which has just concluded, the Minister has a particular duty, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, on the matter of warrants. When I was a probation officer, I recall there was one court in which police officers would ask for 10 or 20 warrants, which would be issued en bloc. That cannot be an acceptable practice, and questions must be asked about the way in which warrants are being granted if we are to restore the good relationship between the police and the public. I understand that there was a study recently in the *Criminal Law Review* which concluded that magistrates exert very little control over the issue of warrants. That is borne out by my own experience in the past and by some of the evidence which has emerged in the Jarrett case.

With regard to entry and search, there seem to be double standards in operation. People who live in lodging houses seem to have less right to privacy than those who live in private houses, either rented or owner-occupied. The tenant in a lodging house must be allowed the same rights as an ordinary resident in rented or owner-occupied property. That is an extremely important matter.

Another area of concern is the functioning and financing of the codes. The Lord Chancellor seems to have become a sort of Home Secretary in exile. Everyone on the Government Benches seems to accept that the Lord Chancellor is going to retire, but between now and his retirement he seems to be determined to do exactly what he likes. Indeed, he might even be a Prime Minister in exile. He seems to be very much a law unto himself.

I have a particular axe to grind in regard to law centres, which have been allowed to run down. They were one of the best legal developments under the Labour Government. They have been very useful in inner city areas and in the country generally. They have been undermined, and in many places closed down or threatened with closure.

As far as I can understand, duty solicitors working outside office hours will get enhanced rates of pay, but solicitors chosen by the defendant will be in a different position. Under the Act, a person held in a police station has a right to ask for a solicitor of his own choice. If he then chooses a solicitor in the middle of the night, that solicitor will not be paid the enhanced rate. The solicitor must be tempted to refuse to act, so the right to choose a solicitor no longer exists. The right is undermined by the lack of resources.

I was disturbed by the Minister's comment that the Government could not have an open-ended public expenditure programme. It is difficult to sustain the argument that a principle in law has been agreed, but that it cannot be afforded. Apparently, in other parts of the legal system cost is no object. The cost of prosecuting the Cyprus service men would almost pay for any scheme. I am far from happy about the matter, and believe that it should be reconsidered by the Government.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the truth were obtained in a police station because a man was properly advised, the cost of a subsequent abortive trial would be saved? For a few pence spent in time, many pounds would be saved.

Mr. Soley: I am always willing to listen to legal advice from many suitably qualified hon. Members, as long as I do not receive a bill afterwards. I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. I have a list of solicitors and barristers whom I would pay not to defend me. My hon. Friend is not on it.

Full advice is available only to those who are detained for arrestable offences, but £50 is the maximum available for non-arrestable offences. The most that a person who voluntarily goes to a police station on a non-arrestable offence will receive is £50. The going rate among solicitors is about £25 an hour—considerably more than I get—which would mean a maximum of two hours advice. After that time, the solicitor could presumably say "I am sorry, but I must leave now."

Mr. Bermingham: It includes travelling time.

Mr. Soley: I did not realise that. Therefore, it may be less than two hours before the solicitor leaves the police station.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is illogical to pay solicitors less money for dealing with non-arrestable offences? In many cases, non-arrestable offences are more complex than arrestable offences. A flat rate would be better.

Mr. Soley: I have benefited from some more free legal advice. I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman is right.

[Mr. Soley]

What worries me more is the case of a person who is voluntarily or involuntarily at a police station on a non-arrestable offence, but who, after his solicitor leaves, is charged with an arrestable offence. There is nothing to stop that happening if the police decide that a more serious charge is appropriate.

An east London solicitor has given me an example. He states:

"A group of five youths were arrested for threatening behaviour. They were detained at the Police Station for a long time and interviewed. After the interviews had been concluded, they were charged not with threatening behaviour but with conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm. None of these youths would have been entitled to more than £50 worth of advice."

There is real anxiety that the Government are not putting their money where their mouth is. The previous Home Secretary said:

"We want a duty solicitor scheme that works, thereby showing in a practical way that the new safeguards in the Bill are not a paper exercise."

The Government have not lived up to that commitment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am conscious that I am trespassing on ground that is the province of my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor. Regarding the duty solicitor scheme, the figure of £50 was fixed after consultation between the Lord Chancellor and the Law Society, which believed it to be fair and reasonable — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The figure provides for the standby payment of £30 for duty solicitors for a 12-hour period and an enhanced rate of pay of £36 an hour for work undertaken out of office hours or at weekends, which includes travelling time. If the work relates to non-arrestable offences, the rate will be £27 an hour. In addition, £10 will be paid for telephone calls through which legal advice is provided. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's conclusions that the provisions are not fair and reasonable. They are based on pilot studies that were undertaken. However, this is one aspect of the Act that will be considered, when it is put into practice, to discover whether improvements are necessary.

Mr. Soley: According to my hon. Friends, the Law Society did not agree to the figures or, indeed, to the principle. The Law Society was unhappy about the way in which the principle had been formulated. The Minister cannot hide behind that argument. The Lord Chancellor is trying to keep the scheme down and the Treasury wishes to save public money, so the scheme has been cut. The previous Home Secretary gave a clear commitment in Committee that these would not be paper safeguards; but that is what they are. Unless the Government reverse the process, we shall be in difficulty when the Act comes into effect.

I return to the letter of the solicitor from east London who contacted my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). He gave another example that causes concern. His letter states:

"In the past three weeks this firm have had two instances where they have been contacted, in one case by a wife and in the other by an employee, and requested to go to the Police Station, only to be told when we contacted the Police Station that there was nobody at the Police Station of the name that we requested. Subsequently, arrangements were made for someone from this office to go to the Police Station with a letter addressed to the detainee and a copy to the Custody Officer indicating that a call had been made to us and that we were available to attend at the Police Station for an interview. For reasons one can only speculate on, within half an hour of the letter being delivered, the suspect was confirmed to be at the Police Station and permission was given for someone to be present at his interview."

I do not have the advantage of having served on the Committee, but my right hon. and hon. Friends who did were keen to press for the codes and they achieved several changes. However, the codes do not provide the proper balance between the rights of the suspect and police effectiveness, which is required to make matters clear to the public and the police. The codes are not a satisfactory response to a complicated Act that we believe has many undesirable aspects.

The already dangerously deteriorating relationship between the police and public will be made worse unless the Government do more to ensure that law centres and duty solicitors are financed and protected. The Government must ensure that the codes are adhered to and that police officers are given sufficient training so that we can begin the long hard road to regaining in key areas the support for the police that has been lost at a terrible cost to the community. That is a matter for which this Government bear a terrible responsibility.

8.19 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on producing simple codes of practice that can be understood by the general public.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I shall complete my point and then I shall give way gladly to the hon. and learned Gentleman. The beauty of this document——

Mr. Carlile: Beauty?

Mr. Hind: —is that the man in the street can no longer say that the law is complex or that the document is written in legalese. He can go into any shop and buy this document, which will tell him precisely what his rights are when he enters a police station. This is a major development in police dealings with the general public.

Mr. Carlile: I agree with almost everything that the hon. Gentleman has said, although I do not share his perception of beauty. He said that any member of the public could enter a shop and buy the document. Does he agree that £3 is an extraordinary price to pay for a document which, after all, simply sets out our rights in a police station? Does he not believe that it should be made available to the public at a substantially lower price?

Mr. Hind: The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a good point, and no doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will bear it in mind.

An important effect of the codes of practice will be the necessary reorganisation of police training to meet their requirements. I hope that the Home Office realises the burdens that have been placed upon the police force when dealing with problems that arise from the codes of practice. They have tackled those problems manfully, and the Lancashire police force has informed me that it has been expensive to make police officers aware of the details of the document.

The document will be welcomed by the general public, not only because of its simplicity, but because it has strengthened some of the powers of the police and codified many of their common law powers. It has also translated them into simple terms which the public can understand. It has given the police more teeth when dealing with

criminals, and is clearly part of the Government's strategy to ensure a stronger and tougher approach to tackling crime.

The codes of practice reflect many of the lessons that were learnt in Scotland from a pilot scheme on stops and searches. That experiment revealed many offences that would not otherwise have been discovered, including the carrying of offensive weapons and the possession of drugs. I hope that the law will be applied strongly to football hooligans, who are mentioned in this document, and that the police can deal with them firmly but sensibly. The codes of practice will break down much of the aggression that occurs at football matches, which triggered the introduction of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Act 1985, following the riot at the European cup final in Brussels stadium.

One failing of the document is that it does not mention guns. Following the incident at Brixton, it is important that those whose premises are searched are aware that police officers are armed. In the light of what we know now, the tragic incident at Brixton might not have happened if those who owned the house had known that the police officers were armed. Those of us who are aware of the problems of Brixton and the difficulties of policing such an area will live to rue the day when that armed police officer entered the premises in the way that he did. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider including such a provision in the code of practice when it is reviewed in the light of experience.

Many solicitors have told me that the duty solicitor scheme is in many ways inadequate, especially in relation to summary offences. May I give an example? The solicitor's client may be interviewed by the police on the basis that he caused a death by reckless driving. However, subsequently, the police may consider that he committed a negligent act, so he will be charged with careless driving. That solicitor may spend hours in the police station on a serious matter, but he will not be remunerated in the way that he would expect for his hard work on such a serious offence. There are other examples. We know the difference between threatening behaviour under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936, which is a summary offence, and affray, which is an indictable offence that could have entirely different consequences. Perhaps my hon. Friend will confer with our right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor about those matters.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is it not true that if someone goes to a police station voluntarily to be interviewed about an arrestable offence, he is entitled only to the lower tier of legal aid? That is just as bad an example as the one my hon. Friend gave.

Mr. Hind: I understand my hon. Friend's point, which is a good one. The codes of practice will ensure that all those involved—the police and every member of the general public in contact with the police—know their rights. Their aim is to safeguard everyone. We must ask ourselves whether, in terms of remuneration for the time expended and effort required by solicitors, we are adequately safeguarding the rights and interests of the public.

The most important aspect of the codes of practice is that a policeman may be disciplined for breaching them. The public will realise that any breach by a police officer can result in a complaints procedure under the authority of the Police Complaints Authority.

As a practitioner in the criminal courts for many years, I have been disturbed by the practice of recording interviews with defendants after the event. The practice leads to inaccuracy. Occasionally, juries have found that Enid Blyton had some hand in the writing of interviews after the event where dishonest police officers were involved. Such cases lead to suspicion in the public mind. I spent many years practising in Leeds, where there was the sad case of a man who died in custody, which resulted in the trial of several police officers. For many years that completely undermined public confidence in the police. A similar situation arose in Sheffield. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) is not in his place, but he will know of the famous rhino whip case in Sheffield, which had a similar effect upon juries there.

Paragraph 11.3 (*b*) (ii) of the codes of practice urges that a contemporaneous note should be made of interviews carried out in the police station. That is a major safeguard for the police in obtaining convictions in court, and for the defendant. In my experience, defendants are asked by the police to sign not only at the end of each page, but at the end of each answer, to show that what is written is correct. The interview is recorded as it takes place in front of those concerned. I think that I speak for most of my colleagues in the legal profession when I say that that strengthens the prosecution case a great deal. Wherever possible, that practice should be followed

"unless in the investigating officer's view this would not be practicable or would interfere with the conduct of the interview".

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way once again. Will he share with me the hope that as a result of the excellent provision in paragraph 11.3 (*b*) we shall not see what I understand has happened in some parts of Scotland—a sudden increase in the number of informal confessions made by accused persons while they are in a police car on the way to the police station?

Mr. Hind: I take that point. The proper course of action should be an interview at the police station. I hope that the police will bear that in mind. Obviously, a police officer faced with a man who insists on talking cannot ignore that. He must caution him and try as soon as possible when he gets to the police station to make a note of what was said. I am sure that such cases are rare. I have found in my practice that most of the time my clients are less than willing to spill out confessions of their evil deeds. That may be the experience of many of my hon. and learned Friends.

Tape recordings are dealt with in the codes of practice. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind that tape recordings are becoming more widespread and are a matter of concern to many of those who appear in the courts. At the moment, solicitors are being given tapes where the most important matters relating to the offence are included within a large amount of conversation relating to the family and so on. No effort has been made in the Metropolitan police area to transcribe the recordings of such interviews and hand the transcripts with the tapes to the solicitor acting for the defence so that he may check them. Solicitors are asked to make their own transcripts. When my hon. Friend reviews the codes of practice, will he consider some system whereby we can avoid that and the problems of juries listening to a lot of irrelevant tape, which is a waste of the courts' time and money?

[Mr. Hind]

I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which the codes of practice deal with medical matters. Today, many more people who come before the courts are victims of drug abuse. A frightening number of heroin addicts are appearing before the courts. Therefore, police officers frequently have to deal with people who are suffering from withdrawal symptoms. It is important that police officers should take every precaution to ensure that they know whether an accused person is withdrawing. What such people say in their confession is completely undermined. They will say anything to get out of the police station to receive a further dose, whether by injection or by smoking.

Recently, I heard of a man who had been in a police station for 44 hours, during which time he was seen by four doctors. After the 44 hours were up he admitted the offence about which he was being questioned and made a voluntary statement. The police officer who gave evidence in court about the interviews said that he was not aware that the man was a heroin addict. He was not even aware that he had been visited by doctors. Those are important problems which, unfortunately, the police are facing as a consequence of our modern society. I urge the most careful consideration of that matter. A doctor should be called at every opportunity to decide whether a person is fit to be interviewed.

It is my experience that doctors have gone into the witness box to give evidence and have said that they will not say that an accused is unfit to be interviewed unless that person is "very ill indeed". That is wrong. There are two levels of heroin abuse — physical and mental dependence. How does one diagnose a craving if a man has been given drugs to repress the physical symptoms of drug withdrawal? I hope that my hon. Friend will bear those factors in mind when he considers the matter.

I hope that the codes of practice will see the end of the witness who is told to wait on the corner and say whether he recognises a person who walks round the corner. Unfortunately, that happens all too often. In November I heard of a police officer who waited outside a police station for an accused person whom he had not seen for 10½ months to sign on. He knew that that person was coming and he was there to identify him. There was no identification parade. We must stop that sort of thing. The police must be aware of the identification parade provisions in the codes of practice. They are clear and concise.

I welcome the provision in paragraph 20, on page 89, which deals with the taking of photographs at identification parades. Those of us who have appeared on behalf of the defence or the prosecution in trials involving identification parades know that such photographs are valuable when criticisms are being made of a person's memory and ability to point to the appropriate person in a line up.

I thank my hon. Friend for making clear on pages 91 and 92 of the codes of practice the procedure for showing photographs to potential witnesses. That is a welcome change. Every accused person will know the position in relation to that.

The codes of practice are a major step forward. I hope that, because of my comments, my hon. Friend will not think that I do not regard the codes as a major contribution to our criminal law. I do so regard them, but we would be failing in our duty to the House if we did not say something that would improve the situation. These codes of practice have already been put into operation in some police stations. Let us hope that they will improve the quality of our investigations and the rights of people in police stations.

8.39 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): As someone who bears the many scars of having served on the Standing Committee that dealt with the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, I congratulate the two novices on the Front Benches who have entered into the fray like real professionals. Like many who served on the Standing Committee, they have endeavoured to ensure that what we produce are practicable and reasonable codes which provide sufficient powers for the police and adequate protection for the suspect.

This debate tolls the knell of the passing of the judges rules, a fact which can cause no regret to anyone who has experience of practising in the courts. The judges rules have been honoured in their breach rather than in their obeisance, they have become discredited, and the judges themselves have generally recognised that they are almost valueless. These codes, imperfect as they inevitably are — after all, they are the first attempt at this type of dramatic and comprehensive change in police practice — are bound to be a great improvement.

I applaud the spirit in which the Minister of State has welcomed the criticism that has been made so far in this debate, and I hope that in the future that same spirit will be reflected in the Government's willingness to amend the codes as exigencies arise. The first may well be in connection with the use of firearms by the police.

1986 will be a year of great challenge for the police, not least because they will find themselves charged with the responsibility of putting into effect their part of the obligations imposed by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. That Act contains many complexities that I know are unwelcome to the police. Indeed, police officers around the country say ruefully that the old-fashioned police sergeant, who in the past has been a somewhat homely creature, has had to take what amounts to a management course in order to perform the duties of the custody officer.

I know many police station sergeants, and have confidence in their ability to take on board the duties that are now imposed on them. I hope that all police officers will bear in mind the words of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who in Standing Committee said:

> "The individual has his protection, which is that a code exists which those in authority are deemed to know and obliged to operate . . . and on which a court, if it accepts the contention and acts upon it, acquits." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 1 March 1984; c. 1582.]

I hope that all police officers will be reminded of those words, and that they will realise that the courts will take an extremely condign view of police officers and their conduct if they are in breach of the codes.

I also hope that the Minister of State did not think me frivolous when I mentioned the Welsh language in an intervention. It is the second great indigenous language of the United Kingdom. In Wales, 500,000 people are more comfortable speaking in Welsh than in English, and some would find it difficult to understand even a simply drawn code such as this were it written only in English. I hope that in Wales there will be Welsh translations of the whole

of the code so that those who are more comfortable in the Welsh language can follow the code in their indigenous language.

I emphasise the point that I made in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). I suggested that the price of the code—£3 for the draft—is rather high. I was pleased when the hon. Gentleman agreed with me, and I hope that the Government will feel that a document such as this should be available to the public at half that price.

There are certain particular aspects of the codes with which I am not entirely happy, and I ask the Minister of State to consider the points that I shall now make and to consider possible future amendments. There is some evidence, mentioned by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) in some detail, that in the aftermath of the Tottenham riots police officers under pressure—and one understands the effect of that pressure—tended to be less careful than they should have been of the safeguards that should have been given to suspects. In the context of an inadequately funded duty solicitor scheme—experience will show, as the Law Society has submitted, that it is substantially underfunded—it is important that the code should be enforced by police officers, whatever the situation or pressure.

My general criticism of the codes is that they contain insufficient requirements for suspects to be informed of their right to be silent, of the limitation on police powers contained in the codes, and matters of that sort. On stop and search, paragraph 3A on page 16 states, inter alia, that

"although there is no power to require a person to do so, there is nothing to prevent an officer from asking a person voluntarily to remove more than an outer coat, jacket or gloves in public."

It is all very well to state that, but neither the code nor the guidance notes require the police officer concerned to tell the member of the public that he or she is under no obligation to remove outer clothing other than a coat, jacket or gloves. If we are to maintain the spirit, expressed elsewhere in the codes, of good community relations in police work, it is important that people have the right to be informed. Indeed, an obligation should be imposed on the police by the codes to inform people of the limitations on police power.

Paragraph 2.2 on page 14 entitles a police officer, before carrying out a search under the stop and search procedure, to question a person

"about his behaviour or his presence in circumstances which gave rise to the suspicion";

and the suspicion referred to is the reasonable suspicion that entitles the officer to carry out the stopping and searching. If the officer has a reasonable suspicion sufficient to stop the person concerned, if he has the reasonable suspicion to entitle him to carry out the search, and if he feels it right to question the person about his behaviour or presence in circumstances that give rise to that reasonable suspicion, he surely has the time to caution the suspect and he should be obliged to do so.

It is therefore a regrettable lacuna in the stop and search code that, in the action required before a search is carried out and where questioning takes place, a caution is not also required. I draw to the Minister's attention an important and particular concern highlighted by paragraph 4.4, which deals with the records that an officer is required to keep when carrying out the stop and search procedure. He should normally seek the name, address and date of birth of the person searched, although the person searched has no obligation to give them.

I was encouraged, at a luncheon in the City of London a few days ago, to hear the Home Secretary make the clear and unequivocal statement that he does not believe in a national police force, which he thought would be a backward step. Like him, I recognise that one must allow a considerable amount of organisational autonomy to the individual police forces. Nevertheless, it is clearly the duty of the Home Secretary to ensure that the use made of records obtained during stop and search procedures, as set out in paragraph 4.4, is a proper one.

In the Suffolk police computer system, a person who has been stopped and searched three times within the county, which, after all, could be three visits to a match between Ipswich Town and Norwich City, if he can bear to go to such a match as often as three times, is then starred on the computer as a suspected person, although he is not suspected of any offence. The wholesale gathering of not only names and addresses, but dates of birth seems to be of more use in widespread information gathering than in dealing with any specific offences or suspicions.

It is vital that any records obtained in stop and search procedures should be used only for the purposes of stop and search procedures and not for more widespread information gathering purposes. Will the Minister give an undertaking that records of stops and searches will be destroyed after the relevant period and will not be used as general police intelligence information?

Mr. Soley: The hon. and learned Gentleman is making an important point. Is not his point even more important when we bear in mind that there is evidence to suggest that people who work shift work and travel during the night or the early hours of the morning are more likely to be stopped, and are stopped on a number of occasions?

Mr. Carlile: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I recall many years ago cross-examining a police officer in a drunk driving case in a Welsh rural county—not mine—who confessed to me that life was so boring sitting in a police car at night that he stopped every car that went past. While that may be an extreme example, there is a risk of such behaviour being repeated. Therefore, it is crucial that the information obtained should be used properly.

I deal now with the code concerned with the search of premises and the seizure of property. I made my point in an intervention in the Minister's speech, but I re-emphasise it. It is crucial that whatever instructions are given to the police should be reinforced in the instructions to magistrates. Most magistrates are careful and competent. But we must not mince our words: some are sloppy and incompetent. We must ensure that such magistrates who are prepared to act merely as a rubber stamp because the law requires search warrants are not permitted to do so in the future, particularly as a magistrate issuing a search warrant and dealing with considerations such as whether notice of a search is to be given to the person who is to be searched and having to consider points such as "disproportionate inconvenience"—one of the least beautiful phrases in the codes—must have a clear understanding of what is being asked for and what is required.

I agree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith about the guidance 4A in the code dealing with searching premises and seizing property which states:

[Mr. Carlile]

"In the case of a lodging house or similar accommodation a search should not be made on the basis solely of the landlord's consent unless the tenant is unavailable and the matter is urgent."

I do not suppose that the club in Pall Mall in which I live during the week when the House is sitting would take too kindly to being called a boarding house, but it could be described, at a stretch of the imagination, as "similar accommodation". It is wrong that those of us who stay in clubs such as mine should have a lower standard applied to them in the code than those living in their own homes. This is a serious point, which applies to the many young people in particular who not only live in lodging houses but now, it would appear, will be forced by the Government's policy on bed and breakfast accommodation to lead a nomadic existence, travelling every few months from one lodging house to another.

Paragraph 3.1 on the code of questioning and detention sets out a right for a person who has been detained to consult

"this and the other codes of practice."

I hope that the Minister will ensure that this is so and that suspects who ask to see the codes of practice and who, I hope, will be told of their availability will be given the time to read them. It is no use simply being shown a pretty book with a red cover if one is not given the opportunity to find out what one's rights are. I counsel that police officers be encouraged to show some patience towards those members of the public who wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to read about what their rights are.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Rather than having the code of practice, should there not be five, easily understood points about rights to solicitors and so on?

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman has a great deal of experience in dealing with the technical matters in the courts. It is highly desirable that a simple summary of the main rights be available, although I emphasise that when people in custody ask for the code, as they are entitled to do under this provision, they should be given enough time to read the relevant parts.

I feel some confidence—at least a hope—that on the basis of what we have heard from the Minister the Government will scrutinise closely the operation of the codes. I hope that chief constables will be told by the Government of the importance of punishing breaches of the codes in disciplinary proceedings, particularly in cases in which, in the courts of England and Wales, judges have been faced with difficult evidential problems because of breaches of the codes by police officers. We know—because we are practical people, I hope—that police officers will breach the codes from time to time. Some of the breaches will be trivial, and perhaps we should not take too serious a view of them. But when breaches are significant, particularly when they affect the outcome of a case, the result of disciplinary proceedings should be serious in its consequences for the police officers concerned.

In welcoming the codes on their way into the police stations of this land, I ask the Minister of State to consider seriously the possibility of providing in Government time in the not-too-distant-future a further opportunity for debate so that once again we may scrutinise the codes not as to how we feel they ought to work, but as to how they are working in practice.

8.59 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Like all the other hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, I welcome the codes. Many of my constituents will be reassured by having the right of access to the codes when they reach the statute book on 1 January 1986. I say that advisedly. When I have visited youth clubs and other clubs in my constituency, I have been surprised by the number of times, for well over a year now, that people have said to me that it would be a great help if there were police codes of practice. We have such codes now.

The codes are complex, and there are four of them. Reference has been made to the fact that their cost—£3—will be a drawback. I strongly urge the Government to divide the book into four and to make the codes separately available, free of charge, to any member of the public who wants them. They should be made available, free of charge, in every police station in the country from 1 January 1986. That would be a very good investment, and the Government would go a long way towards restoring confidence in the police and in the way that criminal matters are dealt with in Britain.

I wish to raise two points on the codes. The first point relates to something which they do not contain, but which my hon. Friend the Minister of State ought to think of including. Paragraph 17 of code C deals with the charging of detained persons. There are one or two serious omissions. No mention is made of recording an interview on a tape or by other magnetic means. That ought to be done automatically, wherever possible. I refer in particular to paragraph 17.1, which deals with a prisoner who is about to be charged with a serious offence. He should be photographed when he enters police custody. A photograph of his condition when he enters the police station should automatically be taken. It may be difficult to put this into effect, but it is particularly important if a vicious crime has been committed and public feeling is running high.

It would be in the interests of the police if a photograph were taken to show the physical, external condition of a suspect who is brought to the police station on a grave charge. There would then not be the incident of the kind that occurred at the time of the pub bombing in Birmingham a few years ago. Photographs were not taken until 54 hours after the suspects had entered police custody. It was impossible to compare their condition then with their condition when they were taken into police custody, because no photographic record was made at that time. When major charges are laid, the police would be safeguarded if a photographic record were kept of the condition of suspects when they entered police custody.

My second point, on which many hon. Members have touched, relates to the omission from the codes of the conduct of the police in the use, issuing and handling of firearms. My hon. Friend said that the matter was being given urgent attention, but the country demands today nothing less of him than another code of practice which relates entirely to that matter. Recently, so many mistakes have been made by the police in matters in which they have been trained that in some cases, where the police are known to be armed, ordinary people run for their lives. I shall not go into these cases in great detail, but not so long ago in the west end of London armed police fired and injured the wrong person without making any proper challenge. There is also the sad case of the police officer

who entered a house with a search warrant and was armed with a cocked handgun which he set on the edge of a child's cot, with subsequent fatal results.

The matters about which the public should know should be laid down in a code of conduct for the House to debate. They should include not only the conditions in which one would expect the police to be armed and the eventualities for which the police should be prepared, but the type and calibre of weapon to be used, the type of training that officers must receive before they are allowed to use the weapons in public and, more important, instructions in the handling of a firearm by a trained police officer, whether or not someone is suspected of having committed a crime.

Hon. Members have already said that a warrant must be issued by a magistrates court for a house to be searched. In recent months public happenings have made a strong case for saying that unless there is an emergency the police should obtain a warrant before they are allowed to arm themselves and go among the public.

Generally I welcome the codes, and I hope that my hon. Friend will seriously consider making them widely available, because they will be a popular document for general use.

9.7 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I shall begin by drawing the Minister's attention to one of my interventions in his opening speech which he misunderstood. He may recall that I intervened regarding persons who enter a police station voluntarily. I drew a contrast between the rights of the voluntary attender and those of the detained person. The rights of the detained person are safeguarded by the custody officer, but the rights of the voluntary attender, which are referred to on page 38 of the draft codes, are protected by nobody. The draft codes merely state that he must be shown the same kindness and courtesy and have the same facilities extended to him, until he becomes a detained person, when he goes into the care of a custody officer. I suggested that we might overcome the hiatus, which could give rise to arguments in the court room later, which is what we are seeking to avoid, by saying that when a person voluntarily attends a police station the custody officer shall seek to ensure that his rights are maintained.

I served on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill Committee, with its 159 sittings. The object of the exercise was to try, whenever possible, to improve the Bill. Efforts were made by all those hon. Members who served on the Committee to see whether that could be achieved. I ask the Minister to take on board the point that I have made, which is made in a spirit of helpfulness rather than confrontation.

In Committee, I moved a number of amendments, in particular, with regard to the rights and duties of the custody officer and the rights of prisoners. Although I now practise as a barrister, for many years I was a practising solicitor and I spent many a long hour in police stations.

I intend to return to the point that I mentioned during my intervention about the duty solicitor scheme. Standing, as it were, one removed from the scheme, I can perhaps say some of the things that solicitors might not want to say for fear of being thought to be trying to forward their own interests. There is much merit in the duty solicitor scheme.

The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) made a valid and valuable point when he suggested that a synopsis of the codes of practice should be given to the prisoner or the detained person at the moment of detention. It is not beyond the wit of man to provide a simple leaflet printed in large print. Some people have difficulty in reading. Many of the people who find themselves detained in police stations are not just nervous and frightened; they occasionally have some educational difficulties. The codes of practice are contained in the type of book that one would expect to read at one's leisure. Its contents can be condensed into five or six simple headings such as, "You have the right to remain silent", "You have the right to consult a solicitor", "The custody officer is in charge of you", or "You cannot be detained for more than 24 hours without x, y or z happening."

The Americans have an expression about reading a person his rights. The English have always seemed reluctant to do that. I have never understood why. We should consider the result. Games can be played in police stations to see whether people can be tricked into confessions. They are occasionally frightened into doing so. No one admires such evidence. When it is analysed later in a court, it only sours the relationship between the public and the police and destroys much of the good work that police officers have done over many years.

It is to avoid such problems that many of us have pressed for a considerable time for a detained person's rights to be protected. The codes of practice are perhaps a first step along the long road towards achieving a sensible system which will remove investigation from interrogation and towards evidence.

No one can argue with evidence. The evidence speaks for itself. I shall repeat what I said in Committee. The finest case that can ever be brought by the prosecution is one that does not rely for its evidence or one ounce of its strength upon an interview in a police station. The evidence speaks for itself. That is a proper case.

We became lazy in the 1960s and 1970s and moved away from gathering evidence towards the interrogative type of investigation — "Get a confession; get an admission." We had arguments in the 1970s about verbals. "He verballed me up, guv" — the classic defence that every lawyer has heard.

Solicitors tried to move away from that and we adopted the practice of contemporaneous notes. Now we are moving towards tape recordings. Eventually, I hope, we shall move back to obtaining evidence, which will shorten many criminal trials in this country.

That is one of the reasons why the Treasury ought to stop doing its figures. I have said in Standing Committee and in the Chamber on numerous occasions that if one wants to mess something up, one need only let the Treasury get its hands on it. Basically, the Treasury does not understand anything. I suspect that whoever in the Treasury advised the Lord Chancellor's Department about the duty solicitor scheme did not have a clue what he or she was talking about. The Treasury does not seem to appreciate that the presence of a solicitor at a police station can be a good thing. It can shorten the time of interview, reduce the amount of unpleasantness in the case and very often, because proper advice is given, get the right result at an early stage.

In the face of all that, the Treasury can say, "If you work unsocial hours and the offence is not an arrestable one we shall limit payment to £50". The Law Society does not agree, and it has the advantage that the people on its

[Mr. Gerald Bermingham]

committees have actually done the job. They have turned out in the middle of the night and they know the difficulties that can arise.

Mr. Ashby: The allowance of only two hours under the legal aid scheme for duty solicitors may be wholly inappropriate in certain circumstances. It is absolutely ludicrous and totally misunderstands the true position. The whole problem has been caused by people who have no idea about what really happens.

Mr. Bermingham: I have practical and personal experience of yesteryear when I was a solicitor. I was called out at night to go to police stations on numerous occasions, as were my staff and partners. I was fortunate enough to practise in a city with only four or five police stations, all of which were within 10 or 20 minutes' drive from my house. If someone were arrested at Rotherham, 12 or 13 miles from the solicitor's home—you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know the area as well as I do—the travelling time may be half an hour. There is always a delay at the police station before one sees the client. In the early hours of the morning there seem to be interminable reasons for delay. That may not be due to nastiness. I always try to be kind and put it down to forgetfulness on the part of the officer, but very often police officers do not want a solicitor to see the client. One eventually gets to meet the client about an hour after starting out. If there is a limit of two hours in cost and credit time, the actual time spent with the client will be only half an hour.

In reality, solicitors always stay, regardless of what they are paid. That is said to be a weakness on the part of solicitors, but I believe that it is a great credit to the profession. I recall an occasion when a man voluntarily went to a police station in Birmingham with his solicitor. The solicitor was with him at the police station for 12 hours. Under the new scheme the solicitor would be paid only £50. The profession is an honourable one and it is not given proper and due credit for that. Solicitors have always been a target for criticism.

Mr. Ashby: And barristers.

Mr. Bermingham: Indeed. I was about to say that the other branch of the profession has also been a target.

It is an honourable profession, and solicitors will stay with their clients. It is disgraceful that undertakings given in good faith are now being dishonoured because of advice given in other quarters by people who do not know what they are talking about.

A 24-hour duty solicitor scheme means solicitors being prepared to turn out at 3, 4 or 5 o'clock on a Sunday morning, to drop their family plans for the weekend and to disrupt their social life because police stations must be covered 24 hours a day. We are asking a great deal of those solicitors, but we are offering them very little in return. The Treasury and the Lord Chancellor's Department then decide that £X is sufficient and the popular press goes on about how much the solicitors are earning. Solicitors have overheads——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I find it difficult to see what solicitors' remuneration has to do with the codes before us.

Mr. Bermingham: The codes refer to the right of access to lawyers, and a duty solicitor scheme is very much part of the package. Accordingly, the terms and conditions of that duty solicitor scheme must perforce be part of the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is about the codes of practice. I see none of those matters in the codes of practice.

Mr. Bermingham: With great respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter is dealt with in paragraphs 3·1 and 6 of section C of the code. Paragraph 3·1 on page 40 provides that when a person is at a police station

"having attended there voluntarily, the custody officer must inform him of the following rights . . . the right to consult a solicitor in accordance with section 6 below".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The remuneration of solicitors is not mentioned in paragraph 3.1 or, so far as I can see, anywhere else in the codes of practice. I think that the hon. Gentleman should pursue that matter at some other time.

Mr. Bermingham: This is probably the only opportunity that we shall have to pursue it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I appreciate that the Chair rules and I must obey. However, I think that the point has been made. I hope that the Minister will take it on board as it is a serious professional matter.

We are for ever driven back to the purpose behind the code of practice, which is to give people the right of access to a solicitor. One of the holes in the code is perhaps that there are still occasions on which such access can be denied. I have conceded that grave and serious matters must be involved which may later be challenged in the court, but I have never understood the reluctance of police officers to allow a defendant to take legal advice. Of course, there are safeguards for rare or exceptional circumstances, but, just as the judges rules were honoured more in the breach than in the observance, I hope that with regard to the right of access to a lawyer the courts will in future take a far sterner and more robust view of cases in which access has been denied.

In the past, prosecutions have often attempted to justify such denial with post-hindsight arguments. Why have certain police officers in this country found it necessary to take that attitude? What are they frightened of? That is the real question. If the evidence is strong, they have nothing to hide, so why deny the client access to a lawyer?

There are various other aspects of the codes of practice that one could pursue, but I ask the Minister to consider the central point: that if justice is to be even-handed and fair, if we are to avoid cases like the Confait case and if we are to get rid of the long and tedious court room arguments about what was said at one interview or another and the slanging matches about alleged pressure and bullying, the code of conduct at interviews and in police stations must be fair and it must be seen to be fair.

The codes of conduct are a step towards that, if they are enforced, and we have the assurance that they will be. I have listened to that assurance, but I hope that hon. Members will be able to review the matter from time to time. I await with interest to see where there are breaches of the codes and what actually happens. Will the codes have the teeth that they are said to have? I am not yet convinced. Perhaps I am by nature cynical or I have had too many years of watching what has happened to be converted overnight like St. Paul on the road to Damascus.

A step has been taken, and I shall watch with interest what happens. I ask the Minister for an assurance that

these matters will be reviewed openly from time to time and that, where errors and mistakes are found, rectification will be not some time in the future but immediate, so that in our court rooms trials become trials based on evidence and not, as happens on many occasions, personalities.

9.26 pm

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Those of us who are involved professionally with police powers have known for many years that they are confusing and haphazard. For example, the police had the power to stop and search for stolen goods in some cities, but not in others. One particularly outrageous example was that they could obtain a search warrant to look for birds' eggs, but not for a murder weapon. Anyone who realised the inconsistencies would agree that something needed to be done to codify and improve the law.

I hope that no one in the House will object to the introduction of these codes or mourn the passing of the judges rules. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, quite rightly, that the judges rules were outdated. They were also ignored in many instances. If a suspect knew that they existed and asked a police officer for a copy of them, the police officer would regard that as something of a joke.

Paragraph 1 of the code is a vast improvement because it makes it clear that the codes will be made available at police stations for use not only by the police but, where requested, by a suspect. I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) when he asked whether it would be possible for a brief resumé of the codes to be printed and made available at police stations free of charge. Comment has been made about reducing the price of the codes. Perhaps a compromise would be to produce an abridged version of the codes and make that available free of charge.

Many hon. Members have rightly expressed their concern about abuse. We all know that abuse has occurred under our present law. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said that he did not like cases in which the police based their evidence on a confession. Unfortunately—I hope that he will agree with me—in the great majority of cases that come before the courts the evidence that tilts the scales, and in some cases the only evidence, is a confession. I have been concerned for many years about the undue pressure that can be put on a suspect to get him to confess to a crime that he may not have committed. That pressure is likely to be most severe in the cases where the suspect needs help and guidance the most.

Let me give an example. Very often—I say that with regret, but I am afraid that it happens very often—a police officer will refuse a telephone call to a suspect, make a threat or say that the suspect will not be given bail until he has made a confession, or say that a more serious charge will be preferred unless a confession is made. That usually happens when the police officer knows that the suspect has previous convictions. The relevance of that is that when the case comes to court, if the accused person seeks to tell the court the truth—that he was put under that pressure and made the confession just to get out of the police station—that is regarded as an attack on the character of the police. Therefore, the tribunal is made aware before it has determined his innocence or guilt that he had previously come to the notice of the police. In those circumstances, how is he to get a fair trial?

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery suggested that we should look at codes of practice for magistrates. I have some sympathy with him in that argument. I may be paraphrasing, but in a well-known case a magistrate announced in open court, "In this case there is a conflict between the police evidence and the evidence given by the defence, and in such a case we always prefer the evidence of the police." That case went to appeal, and the conviction was rightly quashed. In how many cases does the chairman of the bench think that but does not say it? It is important to ensure not only that the police follow the guidelines but that proper training and guidelines are given to magistrates.

I agreed with many of the comments by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), although he got carried away by his rhetoric when he ventured on to our inner city problems. At one stage in his speech I wondered whether he was considering a career in the Church——

Mr. Soley: They would not want me—they are all Marxists.

Mr. Knight: I am glad to hear the comments of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman.

The hon. Gentleman said that in many cases the police obtained their evidence as a result of help from the public. He was right. He was also right in saying that, because of that, the police rely on the public for their detection work or at least for help in putting together a case. The relevance of that to the codes is that the good police officer, who wants to get results and is willing—most are—to play the game by the rules, will see that there is a benefit to be obtained by the police in getting the confidence of the public, not alienating the public.

Some would say that the safeguards were not adequate in the past, but new safeguards are now introduced with those new codes. For example, a new independent Police Complaints Authority has been set up and a statutory duty has been imposed on all police forces to set up proper consultative arrangements with representatives of local communities. I hope that those two items will help the police to gain and retain the confidence of the public in many areas.

Concern has been expressed about the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme. I note the comments that you made earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point which I wish to make, and which I thought the hon. Member for St. Helens, South was making, is that if the codes give an accused person the right to consult a solicitor, it is valueless if no solicitor is prepared to come out because he is not being paid sufficient remuneration to undertake the work required of him. Concern has been expressed in my branch of the profession about the arrangements that the Lord Chancellor has said will apply to fees to enable solicitors to give advice under the codes. I think that was the relevance of the point which the hon. Member for St. Helens, South made.

I received a letter only this week from the secretary of the contentious business sub-committee of the Derby law society, Mr. Peter Ashworth, who is a respected local advocate in Derby. He expresses concern and the concern of solicitors in Derby about the operation of the 24-hour scheme. In his letter he says:

"As you know, in Derby there has been a Duty Solicitor Scheme in operation now for some time at the Derby city Magistrates court. This has proved to be a great help to those people who are bewildered and concerned about their problems . . . ".

He goes on to say:

[Mr. Knight]

"it is hoped that a 24 hour Duty Solicitor Scheme will be mounted in Derby and district. Obviously, this will be of public benefit. However, there are grave misgivings about the way in which this scheme has been constrained by the Government and there are some areas where I believe it will not be possible for it to commence operation."

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, subject to your view on the matter, is the relevance of the comments about remuneration in the draft codes that we are considering. I emphasise the point which the hon. Member for St. Helens, South made and, as I understand it, these arrangements were made without prior consultation with the Law Society. If there was consultation, there was certainly no agreement on how the scheme should be implemented.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there was consultation with the Law Society but that the the Law Society made strong representations and did not agree with the scheme that has been imposed upon it?

Mr. Knight: That may be the case, but I shall be happy to accept the comments that my hon. Friend the Minister will make in reply. According to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, there was consultation but no consensus. There was no consensus over the introduction of this two-tier scheme. Concern has been expressed about the lower tier, although no one suggests that the entire scheme will be inoperable. However, I have misgivings concerning the lower tier and how it will operate.

I thought—I hope that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—that the £50 limit included solicitors' travelling time. In tests carried out by the Law Society it has been shown that on average 30 or 40 minutes is used as travelling time in each direction. If this is not so, I would welcome a denial from my hon. Friend the Minister.

Justice in society can be achieved only by striking the correct balance between the power given to the police and the rights of the individual. Despite my slight misgivings, I believe that these codes get the balance right and I wish them success.

9.38 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I apologise to the House for not being present for all of the debate, but I had a constituency problem to attend to.

I have listened with great interest to the debate and everything that I have heard has been sensible. I welcome these codes, just as I welcome increasingly the Police and Evidence Act 1984 and the improvements which have come with its implementation. I was most unhappy about the 96-hour provision. The Act has much that is good about it, and the same can be said for the codes. I am confident that the codes will bring dignity and sense to policing and to the courts, which we have not had so far. Other countries have enjoyed those things, but unfortunately we have not.

I hope that the days are gone of solicitors being involved in ignominous run arounds. All too often solicitors telephone a police officer, only to be told that he is not available, or that a message will be passed to him. Unfortunately, in many instances the solicitor's message is not conveyed. I have been involved in a case for about five weeks, during which examples of lack of contact between solicitors and police officers have come to light. It is awful to think of solicitors travelling from London to Nottingham and being unable to see their clients. In many instances they have been told that they would be able to see them, but on arrival are told that that is not possible. The solicitor takes a train back to London, and during the journey his client may well appear before the court. That happens frequently, and the codes, if they are properly implemented, will stop it. They will bring back dignity and confidence to the police. In that sense, we are doing much for law and order. That can be said for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and for the codes of conduct.

The police depend upon the public, and it is unfortunate that they have forgotten that at times. They must remember that they will not be able to achieve what they want without the confidence and support of the public. Their detection rates will not increase without that support. We must give the public confidence in the police, by means of the codes. They will be a most valuable addition to the current framework and we must respond to them positively. Let us adopt them with enthusiasm and ensure that they are followed and implemented. There is a great future for law, order and justice if we follow the codes.

I cannot wait for the introduction of tape recorded interviews. Those of us who have been involved in cases where tape recordings have been used know that they have been enormously successful. Some cases which ran for five weeks and cost many thousands of pounds could have been disposed of in three days if tape recordings had been available. The savings involved in disposing in three days of a case which would otherwise run for five weeks would pay for the tape recording of all the interviews that have taken place in south-east England during the past year. On that basis, why were tape recordings not introduced 10 years ago?

If a system of tape recording is implemented properly, an enormous amount of court time will be saved. An enormous sum is being spent on the building of courts and the appointing of extra judges, but the new courts and the newly appointed judges could become superfluous once we begin to record interviews. There have been 10-week trials involving enormous numbers of exchanges such as "He said that," "No he did not," "Yes, he did," "No, he did not." That will disappear. The interviews will be recorded on tape and, as the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said, we shall be looking for proper detective work. There will be proper interrogations and proper admissions in which everyone will have confidence. Jurors will be able properly to convict or otherwise.

A case at the Old Bailey came to an end recenty after running for an enormously long time. It would have been marvellous if the interviews in that case had been recorded on tape. I believe that the case lasted for four months. It would probably have lasted for a week if the interrogations had been recorded on tape.

I apologise to the House for intervening at a late stage in the debate. However, I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to introduce the tape recording of interviews and interrogations. Codes of conduct are fine, but for goodness sake let us have tape recordings. My hon. Friend will be surprised at the money that will be saved by their introduction. I cannot understand why the Treasury has not been insistent that tape recordings should be used. There will be enormous savings in both time and money, and justice will benefit accordingly.

9.44 pm

Mr. Giles Shaw: The refreshing intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) has given me a sudden thirst for the economies of scale of tape recording. However, I have to remind myself that I must equip every police station with an appropriate room which is sound proofed and generally appropriate to the purpose for which it must be used. Nevertheless, I welcome the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend, and I can assure him that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary shares his view. Indeed, we shall be starting to extend gradually from the trial areas in which tape recorders have been used.

The subject of tape recording was raised by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and my hon. Friends the Members for Leicestershire, North-West and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). A further code of practice will, of course, be laid before the House in accordance with the provisions of section 60 which require the Secretary of State

"*(a)* to issue a code of practice in connection with the tape-recording of interviews of persons"

and

"*(b)* to make an order requiring the tape-recording of interviews of persons".

I hope that that will not be too long delayed. Indeed, I trust that it will make its appearance in the course of next year.

Sir John Farr: Will the new code also include the provision of video recorders?

Mr. Shaw: That has not been part of the experimentation which we have undertaken with tape recording. I take my hon. Friend's point that that is yet another useful technological development. In so far as we are wishing primarily to deal with evidence which has been recorded and which can be understood and transmitted, I think that the video recorder is, in a sense, an excessive development. Let us watch the way in which these technologies are evolved in court cases and review the matter in due course.

I sound one note of caution regarding the reference of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West to the transcripts of tape recording. The joyous economy which my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West rightly seized in the matter of tape recording would fairly rapidly disappear if every tape recording had to be fully transcribed. I am sure that those of my hon. Friends who are lawyers will readily recognise that armfuls of printouts would not be the way to proceed if they and the Government wished to simplify the matter and reduce the cost of court proceedings. I do not, therefore, welcome the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West that there should be provision for the supply of transcripts.

Mr. Ashby: I am convinced from cases I have done myself in which there have been tape recordings that it is totally unnecessary to have a full transcript of the tape recording. It is necessary only to have the tape recording available to be heard. It is necessary to have transcribed only the choice parts which are the admissions.

Mr. Shaw: I am delighted to have that support from my hon. Friend. No doubt all good members of the Law Society will take note of the way my hon. Friend puts his point, because this matter will doubtless cause concern to lawyers at some stage.

I turn to the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I understood his point about the increased bureaucracy which is inherent in the Act and not only in the codes of practice. With regard to training, I think that the hon. Gentleman was suggesting that there was rather slender training, but I can reassure him that substantial training is involved. Every officer has been through a course which lasts for almost a fortnight for those involved in sergeant's training and almost three days for those involved in constable's training to ensure that there is a working understanding of what is required when the Act becomes fully operational on 1 January next year.

I accept that the anxiety is one that forces face in relation to the controls imposed, the keeping of records and the bureaucratic elements within the legislation. In particular, the role of the custody sergeant to which the hon. Gentleman referred will be crucial. The maintenance of duties of the custody sergeant and the record of how he deals with the persons in his care are also crucial to the rights of the suspect which have been such a feature of the debate. This is a matter with which many forces have now experimented and those that I have visited are of the opinion that the Act in action is somewhat less formidable than the Act in prospect. I sincerely hope that that opinion will come to be shared generally.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the PSI report in relation to stop and search powers. My understanding is that the report accepted that stop and search powers were of use in the detection of offences and that they should not be withdrawn but be proceeded with. I think that the concern was that there would be a need for safeguards to ensure adequate supervision of the exercise of the power. That is what the codes are setting out to achieve, and I hope that that will be the case in practice.

When the hon. Gentleman referred to lodging houses, I think that he had in mind note 4A on page 27 of the code. I am a little concerned that he should interpret it in the way that he did, suggesting that lodging houses were dealt with differently. The note for guidance says:

"In the case of a lodging house or similar accommodation a search should not be made on the basis solely of a landlord's consent".

That is trying to protect the tenant's right to determine access to his flat rather than the right of the landlord, which is so frequently the case at present. I hope that there will be a slightly greater protection of the tenant, which I think the hon. Gentleman had in mind. There is still the provision that, if the tenant is unavailable and the matter is urgent, the police may rely only on the landlord's consent. The intention, however, is to offer greater protection from entry to the tenant's property, so that it shall not be simply on the say-so of the landlord.

Mr. Soley: Surely the point is that if the tenant is not available the entry should be effected only when the police have a warrant, and not on the say-so of somebody else.

Mr. Shaw: I accept that. The question is one of search with consent, and whether the urgency of the matter overlies the requirement of consent. I take the hon. Gentleman's point, and obviously in practice we shall have to see how it is carried out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West raised several points, and I have dealt with the use of tape recordings. I welcome his comments on the language used in the codes. We have tried hard to adopt language which can be widely used.

[Mr. Shaw]

In an intervention when the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery was speaking, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West suggested that there should be a simplified leaflet setting out the main conditions. Provision is made in the code for the suspect's rights to be drawn to his attention. At paragraph 3.2 on page 40, it says:

"The custody officer must give the person a written notice setting out the above three rights".

That refers to the right to have someone informed, the right to consult a solicitor, and the right to consult the code of practice. There is also a right to a copy of the custody record in accordance with the proceedings set out in paragraph 2.4. That will go some way towards making provision for a simplified version of the code to be drawn to the attention of all suspects. I hope that it will meet with the approval of those who have raised the point.

The four basic rights — to be set out in a leaflet handed to the suspect — would be the right to have someone informed, the right to legal advice, the right to a copy of the code of practice and the right to a copy of the custody record.

Mr. Bermingham: Perhaps in one of the Home Office directions this suggestion could be made to police forces, and that might put the matter in motion. If the leaflet could be handed to the person at the time when he signed the detained person's sheet, the problem would be covered.

Mr. Shaw: I take on board the hon. Gentleman's sensible suggestion and will see that that is done in relation to police practice.

The provision that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West suggested — to have a simplified or shortened leaflet setting out the rights of the individual — will be met. I emphasise that the codes of practice, whether they cost £3 or not, will be available in every police station in England and Wales. I confirm that the Welsh language will be used, as it is already where Government documents are involved.

I have already referred to the Welsh language matter that was raised by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. He also mentioned magistrates and warrants. I understand the unease that has been expressed in the debate about magistrates' warrants. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) also raised that point. Sections 15 and 16 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act lay down the condition under which warrants are issued. The police will make applications for warrants on forms to be issued by the Home Office, together with a circular note about the provision of the code. A standard application form will be used when a police officer makes an application to a magistrate. The form will clearly set out the information needed for the magistrate to satisfy himself that the requirements of the Act have been met.

However, I accept the points that have been raised. If that system is ineffective, I agree that we should have to consider further guidance to ensure that the practice can be carried out effectively. The intention is to do what the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery seeks, which is to formalise and structure the procedure under which a magistrate can issue a warrant.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South was in robust form when he dealt with the duty solicitor scheme. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) also raised that matter. At the risk of getting it wrong again, I can now correct myself by stating that the Law Society was substantially consulted by the Lord Chancellor's Department, but it did not consent to the two-tier arrangement that forms the present basis of the duty solicitor scheme. The arrangement was not regarded with much enthusiasm, but no alternative was offered by the Law Society for a scheme that would enable the 24-hour duty provisions to be enacted as speedily as we would wish. The scheme has not, as yet, gained the support of the Law Society, but the society was closely consulted.

I should tell the hon. Member for St. Helens, South that there will be an opportunity further to assess these matters when the provisions for legal aid orders are laid before the House, for one of which the affirmative procedure will be applied. I am happy to state that the Solicitor-General will move the orders. That will allow for discussion among lawyers, which will be signally more appropriate than a discussion with me.

I confirm for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North that the £50 limit on costs in the second tier for non-arrestable offences will include the payment for travelling time. My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for St. Helens, South accused the Government of proceeding without any idea about what might happen in practice. In pilot tests, the £50 figure emerged as the average cost in the majority of cases, although I accept that nothing will determine that figure more accurately than putting the scheme into practice. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North is dissatisfied with the limit, I suspect that he would welcome some scheme rather than none.

We must ensure that the provision of consultation with a lawyer is made available as of right to the suspect, and made available quickly. I must tell the hon. Member for St. Helens, South that the Lord Chancellor has undertaken to keep the operation of the scheme under early review. I am sure that decisions will be made in the light of experience.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough asked about firearms. I said in response to an earlier intervention that the Police Complaints Authority is likely to report on the use of firearms in searches, which clearly played a part in two of the tragic cases that are before the authority. My hon. Friend will recognise that the use of firearms is acutely sensitive in relation not only to the police but to the public. Therefore, it would be wrong for me to say more tonight than that I believe that the public interest will be served by the report of the Police Complaints Authority. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it clear that any advice from the authority on training in the use of firearms and the methods by which those who use firearms are selected will be carefully and seriously considered. My hon. Friend will recall that, not too long ago, there was a thorough review of police practice in relation to firearms after the Waldorf case, which no doubt we all remember well.

I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety, but I assure him that such matters are being reviewed by the Police Complaints Authority. Should it see fit, as I suspect it will, to make a special report on the matter, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will consider the lessons to be learnt from such cases.

I welcome the way in which hon. Members have contributed to our debate on the codes. It is clear that hon.

Members on both sides of the House believe that the codes are a significant step forward. Although some hon. Members may believe that the codes have disadvantages, the general feeling seems to be that, on the whole, the codes will have considerable advantages.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) is in the Chamber. I am glad to know that the proposals set out in my letter to him relating to further protection for the deaf, especially the prelingually deaf, are likely to meet with their approval. That is symptomatic of our purpose. The codes will provide some reassurance that the rights of the public, whether they belong to ethnic groups or to disadvantaged groups, including the disabled, the deaf, those who have difficulty in speaking or the mentally ill, are clearly laid down in the form of codes that will have a significant bearing on the powers of the police while executing their duties. The codes will have force in the disciplinary code for the police which hon. Members have come to realise is a considerable advantage.

However, I trust that the codes include the correct expression of the view of Parliament, as contained in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, that a balance should be struck between the execution in the correct measure of new powers and the duties that Parliament has laid on the police. I assure the House of the extreme care with which the police approached their task, recognising that from 1 January 1986 they will be operating within a context that represents the biggest change in the statutory backing for policing for about 50 years. With those formidable prospects ahead of them, I am confident that they will discharge their duties effectively and well.

I am grateful to the House for accepting the spirit in which the codes were placed before it, and I look forward to the House approving them.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order 1985, dated 24th October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th October, in the last Session of Parliament, *be approved*.

STATUTORY INSTUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Weights and Measures

That the draft Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Various Foods) (Amendment No. 2) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 20th November, be approved.

Highlands and Islands Shipping Services

That the draft Undertaking between the Secretary of State for Scotland and Regionfields Ltd. trading as Easdale Island Shipping Line, which was laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SERVICES)

Ordered,

That Mr. A. J. Beith be discharged from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) and Mr. James Wallace be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Gerald Malone be discharged from the Select Committee on European legislation and Mr. Robin Squire be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

LIAISON COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Mr. A. J. Beith be dischared from the Liaison Committee and Mr James Wallace be added to the Committee. —*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Dr. John Marek be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Allan Rogers be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Malcolm Pike

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10.4 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): It is with considerable alarm that I record that it is almost one year since I raised in the House for the first time the case of the detention in Libya of my constituent Malcolm Pike of Blandford St. Mary. I shall outline the background to the matter and, in particular, the developments during the past year of this most unfortunate case. In the light of those developments I shall make a number of recommendations.

I am heartened that the debate is to be answered by my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar). I was delighted at his recent appointment as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I know that that feeling is shared by many of my colleagues. As a Back Bencher he was renowned for the energy and combative nature of his advocacy. I earnestly hope that he will deploy all his skills in assisting me to help my unfortunate constituent.

Whatever help my hon. Friend and his colleagues can give will be vital if this young life is not to drag on in further dusty detention. But, as I have pointed out before, in the years ahead there are likely to be more and more Britons working overseas. That will happen as more and more British industries, manufacturing and service, undertake to join in the fierce competitive battles that are to be waged in overseas markets for the contracts on which our high standard of living depends. I hope that Britons are also increasingly likely to be engaged overseas in a second role, which is the provision of managerial and advisory services to overseas countries. I have mentioned that point before in the House, and I hope that I shall have future occasions on which to expand it. For the present debate it should be sufficient to draw to my hon. Friend's attention the great likelihood of an increasing number of Britons overseas and the necessity for an increased robustness in their protection on the part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Government Departments for reasons that will become clear.

Malcolm Pike, who is now 32 years old, worked for Lomond Engineering in Libya between 27 August 1980 and 11 June 1982. He was based in the company's office in Benghazi where he dealt with administrative and financial matters. The company was actively engaged in engineering contracting work in Libya. Mr. Pike worked as an accountant and left Libya in June 1982. He was unemployed for a time and lived at home in Blandford St. Mary in the most beautiful county in Britain.

In May or June 1983 he received a call from Mr. Mohammed Naim Sharafat who is of Pakistani nationality and was then the engineering and general manager of Lomond Engineering Company Ltd. in Libya. Mr. Sharafat asked whether Mr. Pike was interested in returning to work for Lomond Engineering in Tripoli. He explained that on 1 March 1983 the company had been nationalised and all the work and current contracts had been taken over by the National Petroleum Services Company of Libya. They required someone conversant with the company's affairs and accounting procedures. He explained that Mr. Pike would be involved in finalising the claim for compensation with NPSC and in dealings with the tax office in Benghazi. Mr. Pike, who needed both the job and its salary, accepted the offer and returned to Libya on 24 June 1983.

Mr. Pike's task was to assist in finalising the claim for compensation by Lomond Engineering or its shareholders against the NPSC of Libya and to assist in dealing with its tax affairs. In both those matters his previous experience with the company and knowledge of its affairs was of considerable use.

On arrival he found that there were in Lomond Engineering's offices Mr. Sharafat and a Mr. Ismail Sakhnini, a Palestinian with Swedish nationality. The plan was that one person would go on holiday while the other two stayed in Libya. As Mr. Pike was to discover, this was required because the company had tax liabilities for the years 1980 to 1982, and the tax office in Benghazi had issued a letter to the immigration office there informing it of this liability and instructing it that at all times there should be one representative of Lomond Engineering kept in Libya. In August Mr. Sharafat left for a vacation but did not return. At this time a Mr. Samir Shawa was apparently controlling the company from London. Subsequently Mr. Pike left for a vacation in the United Kingdom but returned in October, whereupon Mr. Sakhnini left.

Despite a number of protestations by him that he would return to Libya to take Mr. Pike's place, he never did. During this time, rent on the company's flat in Libya was not paid and Mr. Pike did not have a company cheque book to enable any salaries, including his own, to be paid. The position of both the company and Mr. Pike became more and more serious.

At that time it became even more difficult for him or, indeed, anyone to contact Mr. Shawa. Mr. Pike was able to arrange for a Mr. Clive Downs to take his place for a short time to enable Mr. Pike to take a holiday to come back to the United Kingdom to try to sort matters out. This was done at the expense of Mr. Pike, who had to pay Mr. Downs to do this. Naturally, Mr. Pike, being a man of honour, returned to Libya to allow Mr. Downs tc leave. A third visit was made later when matters became desperate in June 1984.

At this point in the story a Mr. Abbas Bunkheila, a Libyan national at present believed to be residing in the United Kingdom, comes on the scene. He had previously lived in Benghazi and worked with a company entitled Libyan Resources Development, and to him payments were made for assets in Libyan Resources Development and, according to Mr. Shawa, for other reasons.

Mr. Pike was owed the sum of about £16,000 by Lomond Engineering in August 1984 and is undoubtedly owed a good deal more money now.

Lomond Engineering is a company registered in the Cayman Islands, and a firm of what are apparently lawyers provide some of the directors. Lomond Commercial Ltd. is a company registered in the United Kingdom, apparently wholly-owned by Mr. Shawa. While there seems to be no formal connection between the companies, it was apparent to Mr. Pike that the two were run by Mr. Shawa, who certainly took decisions which affected Lomond Engineering.

Mr. Pike was, and remains to this day, detained in Libya without pay and is owed a substantial sum of unpaid salary and expenses. He has relied on the charity of friends and been fortunate, but he is not allowed to leave the country as the Libyan authorities are permitted under Libyan law to detain him as a hostage for the taxation bill

alleged to be owing by Lomond Engineering, the company for which he worked. Mr. Pike himself has no resources. He was never a shareholder in Lomond Engineering or connected with it in any way other than as an employee.

I raised the matter in correspondence with the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton). I also raised the matter on the Adjournment on 21 December 1984, when it seemed that there was a possibility that Mr. Sakhnini would be prepared to go back to Libya to take Mr. Pike's place. This proved, as have other promises of such an arrangement, to be false, and since then no effective progress has been made.

Throughout this time Mr. Pike's father, Mr. Frank Pike, has worked tirelessly to try to contact the individuals connected with this company to obtain their help in securing his son's release. All his patient efforts by writing, telephoning, travelling and waiting have come to nothing. He has received no replies to his letters or information or assistance of any kind from these individuals.

I should also say that both Mr. George Anderson and Mr. Hugh Dunnachie of the Foreign Office, as representatives of Her Majesty's Government in Tripoli, have been as helpful as they can. Mr. Dunnachie's efforts to achieve Mr. Pike's release deserve considerable praise. Without his continuing help, Mr. Pike's condition would be even more serious than it is. On behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pike, I extend the warmest thanks to him and all the Foreign Office staff involved.

This is a murky and mysterious matter and it has involved prolonged correspondence, discussions and negotiations with other companies bearing the Lomond name. These reveal, among other things, that Lomond Engineering has circulated a set of accounts containing a forged opinion. That is not the only thing that needs to be investigated.

It appears that Mr. Sakhnini visited Libya in June this year to try to negotiate the settlement of the company's tax liabilities, but he did not contact Mr. Pike and no arrangements were made to release Mr. Pike from his detention. Apparently, cheques for 260,000 Libyan dinas were issued by the National Petroleum Services Company to Mr. Sakhnini on his visit to Libya, but he failed entirely to use that money, as promised, to secure Mr. Pike's release. It is also apparent that, despite denials, Mr. Sakhnini was appointed as attorney of Lomond Engineering and that he was an employee of the company at one stage.

I have said that the conduct of Mr. Shawa, Mr. Sakhnini and Mr. Bunkheila and Mr. Floyd Cullup, who signed a document appointing Mr. Sakhnini attorney of Lomond Engineering, deserves investigation, and the part played by Mr. Shawa in particular seems utterly reprehensible.

I understand that Mr. Shawa has applied for naturalisation, but purely on the ground that he has apparently brought about the detention of a British citizen in Libya I would regard him as somebody utterly unfit and undesirable to be a naturalised British citizen.

I also understand that there have been suggestions that Mr. Bunkheila and others connected with the company have wished to prolong their stay in the United Kingdom. Notwithstanding the preliminary views of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), Minister of State, Home Office, in May last year, I believe that there is now evidence of serious misconduct which should make it unthinkable that anyone connected with this company should be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom.

I am therefore making a plea, on behalf of an anguished Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pike, who have borne the detention of their son with considerable fortitude over a long period of time, that my hon. Friend will take the following action.

First, will my hon. Friend make the strongest representations, through the admittedly limited means available, to the Libyan authorities that my constituent, who has no funds, and no control over the assets of the company, and is of no use to the Libyan authorities, should be allowed to leave Libya forthwith?

Secondly, will my hon. Friend draw the attention of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, to this debate and ask him to re-examine immediately any requests to stay in or enter the United Kingdom by Messrs. Shawa, Bunkheila, Sakhnini, Cullop and anyone else involved with Lomond Engineering?

Thirdly, will my hon. Friend support and assist any inquiries that may be instituted in connection with some of the more serious aspects of this matter?

My hon. Friend must understand the deep gloom of a family who see their son's continuing detention far from home by heartless and possibly criminal activities of a small number of people. I hope that he will do everything that he can to rescue my constituent from his desperate plight.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on obtaining this debate, and on selecting for debate the subject on which he has addressed us so ably. I thank him also for the kind personal remarks that he made about me at the beginning of his speech.

I know that my hon. Friend has been a tireless campaigner on behalf of Mr. Pike, who is one of his constituents. I know, too, that for well over a year Mr. Pike's plight has been distressing both to himself and to his family. My hon. Friend raised this case as long ago as December 1984, and I am deeply sorry that the case is still dragging on. Nobody who listened to that debate almost a year ago would have believed that it could be possible for the case still to be dragging on. I join my hon. Friend in hoping very much that the case will soon be resolved.

Before speaking in more detail about the particular points that were raised by my hon. Friend, I think that it would be appropriate to set out the context both of our own difficult relations with Libya and the generality of the consular protection that we are able to provide across the world. I know that many right hon. and hon. Members have particular cases that they have followed carefully. I hope, therefore, that my general remarks will be of wider interest.

The House will be aware that the United Kingdom broke off diplomatic relations with Libya in April 1984, following the tragic incident in St. James's square, but we have no wish to impede ordinary private contacts or civilian commercial exchanges between Britain and Libya. It was because of the break in diplomatic relations that we decided to allow the Libyans to maintain an interests section in the embassy of its protecting power, Saudi Arabia. This interests section was staffed by two Libyan

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

officials. Two British consular officials were appointed to constitute the British interests section at the Italian embassy in Tripoli. We are grateful to the Italian Government for agreeing to act as our protecting power in Libya. We are also grateful for the performance of our consular officers in Libya. It is not an easy task. I know that they will be heartened by my hon. Friend's very kind remarks about them.

Many British subjects travelling or working abroad find themselves in difficulties. I have particular sympathy for Mr. Pike, not least because his difficulties lie towards one end of the spectrum in two respects. The first is the severity of his difficulties. The second is the fact that they have been going on for such a long time. The difficulties of many British subjects can be cleared up in a few hours, often without the help of local consular staff, and often even without intervention by the British Government in London. However, those British subjects who need assistance can get it from the Foreign Office in London and from diplomatic service officers in embassies and consulates abroad. My hon. Friend might be interested to know that we have about 290 diplomatic officers abroad who are engaged in full time consular work, and that they are supported by about 137 locally engaged staff.

To give some idea of the problems that are faced by my Department, I should tell the House that about 5 million or 6 million Britons are resident overseas. I cannot be more certain of the number, because many of them do not register with local embassies or high commissions. A further 22 million Britons travel overseas each year—in other words, nearly half the population of the United Kingdom. That figure is about four times as many as travelled abroad 20 years ago.

In the Foreign Office we do our best to keep up with the increasing work load. We shift our staff around to meet peak times throughout the world and we also keep our staff levels under constant review. We support the staff abroad in a number of ways. We have a consular department in London which has staff to call on every day of the year, 24 hours a day, with the exception of Christmas day. The London staff may give advice to people who are going abroad before they leave and then help to solve the problems which sometimes arise after they get there.

I recommend to my hon. Friend, although I am sure that he has seen it, an excellent leaflet entitled "Get it right before you go", which has been widely distributed. It explains in succinct language what we can do and also, I am afraid, what we cannot do. Members of the public who want more detailed advice on specific countries, particularly in such areas as the middle east where local laws and working conditions are very different from those in the United Kingdom, can get that kind of information from our consular department.

I shall tell my hon. Friend what our consuls can and cannot do. They can ensure that a British subject is informed of his legal rights, but they cannot give legal advice themselves. They can ensure that British subjects are treated no worse in prison than are local nationals, but they cannot get people out of prison. In a nutshell, we can help British citizens abroad who fall foul of the law in a given country, but we cannot get another country to change its laws, however different those laws may be from our own.

That provides a backdrop to the specific question of Libya and the tragic case of Mr. Pike. Local law there, as in many other Arab countries, provides that an employee may be held responsible for his firm's debts and should not be allowed to leave the country until the debts are settled. The Government cannot intervene in the process of law in Libya, any more than we would accept attempts by Libya, or another country, to interfere in our law. Nor can we become involved in what is essentially a commercial dispute in which Mr. Pike finds himself, however tragic and sad the circumstances.

Since Mr. Pike returned to Libya 18 months ago, on 8 June 1984, he has been unable to leave the country because he has been held responsible for the tax debts of his employers, Lomond Engineering. Sadly, Lomond Engineering is not a United Kingdom registered company, it does not have a United Kingdom office, and it appears to have deliberately deserted Mr. Pike. I am sure that my hon. Friend is right in saying that the company is responsible for the situation in which Mr. Pike finds himself.

There are cases where British nationals have been, or are currently, prevented from leaving other Arab countries, not Libya, because they are held responsible for their firms' debts. Hundreds of British companies work in the Arab world, and they must arrange that one of their expatriate staff is responsible for the affairs of the company. In doing so, the company recognises that that expatriate can be prevented from leaving if the company incurs debts. However, in all but a tiny minority of cases problems do not arise because the companies either have no debts or negotiate a settlement. As in this case, companies arrange a rota whereby a substitute representative stands in for leave purposes. That practice is entirely acceptable to local authorities.

In addition to the visit to which my hon. Friend referred, a representative of Lomond Engineering visited Libya in April 1985 and received a payment for the company's equipment. That sum was subsequently used to reduce the tax debt, but, sadly, a considerable amount of debt remains outstanding. Interestingly, the Libyan authorities apparently took no action to prevent the representative from leaving Libya.

The Government's scope to assist Mr. Pike is limited. Our British interests section in Tripoli has been supportive of him since his plight was first brought to its attention. It has given such advice and assistance as it properly can. The head of the British interests section has discussed his plight with the Libyan tax authorities on at least six occasions in an endeavour to overcome the problem. The Italian embassy, as the protecting power, has addressed notes to the Libyan authorities requesting that Mr. Pike be granted an exit visa, but without result.

I understand the current position is that a British firm which is highly specialised in Libyan tax matters is preparing a case to present to the Libyan tax authorities in an endeavour to secure Mr. Pike's departure from Libya. I am delighted to say that that firm is doing the work without intending to charge for it.

I am aware, as my hon. Friend said, that Mr. Pike's father has been in contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at intervals throughout the year, and he discussed his son's position with our consul in Tripoli on 6 August when the consul was on leave in the United Kingdom.

Towards the end of his remarks my hon. Friend made three requests. The first was that we should approach the Libyan authorities and do everything within our power to ensure that Mr. Pike is allowed to leave Libya. I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We shall continue to take every possible opportunity to press the Libyan authorities and to urge them to grant an exit visa, but that, I am afraid, must be within the constraints that I have already explained.

My hon. Friend's second request was that I should draw his speech to the attention of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. I shall be delighted to do that. I shall also ensure that my hon. and learned Friend is made aware of the information that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has about the case.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend asked that my Department should be willing to assist inquiries about the case and the performance of the company within the United Kingdom. It occurs to me, after hearing what my hon. Friend said, that it might be worth bringing my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry into this matter to see whether he has any powers, although we must take account of the fact that the company is not United Kingdom registered and his powers may well be limited. However, we shall follow up that point.

I wish to reiterate the sympathy that the Government feel for Mr. Pike. He has, unfortunately, found himself in a kind of limbo. He is not, fortunately, deprived of his liberty within Libya, but he is deprived of his liberty and freedom to leave Libya.

As I have said, I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to do everything that we properly can to assist Mr. Pike. I hope that with the help of the officials in my Department and my colleagues, we can bring his difficulties to an end as soon as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 6 December 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILLS PRESENTED

MARRIAGE (WALES)

Mr. Donald Coleman presented a Bill to extend section 23 of the Marriage Act 1949 to Wales: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 January and to be printed. [Bill 41.]

MEDICAL ACT (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Nigel Spearing, supported by Dr. M. S. Miller and Dr. Brian Mawhinney, presented a Bill to amend section 36 of the Medical Act 1983 to enable the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council to exercise greater discretion in respect of conduct which they judge cannot be regarded as acceptable professional conduct: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 January and to be printed. [Bill 42.]

TOBACCO PRODUCTS (ADVERTISING)

Mr. Laurie Pavitt, supported by Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. Nigel Forman, Mr. Toby Jessel, Mr. Clement Freud, Mr. Robert Sheldon and Sir Anthony Meyer, presented a Bill to provide a for a ban on all forms of advertising of tobacco products; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 February and to be printed. [Bill 43.]

TOBACCO PRODUCTS (SPORTS SPONSORSHIP)

Mr. Roger Sims, supported by Mr. George Foulkes, Mr Laurie Pavitt, Mr. Toby Jessel, Mr. Clement Freud, Mr. Robert Sheldon and Sir Anthony Meyer, presented a Bill to provide for a ban on sponsorship of sporting events by tobacco companies, to be achieved by progressive reduction of expenditure, and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 February and to be printed. [Bill 44.]

COMPANIES

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, supported by Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Bob Edwards, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Jeremy Hanley, Mr. Robert McCrindle, Mr. Tom Normanton, Sir David Price, Mr. Richard Wainwright and Mr. Mark Wolfson, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the election and responsibilities of directors of companies; to require the circulation of particulars of candidates to the members and the consideration of the appointment of non-executive directors before any election of directors to make provision in regard to audit committees and to the functions of auditors; and to make other changes in the law relating to quoted companies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 February and to be printed. [Bill 45.]

Young People (Violent Crime)

9.36 am

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I beg to move,

That this House views with great concern the problem of violent crime committed by the young; notes the important influence which parents, the schools and the media can have in their formative years; and calls upon the Government to lead a renewed and vigorous effort to develop in our young people an increased sense of responsibility and awareness of the interests of their fellow citizens, and to encourage their more active participation in their communities.

The motion has a broad canvas, and yet in the context of violence by young people it may be thought to be drawn too narrowly because it does not invite the House to consider the influence of unemployment, poor housing conditions or badly planned, inhuman and congested housing estates. That is not because I do not consider that any or all of those problems have no consequence whatever, but because I know that the House has addressed itself recently to their effects.

My purpose today is to call attention to those influences where the individual, by his own actions and example, can help to reduce the chances of young people committing acts of violence. I hope that my motion will enable us to concentrate on those more personal influences where people have a constructive role.

The growth of violence in our society has aroused great concern on both sides of the House. The figures for crimes of violence against the person—homicide, attempted murder and serious wounding—have nearly doubled in the past 10 years. What has caused most anxiety has been the level of violence among young people. There is no way of knowing how much violent crime young people commit. All we have are the figures of those cautioned or found guilty in the courts. The figures for 1974 show that 49,879 were found guilty or cautioned for crimes of violence. By 1985 that figure had risen to 68,500.

Of course, there are more young people today than 10 years ago, reflecting the baby boom of the 1960s. Nevertheless—this is what is so disturbing about the figures—the proportion of young people found guilty or cautioned for crimes of violence is higher. Most surprising of all, the biggest increase is among the 14 to 17 age group.

It is easy to seek scapegoats, but we are all involved in our society and the tasks of parenthood and teaching have become even more demanding. There is no one reason, but I believe that I shall carry the House with me when I say that the causes lie in the fact that we live in a country in transition, not only industrially and economically but socially and morally.

We talk of a return to Victorian values—discipline, hard work, voluntary service, a pride and involvement in the community, patriotism and a respect for law and order. All those we associate with the Victorian era. But it was also a time, so well described by Dickens, of grinding poverty, exploitation, hunger, human misery, harsh authoritarianism and moral hypocrisy.

The strides that we have made since then have shown that we have grasped the threads of humanism. Our social and welfare legislation of the 20th century ushered in a kinder and more tolerant society, greater respect for the individual and his desire for personal fulfilment and freedom of choice, and, I believe, a system of justice that has been shorn of much of its harshness.

However, over the past decades, and even longer, with those improvements have come a decline in moral values and discipline, less respect for our institutions and the rule of law, and a desire among some sections of the community for instant and selfish gratification—to be achieved, if necessary, by force. We have also had to contend with the effects of the second world war—the second world war this century—which may have had some effect on the problem.

To a large extent, the old rules have gone and the power of the Church has diminished, as has some of our traditional tolerance. We do not appear to know how or with what to replace them. We do not know how to reconcile the need for an orderly society with our need for a wider freedom or how to have discipline and regulation without unfeeling authoritarianism. Perhaps that is why parents and teachers find it so difficult to discharge their duties and why so many children, growing up in an unsure and ill-defined framework of rules and regulations, regard them as arbitrary and too dependent on whim.

Therefore, the ties of family have become weaker, families are smaller and fewer families have had the experience of their Victorian ancestors where the older children first learnt the art of rearing children by looking after their younger brothers and sisters.

Many families have moved away from their roots. Indeed, hon. Members will remember our debates about the effects on families of moving to new towns—known as the new town blues. Families were separated from their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, who, when the family lived within a nuclear unit, often lent a hand. Of course, we are all familiar with the growth of one-parent families, the problems that that causes, and the destructive effect on children.

Faced with all those difficulties, it is not surprising that there are parents—especially the poor and the less well-educated, those with criminal records or those living in the poorer areas in our inner cities—who, not surprisingly, have lost confidence in their ability to discharge their responsibilities, especially to their adolescent children.

My following remarks will be addressed to ways in which we can strengthen the family. The findings of an investigation known as "Delinquency: its roots, careers and prospects" provide some hope. The first step is to help people in poverty. It is better to spend money supporting those families than to spend even larger sums employing social workers after the damage has been done. I hope that that is what the reform of our welfare services, promised by the Government, will achieve. In addition, a whole raft of measures, from day nursery provision, parental guidance centres and, not least, opportunities to inculcate into deprived children a different sense of values, should be pursued.

I believe that that means paying more attention in schools to the problems of the troublesome child. The earlier that is done, the better the chances of success. It means giving them an opportunity to achieve at school, even if it is not academic achievement. I sometimes think that the emphasis placed on academic achievement, at the expense of simply achievement, can do more damage to the psychology of children than anything else that happens during school hours.

The influence of the teacher cannot be emphasised too strongly. I accept that teachers quite rightly say that it is not for them to take on the role of parents. Teachers have a great many responsibilities. However, they also say that

schools are not just examination factories and that education should be concerned with turning out good citizens. All the more reason why our schools in areas of high criminal activity should play a greater role in combating juvenile delinquency.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister and his Department to call upon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to encourage the growth of pastoral care. The earlier that the emotional problems of the child are observed and treated, the better the chance that that child will not turn to crime.

I am not simply espousing theory; research has been carried out, and experience has been gained. What we need is action, and something more. The decline in religious teaching and worship in our schools is leading to a moral vacuum. If people do not go to church, where else can our youngsters expect to develop a sense of what is morally right? Should it be in the home? Yes, of course, where that is possible, but it should always happen in school. Did not that great headmaster Dr. Thomas Arnold say about schools:

"What we must look for here is first, religious and moral principle, second gentlemanly conduct and third intellectual ability."?

The phrase "gentlemanly conduct" may sound a little old-fashioned these days, but perhaps such conduct leads to less violence—does it not?

Can the media, especially television as it is the most powerful medium of communication, play a more active role? A recent report by 15 teachers—with no axe to grind, and the BBC and IBA knew all about it—said:

"It became clear in the course of discussions with producers and others working for the BBC and ITV companies that there was little agreement among them about the wider educational influence and possibilities of television. Producers often assumed that any discussion of the educational role of the programmes was an attempt to press them into taking a more didactic stance in their productions . . . It is not possible to separate the responsibilities to educate and to entertain into such self-contained boxes. Yet it seems that programme makers often do so. As a consequence they fail to recognise or act upon the conflict and continuity between the duties to educate and to entertain. It is this failure to link the two that causes concern to teachers, parents and others."

Many people find it strange that so much television is preoccupied with violence. It is estimated that young people aged between nine and 14 years of age spend an average of 23 hours a week watching television, sometimes far into the night. What a waste. Just think what could happen if some of them spent 23 hours practising a musical instrument; they would learn to play it and would achieve something of lasting benefit.

Be that as it may, those youngsters watch television and there is violence on television. I accept that it would be inconceivable to have television without violence, for television must reflect the world as it is rather than as some of us would like it to be or therein lies the road to censorship. However, I ask parents to remember that there is such a thing as the on-off switch. It is their responsibility not to allow their children to watch late-night movies.

We often praise the system of broadcasting for its quality. Indeed, its products have earned world-wide admiration. Therefore, it is only fair to say that the same people who lead that industry with considerable skill, imagination and integrity are the very same people who must make very difficult judgments about what is suitable for a wide-ranging audience. They must bear in mind the well-researched fact that individuals vary considerably in their perceptions of violence.

Only recently, a senior research officer of the IBA said about people's perceptions:

"The more closely a fictional setting approaches or resembles everyday life and the more graphic the portrayal of pain and suffering, the greater should be the care we take over the decision of whether such a portrayal should be shown and whether a programme that contains it should be transmitted."

It is precisely because the broadcasting authorities are perceived by Mrs. Mary Whitehouse and others to have neglected that fact that has led to demands for censorship and more effective controls over the showing of violence on television.

Such people are bitterly offended and, to judge from some of the examples that they put before us, that is not surprising. In my view, the critics have a point, and the origins of it stem from technological innovation as well as criticisms of personal judgment. Many of today's programmes which contain violence are made in real life settings because the new lightweight cameras are very portable and require little, and at times no, additional lighting, so that they can be taken to locations where the acting has a reality that is difficult to simulate in a studio.

For the unsophisticated and undeveloped mind—the juvenile mind—it can be difficult to separate what is real from what is not. It is not surprising that such developments have made possible the new television phenomenon known as the docudrama, where fact and fiction meet, and it can even deceive the sophisticated adult.

It is argued by responsible people inside and outside broadcasting that there is no causal proof of a link between violence on the screen and violence on the street. Looking at the research, it is difficult for a layman such as myself to know where the balance of the argument lies because research by responsible researchers can point either way. Much depends on the methodology and, as a layman, I find it hard to make a judgment as to who wins that argument.

It is clear, however, that over the years more and more research findings have conluded that the frequent viewing of television can influence some people to commit violent crime and that repeated exposure to television violence increases the chances that a spectator will act violently. Even some of those who deny a causative effect admit that television can have a reinforcement influence.

One of the most interesting pieces of research was done in the early 1970s by William Belson. His report, "Television violence in the adolescent boy," contained the principal finding that there was strong evidence to support the view that long-term exposure to television violence increased substantially the extent to which London boys engaged in acts of serious violence.

That finding does not stand alone. Many others, here and in the United States, support that opinion. The most recent study, conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health in America, reported in 1982 that

"the consensus among most of the research community is that violence does lead to aggressive behaviour by children and teenagers who watch the programmes."

That concern is shared by exalted people such as Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice. It could be argued that in this area his opinion should carry no more weight than that of ordinary mortals. He is an expert on the law, but that does not make him an expert on research into behavioural

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

attitudes and responses. Nevertheless, I should have thought that Lord Lane would be a cautious man when giving opinions on such an issue. He was reported in July of this year as saying that violence in films and on television, including in news reports, had contributed to an alarming increase in the nastiness of crime. He went on to say that it was

"now accepted as common form that once you have your victim on the ground, you kick him, preferably on the stomach or on the head, where the blows are likely to do maximum injury."

Lord Scarman, in his report on the Brixton disorders, saw the broadcasting medium as bearing some responsibility for the escalation of violence. A former colleague of ours, Eric Moonman, who conducted interviews among the people of Toxteth, wrote:

"The influence of television on their responses to the situation could not be doubted. TV made it look easy. They knew what kind of thing to do."

The BBC and IBA are statutory bodies and among their duties is the duty to listen to and heed public opinion. Indeed, both organisations claim that they do so. The IBA has a code of conduct which it was statutorily compelled to compile. It is a lengthy, detailed document which was drawn up with great care. One paragraph referring to the portrayal of violence states:

"There is portrayed violence which is potentially so disturbing that it might be psychologically harmful, particularly for young or emotionally insecure viewers."

Every producer must have regard to that comment.

The BBC has no code, but it has its own guidelines, and they too are lengthy, well constructed and the consequence of a great deal of thought. They include the passage:

"a consensus of research suggests that de-sensitisation can result from an excess of violence and the amount and treatment of violence needs to be carefully examined all the time."

To judge from comments that are being made, it is possible that the public and the broadcasting organisations are getting our of step, in which case it would be helpful for the BBC and IBA to explain in greater detail to the public their policy towards violence. They might provide examples of when they think it appropriate to apply the code or guidelines to producers and when not to apply it. They could say whether they are contemplating revising their practices and, if not, why not. They might also tell the public about research that they carry out into the effects of their programmes.

There is another reason why it would be in the interests of British broadcasting to set a lead and take the public into its confidence. We are on the brink of an expansion in the number of television channels we can receive. Not all of even the English language programmes will be in British ownership or transmitted by British companies. There is a distinct risk that more will not mean better, that more will not lead to more choice, and that standards will fall. Standards cannot always be upheld by popular choice in the market place. As with many things in life, the people may not have a will to uphold decent and fair standards. We need the institutional framework.

Britain has a reputation for creating authorities by which, as in the broadcasting world, regulation can coexist with freedom of expression. Our broadcasting organisations will continue to carry influence abroad and help to shape international regulation and a decent framework only if they are seen to observe higher standards at home, and in that respect I look to the Government to give their every assistance, for their sake and for that of our children.

9.58 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The opportunity to debate these matters arises because the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), who introduced the debate, believes that issues are involved that merit other than a knee-jerk response. When discussing violence by young people, it is often easy to use clichés that suggest that there is an instant remedy to the problem. The Home Office knows as well as any other Department of State that, in spite of the endeavours of British Governments and those of other countries, and of many agencies outside the Government, it remains necessary to explore the issues carefully and to be careful about suggesting that there can be instant solutions. Many Governments and many agencies have tried and are trying to deal with the enormously complex reasons and practices that make up the violence among our young generation.

I shall cite three examples from my personal experience, which are three microcosms of the problem. These experiences are based in London and they all relate to matters that have arisen over the past few years. The first is a common example. It is the complete despair of parents who have never committed offences and who have done all that they can to instil a code of morality in their children. They despair when they see their children being violent, often week after week. When their children leave junior school and enter senior school, they see them being violent at home, violent with friends and violent with neighbours and others, apart from being verbally violent and violent towards those for whom they have no affection and with whom they have no affinity. These parents wring their hands and fear that they must be to blame for their children's behaviour.

In most such cases, it would be wrong to say that the parents are to blame. Parents in that position will have done all within their knowledge and power, and in the general parental upbringing that they have practised they will have done a good job by objective standards. A particular family that I have in mind could have been accused of over-indulging the children. However, there was no excuse or explanation in that over-indulgence for the way in which at least one of the children behaved regularly. As a youth worker, I would find myself standing between a carving knife held by the youngster and the parent, with the youngster wanting to lunge the knife into the parent because of something that the parent had done or said. I would find myself trying to disarm the youngster when, for example, he was holding, prior to throwing, a milk bottle to smash into others who were not very far away.

The second example is an occasion when, as a practising lawyer before being elected to this place, I was reading my newspaper on the train as I travelled to a court at Oxford. I read that a youngster whom I knew had been arrested for the alleged murder of a girl whom I knew. The incident had happened in Peckham. It came as a shock to me to read their names in a national daily newspaper.

When I returned that evening, I met the group of whom the lad was a member. I discussed with the members of the group what their view would be if it were proved, as eventually it was, that the young man, who was a member of the youth club of which I was a leader, had killed his girlfriend. I asked them what they thought would happen to him if he were convicted of the girl's murder. His friends, who had been with him the week before, said that

if he had killed someone he should be hanged. They had no more sympathy for someone who overstepped the bounds that they regarded as sacrosanct because he was their friend than for anyone else, even though they were equally prone to violence and any one of them might have been the person who committed the violence. Indeed, one of them was much more likely, in my estimation, to behave in that way than the person who actually had.

Thirdly, there is a rather more general example of the way in which the prevalence of violence in many areas reflects upon people's daily lives. On 19 December there will be a local authority by-election in Southwark. It will take place in the Peckham constituency, not in mine. It would be a by-election in the Liddle ward, comprising some of the estates that have been reported in the national press recently as being among the worst in London, such as Gloucester Grove, North Peckham, Camden and others.

The reality of life for political parties reflects the reality of life on these estates. Party supporters will not canvass at night. They are unwilling, however bold they may be, and however able they are to go out with others, to knock on people's doors at night. They are afraid for their own physical safety. In other words, they are afraid of violence, primarily at the hands of young people. Secondly, they are afraid that they will be seeking to induce people to open their doors, which would be unfair on them. Those behind the doors do not normally open their doors after dark, because they expect violent things to happen. That is common, and not the exception. This third example confronts us with the seriousness of the issue with which we are seeking to deal.

Fortunately, the level of violent crime, as a proportion of all crimes perpetrated by young people, is very low. There is a mass of crime involving offences against property, and a lesser amount, thank God, involving offences against people. We must distinguish between the two groups of crime. In a way, one can regard offences involving property—for example, stealing a video or breaking in and taking money—as understandable. It is difficult to extend that understanding to crimes against the person. We can understand youngsters wanting to meet their daily needs by acquiring possessions that they do not have. That is much easier to understand than the feeling that they might have to attack an old person who may have little money or possessions on him. We must put into perspective the proportion of violent criminality, while recognising that it occupies the largest part of the public's perception because it is more serious, more threatening and more menacing than crime involving property.

My second general proposition is that we must be careful not to generalise. The causes of violent crime are especially difficult to determine and often arise for different reasons, even when perpetrated successively by the same individual. The reason for a 16-year-old taking part in a violent assault on a police officer at a football match, or on the way to or from that match, might be very different from the reason for that person behaving violently in another social context a few days or weeks later. We must examine each event and try to diagnose the factors that go to explain it.

The hon. Member for Wealden was right to say that there are many factors, both near and remote, which are accumulating influences, not all of which are understood by the youngster at the receiving end. One primary influence is the family. There are many more small families nowadays. Families tend to live for much longer in small units. We may often find one parent and one child, or one parent and two children, living together. Family units were much larger not all that long ago, and the influence of others, such as grandparents or other older relatives, used to be much greater. In many families there are fewer restraining and inhibiting factors than there used to be. There are fewer people to agree on and present a common code of morality.

I have in mind a wonderful family, the members of which are my friends. There are 13 children; it goes almost without saying that the parents are Irish and Roman Catholics. The members of the family act as the best possible check upon one another. Although they suffered from great deprivation in a general sense, in terms of income, finance and housing when they were young, they had enormous family solidarity. They can provide support for one another; they can entertain one another; they can go out with one another; they can occupy one another and discipline one another; they can take on responsibility for one another when the mother or father are at work or when the older children are not present. They have a general interest which sustains them. That is often to be found in large families, although there is often an odd person out in a large family who feels that he or she must react adversely to the family's general interest.

In general terms, the different general pattern of present family life explains why the mechanisms that families produce are much less effective. The fewer the people who comprise the family, the greater the pressure will be. In a single-parent family—let us assume that the lone parent remains at home and is physically unable to deal with a growing adolescent—the parent may well find it impossibly wearing to keep on seeking to exercise control, and eventually will give in. The youngster will find it unappealing to stay all the time in the company of the single parent. He will go out and become more and more removed from the parent's control.

A second factor is that, by virtue of society's development, previously commonly held values have become less commonly held for all sorts of reasons—changes in demography, more people moving around, changes in community life, the breakdown of communities and the mixing of different national and racial groups. It means that young people find it more difficult to establish the key values, search though they may, and be taught as well as they might. That makes the judgment of values difficult. One of the things that saddens me about Britain is that we do not have clear definitions of values. It has something to do with not having a written constitution, but it is not completely explained by that. Because our fundamental principles have always been unwritten, it is much harder to discover what they are. I have asked youngsters in this country what they regard as the fundamental values and principles. It is more difficult to obtain clear answers from our youngsters than from those in France, Sweden, the United States or even the Soviet Union. Elsewhere they have clearer statements of the principles of civic duty and responsibility.

The third general factor which I suggest often has an influence on young people is the lack of opportunity and the feeling of alienation that can build up. The best example of that that I can cite is the failure of people to behave rationally if they have inadequate verbal skills. If one is able adequately to express oneself verbally, one needs less recourse to physical methods of expression. If someone is frustrated because he or she cannot win an

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

argument and compete on the same terms as the other person, such a person resorts, as people do in even the best educated circles, to other methods.

Marriages often start on the road to breakdown when someone ceases to argue verbally and starts to argue physically. The man often exerts his strength over the woman. A pattern of violence is much easier to establish once the threshold into violence is first crossed.

A youngster, who is not a fool, was arrested near to where I live. I know him. He can usually express himself quite well. He was taken to Tower Bridge magistrates court. He came near to being given a custodial sentence for an assault on a policeman. The youngster had been stopped and questioning began. It developed by him reacting when the policeman sought to arrest him. That lad, who is now in his 20s and settled with a good job, regularly went around carrying a knife. He felt that when he came into conflict with authority he would be less able to cope verbally than other people. That was vividly exemplified in the magistrates court.

I remember thinking, as that lad stood in the dock wearing a leather jacket, looking like he always looked — in some ways surly and anti-authoritarian — that a similarly aged youngster who had had the benefit of an Eton education—to take a trite example, but I hope a helpful one—might have been able to explain how he had lapsed from normal behaviour. He would probably have got off with a much lighter sentence because of his ability to explain his behaviour and relate in a way understood by the person in authority. We can blame a great deal on television, which, although it teaches verbal skills in the sense that it exposes people to a range of views, does not allow the same communication because it feeds in always without giving anyone the chance to feed back. Whereas in past generations matters of dispute were a dialogue, they are now often a monologue to which people are not trained to respond other than simplistically. Many offences of violence are spontaneous. We should be aware that people become caught up in a series of events and react quickly and unthinkingly.

Many offences are induced by other factors. Alcohol is clearly one factor. I applaud the Minister and his colleagues for a little belatedly but none the less honestly seeking to deal with the drugs problem. It sometimes causes us to pay less attention to the alcohol problem, which is responsible for more violent crime than drugs. The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act, enacted last Session, and possibly the drugs Bill proposed for this Session, will deal with these factors, but we must be aware that these pressures have been most harmful.

Another factor is the peer pressure, which suddenly induces someone who may never have committed an offence to behave like his peers when that appears to be the thing to do. The difference between a youngster and an older person is that normally youngsters do not think things through in the same way as older people. They do not have the skill to see where behaviour will lead them. The natural checks and balances that may, for example, inhibit us more than others from drinking and driving—the consequences for us are greater and include public vilification and greater inconvenience—do not work in the same way for someone who does not have a driving licence and who does not think through the social disadvantages of behaving in such a way.

There is a danger that youngsters seeking to be violent are seeking instant gratification. We all do it, and it is nearly always illusory. Stealing, robbing and acquiring other people's property is instant gratification. It is soon spent, passed on or no longer exists. The simple excitement of behaving energetically when life is boring and when often no energy is consumed by someone hanging around all the time explains why someone can get carried away by the excitement of the moment. Those are often single episodes.

A friend of mine is a senior worker at an assessment centre for young people in south London. I was seeking his advice and general comments this morning. He told me that he has someone in the centre who has been sentenced to three years' youth custody for an attack on an old man. It was an attack that went wrong and became a robbery. Someone with a clean record fell to the unjustifiable temptation of wanting to steal. He then behaved much more violently. There may have been a reaction or he may not have anticipated that the old man would not immediately give up the money. The offence became much more serious. He now regrets it, but it is too late.

Some violent crime can be explained by child abuse. Child abuse is reflected when the child becomes an adult. There was a debate in the House on the subject last week. Happily, our society is becoming more aware of the massive problem of child abuse. It is normally committed, not by strangers, but by family and close friends. This may be a topical week to say that we must alert the agencies of protection, such as social services, to ensure that they do the best job—in difficult circumstances, as we all accept. There is a great danger that the abused child will become the abusing parent. That is increasingly becoming the case. The child who is not given adequate parental care and teaching becomes an even more inadequate parent. I have seen that happen regularly as will many other hon. Members. It is depressing, because most children of inadequate parents end up in care and have a greater prospect of becoming inadequate parents themselves.

Some violent behaviour stems from genetic disorders and psychiatric illness, but that applies only to the minority of cases, and so we have to grapple with the social reasons for the majority of acts of violence and their consequences.

I have been driven to three general conclusions. First, in our educatioon we must seek to deal with most comprehensively with the need to establish that violence, particularly against others, is the most objectionable form of activity. We are right to criticise massive frauds in the City, automobile crime and theft from property. But there is a fundamental difference between those crimes and crimes of violence which affect the dignity and integrity of human beings.

Those who commit crimes of violence—in particular, young people — must be shown that violence is an unacceptable form of behaviour in any circumstances. Once they are permitted to be violent in the classroom or at home, violence becomes the norm, and that is very dangerous for society. Therefore, the education process must establish that violence is unacceptable, and youth workers, teachers and others must involve themselves in that process.

Teaching is very hard work in the difficult areas in our society, and teachers' efforts must be backed with

additional social tuition facilities, so that good patterns of behaviour can be established, enabling people to renounce violence in their personal life.

There are three hon. Members in the Chamber this morning who, only a week ago, had personal experience of the second phenomenon that I am about to describe. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) and I were present at an International Youth Year parliament at the premises of the International Maritime Organisation on the other side of the river. I shall not go into the merits of the afternoon's controversial events, but they demonstrated that it is very difficult to establish in young people the principle of tolerant debate and understanding of others.

There is no easy explanation of the phenomenon of intolerance. We have to teach respect for other people's views, otherwise we shall find that we have lost the conventional ways of engaging in the normal social processes. When the norms are broken, violence of language leads to violent behaviour and intolerance of the individual, which is unacceptable however loathsome his views may be. Intolerance is now increasingly common, and we must learn to teach young people how to deal with it and how to renounce it.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I agree with what the hon. Gentleman is saying and I remember well the incident that he describes. However, I ask him to recall that this sort of violence is nothing new in society. It was taking place when I was young and long before that, and it is not unusual. The important question is how we cope with it.

Mr. Hughes: That is right.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Many of us have noticed that intolerance of other points of view in our universities seems to have grown in recent years.

Mr. Hughes: I am afraid that it is a problem that goes well beyond the category of young people. We have a duty, above all in this place, to teach by example. Many people cite this very building as a bad example to young people. It may be in part an excuse, but none the less we must be conscious of it, as must all people in public life. We cannot make the case that we would like to make if we do not subscribe to good standards in our own practice. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith said, there has always been intolerance in society in varying degrees.

My third conclusion is that violence often arises from the feeling that the other side does not understand. The tragedy of Britain today is that we are increasingly a society in which there appear to be two nations. There are places in Britain which in general terms can be defined as the more deprived areas, where people believe—often rightly, although not always — that they are not understood and valued equally.

If black youngsters know that statistically they are less likely than white youngsters to get employment, and have the feeling that they are not understood and that not enough is being done for them, they may think that the only way to be noticed is to assert their point of view, whatever the consequences for themselves. They are willing to challenge authority because that brings attention to them. All youngsters want attention. That is very important for them in establishing their identity. We must not allow them to feel discounted and discarded.

At a time of high unemployment, and when public sector expenditure is being restrained, we have a duty to ensure that our resources are directed towards overcoming the feeling of alienation and powerlessness which sometimes, when added to all the other adverse factors, prompts people, often in groups, to react violently. There will be other debates about how best to deal with the problem of violence, but the Government should always be seeking ways of giving youngsters less cause to feel that they are not being noticed and that the only way to be noticed is to be violent. We must also help them, as I have said, through the education process and other agencies in society, so that we can begin to resolve some of the problems, although ultimately they can be resolved only individually by every young person coming to the conclusion that he or she must renounce violence because it is fundamentally wrong.

10.27 am

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I should like to endorse some of the very well made points of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). One that struck a particular chord was his observation that in our society today there is the fear of violence. There is the fear of the potential victim, and also, in a more subtle sense, the fear of those who might be tempted into violence and feel deeply ashamed subsequently. Obviously, the reality of violence must be dealt with most severely and effectively, but the fear of violence has also changed our society for the worse.

I endorse the hon. Gentleman's point that violence is all too often the language of the inarticulate and the frustrated. We know that in our own lives. He gave the example of how family life can degenerate when people reach breaking point. It is obviously true also of football hooligans and of people who are bored, alienated and depressed, and, above all, of those who are more or less incapacitated by alcohol—another problem to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Clearly, one cannot be articulate when full of alcohol.

It was right for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to say that there is a qualitative difference between violence against property and violence against the person. I am sure that we all deplore violence against the person in any form. The hon. Gentleman was right to link that to the degenerative problem in our society where tolerance of free speech and other people's points of view seems to be decaying. None the less, the explanations coming from all quarters of society, intelligent and thoughful though they may be, are no more than explanations. They are a prelude to action, but they can never be excuses. I stress that point. Parliament and the Government should concentrate on solutions to these problems. There is a body of literature and talk on public platforms about explanations of the problem, but the bulk of our concern should be directed to solutions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) ably introduced the subject this morning. We all listened to him with great interest, particularly to what he said about the media and the impact of the modern mass media upon the problem. He has enormous experience as a former broadcaster and television journalist and he has followed the subject closely. The Home Office and Home Office Ministers would do well to study his remarks.

I should like to touch upon one or two definitional aspects of the problem. We should be worried when about one third of all known offenders in Britain are aged

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

between 15 and 19 years of age. The peak age of criminality, according to the statistics that I have seen, is 15 for males and, incredibly, 14 for females. It should be of concern to the House and the country that those under 17 are disproportionately represented in the criminal statistics for burglary, theft and criminal damage. In 1984 about 36 per cent.—more than a third—of those found guilty or cautioned for criminal damage, or what we would call vandalism, in England and Wales were under 17.

It is equally disturbing that young people seem to be more disposed to criminal activity than older people. From one pont of wiew, we should take comfort from that because perhaps it means that they will grow out of it. However, it is a shame that they have to go through it in the first place. More to the point, it is disturbing that the problem seems to have been getting worse rather than better and that the manifestations are becoming increasingly anti-social.

That leads me to consider briefly, and perhaps superficially, my own rendering of some of the causes. There are many different theories about the causes of crime and juvenile delinquency and, as I have already stressed and want to underline, none of the explanations, however compelling, can ever be considered to be an excuse.

When I talk aout the subject in my constituency and listen to the views of those who were brought up in the 1920s, 1930s or 1940s, they ask how can it be right, whatever the problems of social deprivation, for a generation of young people to react to deprivation and depression in a violent way when they did not. They may be romanticising slightly in the sense that they may not have the criminal statistics in front of them. We know that the criminal statistics and the police recording of crimes have improved and that has had an effect. Even allowing for those tricky scientific points, there is a generational difference, to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has already drawn our attention. That is important because it gives extra validity to the point that there can be explanations but never excuses.

When I was preparing for this debate, I came across a learned study by the Cambridge Institute of Criminology to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden has already referred. I spotted a succinct and helpful quotation from the study that sets out better than I could the heart of the matter when considering causes. The study considered in considerable detail a cohort of boys. The salient paragraph said:

"It was the boys from broken homes rather than those from intact homes, those from poor homes rather than affluent homes, those with unhealthy mothers rather than those with healthy mothers, and those born illegitimate rather than those born to married parents who were more likely to become juvenile delinquents."

That seems to be a clear expression of the problem.

On the basis of some systematic work, the study later identified five key factors that were invariably present and were correlated with the existence of the problems of juvenile delinquency. Briefly the factors were: coming from a low income family; coming from a large family; having parents considered by social workers to have performed their child-rearing duties unsatisfactorily; having below average intelligence on standard testing; and having parents with a criminal record. I stress again that none of those factors, however scientifically arrived at, can be excuses, but they must be borne in mind as parts of the explanation.

There are other causes that are no doubt in the minds of many of my law-abiding constituents and I am sure that they would wish to include them if they were writing my speech. First, they would point out from a common sense angle that there has been a manifest lack of parental discipline in recent years. I have my own theory about the reasons for that. Since the House is not brimming over with speakers I shall elaborate on it.

There is a generation of parents who grew up in the years of depression and during the second world war. They had a fairly miserable time and life was difficult. From a human and rationing point of view, life was more difficult on the home front after the war than during it. When those people had children in the post-war period, even if they could not articulate it clearly, they decided that their children would not suffer in the material sense in the way that they had suffered. I am generalising, but that meant that we bred a generation of spoilt children. I am one of that generation—those who were born during the war or post-war period in the 1940s and 1950s. That generation of spoilt children are today's parents. They are the parents of the youngsters of eight, 10 or 12 who are committing many of the horrific acts about which people complain. Spoilt children often grow up to make the worst possible parents.

That is not a popular line and I will not receive any Brownie points for saying it, but I am convinced that it is part of a cyclical social phenomenon in our society. The problem is cyclical in the sense that it has a self-correcting element. I believe that today's children, those who have been allowed to get away with it because they were brought up by uncaring, insufficiently attentive parents or insufficiently disciplined parents, will realise the error of their experiences and when they become parents they are likely to be part of a swing back to a more traditional and disciplined approach. That is just a hypothesis, and only time will tell. However, I am sure that parental influence, for better or worse, is critical.

A second cause—lack of discipline in schools—was emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. It is much more difficult to exert traditional discipline in schools if one does not have support from parents and society. The two go together.

Thirdly, there is the malign influence of television and pornography. There is pornography in the sexual sense as well as the pornography of violence, which, in many ways, is infinitely more serious. There is more than anecdotal evidence that young and impressionable minds are turned to the bad by such influences.

My hon. Friend mentioned at great length and with great knowledge the problems that derive from television. I shall add one thought. It is commonly said by the defenders of the producers of programmes who put on violent series on television at times when children might be watching that if they moved away from that practice, it would not be acceptable, it would be an infringement of artistic freedom and so on. The clinching argument is usually, "Look at Shakespeare's plays. Look at his history plays. Look at the blood and thunder. Look at 'Hamlet' — virtually no one is left standing at the end." However, the difference is that when one goes to the opera or a play on stage, of course, one suspends one's disbelief

to enter into the spirit of the thing, but there is at least part of one's mind that knows that it is just theatre. That is even true of the youngest children, who respond to Punch and Judy in the same way when Punch does the most awful things to Judy.

When people watch television, there is a great tendency for the mind—even the quite educated mind—not to be able to differentiate sufficiently clearly between the newsreel at 9 pm or 10 pm which, in the days when we could see it, showed South African police beating blacks over the head in Cape Town, and then, after the mild distraction of the weather, programmes such as "The Sweeney". It is all just yards of television; it is all moving wallpaper. It is difficult for the mind to differentiate between one sort of violence and another. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden rightly said, it inoculates people against the natural sense of shock and horror that they should have, which should turn them off but, if anything, makes them more prone to falling into bad ways.

The fourth factor, which has been mentioned by implication, is the lack of suitable facilities and outlets for young people. At a time when public spending seems to be viewed in a more pragmatic way than a short while ago, I urge Ministers to consider the case for sports facilities and supporting youth clubs, voluntary organisations and so on. Often, that is money well spent, and it can save society from having to spend much larger sums picking up the social consequences later on.

A fifth factor, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, is the vital factor of juvenile boredom and frustration. One cannot exaggerate the degree to which some of our young people are, tragically, bored witless by the quality and character of their daily life. That can breed frustration and malign social consequences. We should consider that seriously and not just pretend that the problem does not exist.

The final factor is the lack in modern society of virtuous adult examples for young people to follow. That may sound like a self-righteous point to make, but the fact is that there are not that many models of good behaviour in society any more. The things that get the publicity in the popular press and media tend to be sensational, trivial and even malevolent. For example, the models for young blacks in the inner cities are all too often not someone such as Daley Thompson who, on the whole, is an admirable character with great achievements to his name, but footballers, who shall be nameless, who spend much of the time thumping each other on the field when they should be scoring goals. The models might be pop stars who spend much of their time taking drugs and beating up the place when they should be singing good songs. I may be caricaturing slightly and being a little unfair, but I am trying to say that the importance of the adult example is very great and has been underestimated.

We are still living through a long teachers' strike, or what the teachers choose to call industrial action. I should prefer to call it industrial inaction and non-co-operation. It must be setting an appalling example to millions of young people in our schools. I wish that teachers would consider that aspect as well.

That brings me to my thoughts on some of the solutions to these grievous problems. If we try to be rational, when we seek solutions, we must look to a combination of prevention, detection and punishment. Those are the three major elements. As the excellent Cambridge study said,

> "A rational preventive strategy, therefore, should include general provisions applicable to everyone (such as anti-theft devices, aids to detection, well-defined criminal laws and punishments and a reliable and trusted police force) as well as corrective treatment measures aimed at trying to change the chronically antisocial habits and attitudes of the small minority who create havoc out of proportion to their numbers."

That is a fairly balanced statement of a fruitful general approach.

Prevention suggests, first, the need for better parenting. That is easily said and much more difficult to achieve. In some circumstances it is a heroic achievement for people to bring up children well against all the odds. The role of cash is important, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said. He alluded to the argument that many of the families from which the problem children come could avoid some of the problems that they have to face if they had more cash to do sensible and necessary things.

The Government have had a good record in the past on child benefit, which is very important, and I hope that they will pursue an enlightened policy with the introduction of family credit. However, I deliberately talked about child benefit in the past tense, because I am not paticularly happy at the way in which the Treasury seems to be following a policy of not uprating it in real terms or seeking to improve it, because all the evidence from knowledgeable quarters suggests that it is one of the most effective ways of helping families, particularly mothers who tend to be at the fulcrum of families and the most hard pressed.

Mr. Soley: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Treasury figures released the other day show that child benefit is now lower in real terms than it was in 1979?

Mr. Forman: I am aware of those figures. I have not read the written answer in *Hansard*, but I read the account in the *Financial Times*. Like the hon. Gentleman, I am concerned, and have expressed my concern already in certain quarters.

Better parenting is important, and money has a role to play. It will take a long time to turn round that problem to get things going right again, for the cyclical reasons that I described earlier.

Secondly, better teaching is important. One of the arguments for academic rigour and a more old-fashioned approach to what is taught in the classroom, whatever the subject, is that it teaches not only a disciplined way of thinking, which is the essence of good education, but, through that process, helps to teach the self-discipline which, in my view, must be the basis of all good social discipline. I hope that our teacher training colleges and the general approach to teacher training will lead to the next generation of young teachers coming into the schools with a more traditional and, I hope, self-disciplined approach towards their subjects and their responsibilities.

The third category in prevention is a variety of general measures to diminish the temptations and opportunities for crime and delinquency. The police and Sir Kenneth Newman never tire of saying that the greater part of crime, particularly in the Metropolitan police area, is opportunist. It is not that people are deep-dyed, permanent, malevolent criminal personalities, but that opportunity is all too easily put in their way, and as they may be weak characters they succumb to that opportunity. Society has a social responsibility to diminish those opportunities.

That is why I was delighted to learn from the press recently that the Prime Minister will chair a seminar in the

[Mr. Forman]

new year on the prevention of auto crime. It is not such a serious social crime as crime against the person, but it is important that it should not increase at its present alarming rate, not least because the youngsters who drive away a vehicle are often incompetent and dangerous drivers. They may be drunk or on drugs, and may knock down an innocent person. Indeed, in my constituency some postmen have been knocked down by precisely that sort of hooligan getting behind the wheel of a car. Clearly, preventive measures of a general character to diminish the temptations and opportunities for crime and delinquency are vital.

The improvement of detection suggests a need for more police. I hope that the Home Secretary will heed the cry from many quarters that the establishment levels should judiciously and in time be increased, especially in the metropolitan area, and for improved police techniques. It also suggests the need for better co-operation, which already exists in embryo, between police, schools and parents. I am delighted by the extent to which the police are now invited to most good schools to talk to the youngsters and establish a co-operative atmosphere between them and the young members of the public.

Above all, it suggests more social control and responsibility. Some Opposition Members may find that difficult to swallow. I am impressed by other societies which run on different traditions and values, such as Japan and China, both of which I visited. The natural sense of social control and responsibility throughout the community there, whether in rural or urban areas, is, broadly speaking, greater than it is in our country. There is less atomisation, anomie, and desire to walk by on the other side because it is not one's responsibility, and one does not wish to get involved.

Those aspects are all too characteristic of our modern society. We must reverse them so that responsible citizens regard the maintenance of law and order as their business, and not merely that of the police, social workers and other busy do-gooders. It must be everybody's business. Obviously, neighbourhood watch has a role to play, but I hope that the principle can be explored and extended.

Punishment also has a role to play. It is difficult to talk about, not least in relation to crimes of violence by young people because the public's natural instinct is to lunge for the rod, and to assume that the solution is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and to give the offender a taste of his own medicine. Those of us who have been educated at public schools, as I have, have personal experience of that which we need not go into.

More traditional practices should be adopted, especially by parents. I am not against a loving parent correcting in an immediate, firm and loving way his or her child when it steps out of line. Indeed, one sees that every day on the streets. I hope that that example, beginning with parents when children are at an early age, can be extended while children remain minors. Parents need to be bolstered in that they need to be held more clearly financially accountable for the misdemeanours of their children. That figured in legislation which the House passed not long ago, and I hope that that principle can be extended. We must bring home to parents the connection between their responsibilities and instances of their children's irresponsibility.

The courts also have an important role to play. At times they must give exemplary sentences to serious wrongdoers. To that extent, I must place on record the fact that many of my constituents have told me that they approved of the action taken by Judge Argyle in handing out a long sentence to a particularly vicious football hooligan for his deplorable behaviour. That cannot be the complete solution, but it must be part of the jigsaw. The courts do society and ordinary law-abiding people no service if they flinch from their responsibilities. It is important for the judiciary to realise that the public is constantly disappointed and confused when, if a jury has found a young villain guilty of heinous offences, usually against the person, the judge sums up using strong language, as if it were the worst thing since Genghis Khan, but then hands out some soft dopey little sentence. That leaves the public angry and confused. If the judge sees the matter in a serious light, it is important that this is reflected in the sentence.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman's remarks brought to my mind a case which highlights the matter. Often the mitigation of the offence is the deprivation of the community, and it applies equally to the victim. Usually there is a great sense of injustice when the sentence is so mitigated by the arguments and the reaction of the court that justice is not done either to society as a whole, or between the parties, one of which may have lost a relative, child or friend, and the other of which may live to fight another day.

Mr. Forman: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman, who puts the point well.

I hope that the House and the Government will constantly bear these problems in mind. I wish my hon. Friend the Minister well in the efforts of his Department to pursue co-ordinated policies which will have a positive impact on these serious social problems.

10.57 am

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on his success in the ballot, and on selecting for debate a subject which is serious, crosses party political boundaries, and has so far prompted an hour and a half of debate remarkable for its sensitivity and the thoughts which hon. Members have brought to it.

I completely agree with much of the material in the hon. Gentleman's speech. However, I have some queries about the analysis of the role of television, and the impact that violence shown on television may have. There is some truth in the hon. Gentleman's assessment, but the matter may be more complicated than he led us to believe. Violence on television tends to become sanitised, presentable and acceptable. When violence is shown on the screen or the stage in gory detail, it can be shocking and instructive. It can be shown to be easy if it happens quickly, someone is killed and the camera immediately moves on to the next shot. For example, "The A Team", an extremely violent programme which I seldom watch but have occasionally caught, is watched by millions of youngsters. It has many violent scenes, but no one is ever killed or hurt. Therefore, the image portrayed is that violence is easy and that it is all right because, in the final analysis, there is no pain. We must distinguish a little more

carefully among the ways in which violence is portrayed on television, the different sorts of violence, and the impact that it can have on television viewers.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I agree that television can sanitise violence. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that it has no ill effect on spectators?

Mr. Smith: Of course not. All that I am saying is that we should think a little more carefully about the precise impact of violence shown on television on youngsters and others who view it. I do not wish to make a party political point, but I believe that the way in which many Governments are learning to portray to their populations wars in which they are engaged has many similarities to the point that I am making about television. One can draw some conclusions from the way in which the British Government ensured that the details of the Falklands war were not shown night after night to the British people, but I shall leave that point there because I do not wish to go too far along that road.

The commission of violent crimes by young people is a great problem in the inner cities. However, we must get violence in perspective. Hon. Members have quoted from the D. J. West study "Delinquency: its roots, careers and prospects". One phrase from the study that struck me especially was this:

"Most juvenile offences are petty, disorganised, impulsive and generally unprofitable."

Those four words encapsulate the broad mass of youth crime.

My constituents are worried about many different aspects of youth crime. They are worried about the gangs of youths who stand around on the staircases of blocks of council flats, not being violent but creating much fear in the residents of those blocks, who are frightened to walk past them to reach their flats Such gangs cause a general sense of fear in the community. My constituents are also worried about the enormous amount of car theft and the high rate of burglary on council estates, much of it committed by youngsters. Many council estate tenants in my constituency are concerned about the extremely low clear-up rate for burglaries, for which the latest estimate is about 2 per cent. Those residents can have little confidence in the way in which society protects them from the impact of such crime.

When we consider violent crime committed by youngsters, we must set it in the context of the broad mass of crime and the threat of crime in which youngsters are involved. Violent crime is but part of the picture. We should not ignore the other parts.

Much has been said about the causes of crime, but less has been said about the way in which we should tackle it. I agree with the hon. Members for Wealden and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) about the crucial importance of crime prevention. It is far better and more effective to prevent a crime than to run around after it has occurred trying to solve it and punish the offender. However, I criticise the conclusion of the hon. Member for Wealden, who believed that the Government's proposals for a review of social security might prove beneficial in this respect. I fear that it will prove far from beneficial, but again I do not wish to draw us into too much party political controversy.

What can we do to prevent crime, which is much more important than controlling criminals after the event? We can obtain some results in this area. I agree that we must attempt to control criminals after the event and that we need a good police force that enjoys the confidence of the community, that solves crime and that arrests criminals. We must also have courts and sentences, although I must question the benefit of custodial sentences on youngsters. Recidivism among those subjected to custodial sentences is amazingly and disturbingly high.

I accept that we must have a system of control, but I believe that we could make changes in crime prevention. First, as the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington said, we should try to remove the opportunities for crime. Simple measures would be needed, such as improved lighting to prevent people from loitering in dark corners. Doors could be strengthened to stop the all-too-common practice of their being booted in. We should close high-level links between blocks of council flats so that youngsters cannot run so easily from one to the other. We should provide entryphones and preferably some human intervention in blocks of flats so that residents need not rely only on a mechanical system that frequently breaks down and takes time to repair. We should stop making it easy for criminals to break into cars. One third of all recorded crime is the theft of, theft from or damage to motor vehicles or bicycles. It should not be beyond the wit of the Prime Minister and the motor manufacturers to introduce some reasonable and effective solutions when she holds her seminar early in the new year to try to tackle that problem.

A host of simple measures could be taken—I fear that all of them will cost money, which may make the Government reluctant to implement them—to assist in removing opportunities to commit crimes.

Education has a crucial role to play. I do not go completely along the road of bringing back discipline in the classroom which some Conservative Members have advocated. The role of education is to engage the interest of minds and develop the verbal skills, about which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke, of the children who go through the education process.

Sadly, at the moment the standards in our education system are low. The latest HMI report on school standards showed that only six education authorities out of well over 90 were providing an adequate standard of education. That must give us pause for thought. The Inner London education authority, which covers my constituency, receives no Government assistance for the provision of education in inner London. That must give us pause for thought when we consider the standards of education provided.

More support for the family is needed. Child benefit has already been rightly mentioned, and I applaud the comments made by the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington. Every objective analysis has shown that child benefit acts as an extremely beneficial mechanism for feeding extra money into the poorest family, which shows that it is not something that we can throw away lightly.

There are other aspects of support for the family, such as nursing provision, provision for the under-fives, and in particular assistance for one-parent families. Other measures must be undertaken in which local authorities and voluntary organisations, with support from the council, can do much.

I agree with what the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington said about recreation facilities. We must ensure that young people have somewhere to go,

[Mr. Smith]

something to do, something in which to engage themselves rather than hanging around with nothing to do and ample opportunity to commit crime. I must refer to the role of employment and training opportunities. The leisure hours that can be filled by recreation facilities are made even longer when all one's time is leisure and when there is no job available and nothing with which one can occupy oneself during the day. That makes a great impact on what young people decide to do.

Reference has already been made to the role of drugs and alcohol. The Minister has done much to try to raise the public consciousness of this and to address some of the problems that have arisen. I pay particular tribute to the support that he has given to the inner city "action on drugs" project in my constituency. It is concerned not just with the high profile drugs such as heroin but with the role of alcohol, the amount of tranquilliser taking which goes on, and other drugs that have an impact on people and families.

We need to ensure that our response as a community is not just one of cracking down on the drug pushers and dealers but of looking at the way in which drugs are distributed in the community, the impact that they have on individuals who take them, and the ways in which we can help people to avoid getting involved with drugs in the first place. We must also help them to come out of the habit once they are caught by it.

There is no substitute for good and supportive policing. I am thinking again of those gangs of youths gathering at the foot of blocks of run-down council estates. There is no substitute for good neighbourhood policing and regular patrols, preferably by police officers who know the young people involved, their families and the estate, and who are closely involved in the work of the community. If police were involved in, and accountable to, the local community in which they form a part, they would be seen as less of an alien force coming in from outside and therefore to be rejected rather than respected.

At the back of all of this, on any analysis of the differing roles of prevention and control and the response that society must have to crime, there is the desperate need for us all to be working to create a society in which people are less likely to offend. The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington spoke about the sense of anomie, the way in which communities have broken down. This deeply concerns me. I am too young to remember much of what happened in and immediately after the second world war, but speaking to people who know about it shows that there is definitely a feeling, particularly in the inner city areas, that the sense of community that was once the linchpin of many working class areas has withered away.

That has partly to do with geography and the nature of inner city areas, but it has much to do with the way in which our society has changed from one in which we depended on each other and lived our lives in the public arena of the streets and the landings of council blocks into one in which we focus upon ourselves. We have become a more individualistic society instead of a community-oriented society. That has profound political implications, and I do not want to go too deeply into it. However, major changes in the way in which people pursue the relationship between individuals and the community have occurred over the past 20 or 30 years. In turn, that has had an impact on the way in which young people grow up and their responses to the community.

We need to think about that development and as politicians and Governments we need to make sure that we are building a society in which people feel much more part of the community and are much less dependent upon themselves as individuals and as individual units within that society. That is crucially important, and I hope that if the debate does nothing else it will give the Minister something to think about. I apologise to him for the fact that I may have to miss part of what he has to say because I shall shortly have to leave the Chamber for a quarter of an hour. However, I hope that he will take back to his Cabinet colleagues some of the comments made in the debate and some of the genuine concerns that have been expressed. I hope that he will continue the work which he has already started in some sectors, and will address the problems and build a much better sense of community, with much better support for community provision than we have seen from many of his colleagues.

11.18 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), not just on his motion, but, perhaps more important, on resisting the temptation that comes depressingly often to Conservative Members to suggest that to lock up everybody who commits an offence and throw away the key will produce the magical solution to crime. Neither he nor the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) spoke in simplistic terms, nor pretended that there is an easy punitive solution to the problem of crime.

Although the hon. Members said much with which I do not agree, since I put a different emphasis upon the problem, there is an area of common ground between us. The hon. Member for Wealden is to be congratulated on putting down this motion on crime. Given the Government's record on law and order and the disastrous consequences of their social and economic policies for law and order, a Conservative Member of Parliament must have courage to put down a motion of this kind.

We have had a "get tough" policy under this Government. Nobody can say that they did not do what they said they would do in 1979 and 1983. There are more people in prison in this country than in any other western European country—we are compared only with Turkey—yet the crime rate is increasing faster than ever before, and it is higher than ever before. There have been inner city riots of a nature, intensity and frequency that this country has not seen for 100 years. By any standard it is a serious political problem, and the Government have failed badly.

My first point is that we can do something about this problem. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, a number of policies are already available to deal with it. The Prime Minister need not bother to hold her seminar in the new year. I can provide her with a document from the Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice. It is chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, who has temporarily left the Chamber. I was its previous chairman. It has spelt out a long list of things that can be done. The all-party parliamentary group on penal affairs has also

published a long report on crime and young people and what could be done about it, yet relatively few of its recommendations have been implemented.

Mr. Forman: The advantage of the Prime Minister taking this matter in hand in the new year is that there is a much better chance that Ministers at her level will be able to persuade the relevant company directors and those who take the technical decisions to get on with these changes. With the greatest respect to the groups to which the hon. Gentleman referred, there is a difference.

Mr. Soley: I do not dispute that point. I am glad that the Prime Minister has done this, although it is rather late. Much of the work has already been done for her, and she will not have to spend too much time on the seminar. My most important point, however, is that I do not think that the right hon. Lady will be very effective unless she also reverses the social and economic policies that are doing so much damage to the fabric of our society.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury pointed out that this is all about community structure. A crucial relationship in the high crime areas is the relationship between long-term youth unemployment and the collapse of the community. The reason why the crime rate in the 1930s did not go up as fast as it is rising now, although there was a great deal of unemployment then, was that the communities where unemployment bit very deeply were much more tightly knit and closely supportive.

That is no longer the case. The reason for that has nothing to do with this Government or any other Government. The reason is largely the geographical point to which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred, that people are moving out of the cities into the country. This means that people are trapped in the inner cities, unless one is referring to wealthy professional people who can afford to leave the inner cities when they wish to do so. The Government have aggravated the running down of community areas by pulling off the sticking plaster that was provided by high levels of public expenditure in key areas, and by creating long-term youth unemployment. It is that which has done the damage and brought about the breakdown of communities.

Because of the breakdown of communities, there is less confidence in the police. The police catch the majority of criminals by means of evidence that is given to them by the public. About 80 per cent. of arrests are based upon such evidence. If the relationship between the police and the public breaks down, as it has so badly in these key areas, the police are forced to use what I have described elsewhere as military style policing. They have to break into flats and houses to seek evidence, which often is not there. The Government must bear much of the responsibility for this breakdown. I am pleased that the Police Federation accepts to a greater degree than it used to do that the Government have it as a means of tackling the consequences of their failed social and economic policies, particularly in the inner city areas.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I agree entirely about the community, which has become a theme in this debate. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the ironies is that after every attempt that has been made to restructure local government there has been a breakdown of the traditional boundaries which people previously knew and accepted? In London there is no local tier of government. There are no parish councils or community councils in London, and they rarely exist in the urban areas, where there is most crime. In the rural areas where such councils have always existed there is the least crime. If we had concentrated on the important structures of government instead of trying to change the macro-governmental organisations, we might have done more to root our communities and support them. Instead, we have changed boundaries and released people from any sense of community belonging. There is now a sense of complete alienation in the inner cities.

Mr. Soley: This is not just a geographical problem. There is also a problem about the nature of the organisations. One of the reasons why the Labour party has been pushing so hard for democratic accountability of the police at local level is that one has to make people feel that the police are meeting their needs. If one looks at what people feel are the main causes of crime, one often finds that they do not coincide with what the police feel are the main causes of crime. There is a different perception of what the priorities ought to be.

I am pleased to see that even the *Daily Mail's* opinion polls—if I can quote the *Daily Mail* in support of my case I must be in serious trouble—show that well over half of the population want more democratic accountability by the police, yet the Government still resist it. An attempt to bring people back into making decisions about the nature and the priorities of their communities would make so much difference.

I have spent far longer on that point than I intended. In a debate of this nature we need to remember what we did in our youth. Sometimes, the recollection is very painful. It is too easy to say that things are far worse now than they ever were. On many occasions in the past there was intolerance, violence and a rise in the crime rate. If one wanted to link rising crime rates with anything, I should link them closely with economic distress, combined with social instability. The two often go together and are to be found in other periods of history.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred a week or two ago to intolerance. However, the intolerance that is evident today is not nearly so bad as the intolerance that I experienced when I was at school in the 1950s. The Under-Secretary of State had a light, easy ride, compared with what I experienced recently at a public school, and compared with what I experienced in the 1950s when I was at school. People speak about intolerance in the universities, but what about the intolerance at universities in the past? What about the intolerance of the universities towards pacifists before world war one? What about the general intolerance of people at that level? We must be careful about applying these great, sweeping brush strokes to past generations.

The rise in crime is a problem. This country has tried to solve it by simplistic methods, particularly by locking people up and hoping that the problem will go away. The Government have been ably abetted by the press, which in its headlines complains about sex and violence, but then puts the titillating bits on the inside pages. I shall refer later to that. We need to think a little more carefully about our own background and experiences of life before we write off other generations.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington referred to the post-war generation of the 1950s. The

[Mr. Soley]

chairman of the Tory Party, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), had terrible things to say about parents of that generation and about teachers. We cannot use parents or teachers as scapegoats. That is not on. The reason that it is not on is not least that we are again applying a general broad brush to the many complex issues that face this country. If we blame just the parents and the teachers we shall rightly earn their anger, and we shall do nothing to solve the problem. Whether or not one was spoiled, or whether or not one had the type of upbringing that was fairly common in the 1950s or in the 1970s, will not, of itself, be a cause of violence or crime. Other things will, and I shall touch on those in a moment.

Mr. Forman: There is a long wave in social developments and I was trying to identify the way in which that has influenced the problem. I readily agree that it cannot be the only explanation and that many millions of parents of that generation behave in an exemplary manner.

Mr. Soley: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but the dramatic increase in crime in recent years, particularly in the past five or six years, cannot be linked to the upbringing of that generation.

Let me say a little more to put juvenile crime, particularly violent crime, in perspective. I am talking only of juvenile crime, not the crime of all young people. That depends on how one defines "young". Only 8·6 per cent. of all juvenile crime is violent. Of that, about three quarters receives low sentences from the courts. In other words, courts consider, for whatever reason, that relatively low sentences are required. That is most frequently because the offences are not serious. They are usually the result of a fight that gets out of control

There is a fundamental difference in the way in which we treat the problem now. In 1955, an adult had 20 times more chance of being locked up than had a juvenile. Now, an adult has only twice as much chance. Britain has more juveniles locked up than any other Western country.

The daft short sharp shock experiment which the Government made such a great thing of in 1979 has produced younger, fitter, healthier, faster running, higher jumping criminals than ever before. The failure rate of detention centres is 71 per cent. At Send detention centre the reconviction rate is no different from before. At New Hall detention centre it is worse. When I debated the subject with a Conservative Member on television, he said that we should remember that a 71 per cent. reconviction rate is a 29 per cent. success rate. I give him full marks for blind loyalty, if for nothing else.

Youth custody has an 80 per cent. failure rate. The vast majority of young people grow out of their criminal activities. There is hardly a male in the country—and very few, if any, females — who grows up without committing an offence of some type. What matters is the one who goes on offending and who frequently gets caught. If a person is locked up for a long time, particularly a young person, he is being taught more than anything else how to live in an institution. If a person is taught how to live in an institution, he will go back to that institution frequently. It is the recidivist, the young person who quickly goes into detention centre, then youth custody, then prison, who will almost inevitably spend a lot of his life going in and out of institutions, be they prisons, hospitals or whatever. The present policy is disastrous and is creating a problem for future generations which the Government have only just begun to understand, although some of us have warned them about it for a long time.

We must look to more crime prevention. The hon. Member for Wealden had some relevant ideas about violence and crime, but when one looks at the background of people involved in violence it must be borne in mind that they have often experienced violence in their upbringing. The more violence there is in a person's upbringing, the more likely he is to be violent to his children. One of the key signs in a list of 10 or 12 symptoms of a parent who is likely to batter his children is that he himself was battered. People learn from their experience of adults close to them. Those who learn violent solutions to problems are likely to apply them. That is one reason why I am so strongly opposed to using violence to cope with violence. It rarely works in either the short or the long term.

We must look to more effective means of crime prevention. The family is mentioned in the motion. The all-party parliamentary group on penal affairs recommended the establishment of a Minister with responsibility for the family. I have much sympathy with that approach, although I would prefer a Minister with responsibility for children. A definition of a family is difficult and a Minister's role becomes blurred. We should concentrate on making sure that Departments of State and other institutions in Britain, both private and public, increase the chances of young people growing up to be able to cope with the demands of society — social, humanitarian, technical, educational and all the other demands that go with that.

If we are to do that seriously, we need someone who can look at the problems across the board. However, the problem does not stop there. Those who adopt the moral homily approach that parents should do better miss the point. To find someone who is likely to indulge in criminal behaviour does not simply mean looking for broken families or for families with a criminal background. That is only the first part of the problem. One must look for the family where there is inconsistency in discipline and a lack of love. Those two together are deadly. The absence of one can be bad, but the absence of the two together can often lead to trouble, although not always, because some young people do grow up in such situations and come out of them safely.

I recall one young lad who was on probation to me who, when he was caught lying by his mother, was clouted round the ear and told not to lie to her. Five minutes later, while he was still nursing his ear, the doorbell rang and the mother told his sister that it was the milkman or some such person, and that she should tell him that she was not in. A lot can be learnt from that. One can learn that lying is wrong, that it is right, or, more likely, that what matters is who one lies to, why one lies and what are the chances of getting away with it. That is one reason why families who feel trapped within their own family group or a small group of other people will be loyal to each other, even if at times it involves lying to all sorts of outside agencies trying to help them. That is part of the pattern. I warn people against doing the moral homily bit to families, parents or teachers in the way that the chairman of the Tory party did. At best it is a meaningless concept, and at worst it is insulting and ignores the real problem.

If young people have nothing to do, they are more likely to get into trouble. I am critical of the Government's lack of crime prevention, because they cut public expenditure and talk about throwing good money after bad in some bizarre way that is never described. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury made the point well. Caretakers in blocks of flats help to deter crime, and they also clear up graffiti.

The White City estate in my constituency has a major problem, but the design and structure of that estate is not essentially different from Dolphin square down the road from here. The difference is that the resources put into maintaining and developing the social structure and life in Dolphin square are infinitely greater than those for the White City estate in Hammersmith. Much the same parallel can be drawn with some of the new estates. I am not happy about some of the high rise estates, but, in some cases, if sufficient resources and thought are put into them, and if there is a good tenants' association and so on, they can be successful. As one architect said, they need a great deal of love, care and affection. If we let them run down, and if we do not provide adequate resources, it is clear that they will become a problem.

The provision of facilities for youth activities is especially important. Indeed, I can quote the Police Federation magazine in support of that. It is not the first time that it has supported me, but I am pleased to say that it is now doing so more frequently. It said:

"Cuts in local government spending have limited spending on youth facilities which (apart from being intrinsically good) Lord Scarman recognised as playing an important role in preventing crime. . . . it must also be of concern to the police that current pressures on local authorities to spend less public money is having a serious effect on the provision of facilities for the young . . . if the type of person who responds to the opportunities provided by such facilities is now going to be deprived of them, particularly in the difficult areas, the probability is that anti-social behaviour among the young will rise further."

I entirely agree with that statement.

It is obvious that the Government should not cut the money available to provide youth facilities, especially in the inner cities. Conservative Members may try to kid us that the Government have poured money into those areas, but they ignore the fact that the Government have cut at least £43 million from the rate support grant — far greater than the amount that they have put into those areas —in the metropolitan London area alone, leaving aside such areas as Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. Conservative Members must face the facts. The Government have made draconian cuts, which have had the devastating effect of pulling the sticking plaster off the inner city areas, causing even more damage to the inner city areas.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman knows that one problem is that the youth service has no statutory protection. While the budget is generally held safe for the education service, it is often the voluntary extras, as perceived in terms of statutory responsibility, that go. Does he agree that it would be of great benefit, across the whole realm of social provision, if there was some guarantee of funding for the youth service? That would at least enable the planning of some development of the service—something that cannot be done at the moment.

Mr. Soley: I am not unsympathetic to that view. There is certainly a need for long-term planning.

Education is crucial, and can be broken down into three parts—nursery education, schools and further education. It has been mind-bogglingly stupid of the Government to cut funds to higher education. If someone is unemployed and attends night school to gain GCE qualifications, he now finds it much harder to obtain a place in university than it was a few years ago.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire) *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I shall give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman, but I ask him to hear me out on this point first, as that might save him some embarrassment later.

I left school early, with a great lack of academic achievement, by any standard. Eventually, I was able to go to university by attending a college and obtaining my GCEs. Even though they were at a relatively low grading, they allowed me to go to university. Today, however, young people with three A-levels—more than I had—perhaps two at grade B and one at grade C, are being turned down by universities.

Mr. Lyell: I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Gentleman has allowed me to intervene, although I have not yet been able to take a full part in the debate. Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the picture he is portraying is distorted? We should look not only at universities, but at polytechnics. The current statistics show that 13·8 per cent. of the relevant age group are capable of obtaining university places, which is the equal highest percentage ever. Partly because the relevant age group will decline in proportion, and partly for other reasons, betwen now and the early 1990s the percentage will rise to more than 15·6 per cent. Because the hon. Gentleman is referring to universities alone, he is giving a distorted view of the picture.

Mr. Soley: The hon. and learned Gentleman must have been wheeled out of the Library by the Government Whips. He grabbed the first statistics that came to hand in the hope that they might be useful. He knows better than anyone else that the funding for higher education has gone down. He also knows that that funding is lower than it is in comparable countries. He knows that youth unemployment is a major problem—partly because these young people cannot go to colleges and universities outside a very limited, defined period. To try to pretend that by putting a little more money into one area of higher education is an answer to the problem is to fool himself and all those young people who would like to do more with their lives.

Another aspect of education is very important—the problem in the classroom. If we undervalue our teachers, we cannot expect a good education system. We all know that the British teacher is paid far less, and their status is far lower, than that of teachers in comparable countries. That is a problem, and sooner or later the Government will have to face it.

When considering the relationship between schools and crime, we must acknowledge that the main problem is not behaviour in the classroom, but truancy. If the young person is not in the classroom, he is more likely to get into trouble. The link between truancy and crime is strong.

Mr. Forman: What is the answer?

Mr. Soley: More funds should be put into teacher training and the teaching profession. If we try to skimp on that, there will be problems not only with the general technological change in the economic structure of this country, but in the social environment, such as crime and

[Mr. Soley]

social behaviour. I should like schools to consider teaching other subjects, such as inter-personal relationships. We could do more to teach youngsters about that. However, we cannot do that until the teaching profession is given more resources.

Mr. Forman: The hon. Gentleman referred to the vital point of truancy, which is integral to the problems. Is it not possible for teachers, regardless of whether they are adequately paid, to keep registers of those students who are supposed to be in their classes and, if they are not, to make suitable inquiries?

Mr. Soley: Of course it is. That is not the point. The hon. Gentleman, like many of his hon. Friends, does not understand the demoralising effects on the teaching profession of being told, over a number of years, "You are not highly valued in this country." Quite frankly, that message has been around for many years, not simply since this Government took power. However, the problems have become dramatically worse because of the Government's policies.

The chairman of the Tory party has put the blame for crime on teachers, among others. If we try to devalue an important profession, while comparable countries place a much higher value on teachers, we cannot expect them to do the job as well as they could do. Demoralisation might be difficult to measure, but we all know that it exists. The teachers certainly know that it exists.

Nursery education is vital. I do not have time to say much more about that, but we should provide many more nursery places throughout the country.

Another important aspect of the general problem of crime among the young is housing. I shall not spend too much time on that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury has already referred to some of the things that we should do. We should give much greater priority to moving families with young children out of high-rise flats. Parents with young children, especially single parents, living in high-rise flats must either have the children playing in the flat all day long or must allow them to play downstairs, outside, and usually unsupervised.

The various play facilities have been reduced because of the Government's cuts in public expenditure, so those children literally have to play outside without supervision. If there are no longer caretakers, park keepers and toilet attendants, who previously acted as a deterrent to bad behaviour, we cannot be surprised if those children drift into vandalism and daubing graffiti.

As we have been told, the fear of crime is greater than the reality of it. Part of the reason for that is that decaying, rundown areas are not cleaned up because of the cuts that the Government have made, and that makes the problem worse. Another part of the problem is the media, and I shall return to that later.

Alcohol is a major factor in crime. So many studies have been done, and so many statistics have been published on the subject, that it is unnecessary to quote them. Nearly all the figures reveal that about 40 per cent. of all offences brought before inner city courts are linked to drink. In homicide cases, about 50 per cent. of murderers or victims have been drinking. Drinking is common in battered baby cases, immediately prior to the battering, and it is common in many casual offences, particularly violence.

The British crime survey shows that the person most at risk is not the elderly lady or man living or walking alone, but the young male out on the streets late at night. He is the typical victim of crime. One can hear that from the police at any time, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights at closing time. That is where the problem lies.

What are the Government doing about it? They keep offering platitudes, such as, "It is a problem and we must do something about it," but they do nothing. I was chairman of the Alcohol Education Centre, which, with a couple of other bodies, was merged into one organisation entitled Alcohol Concern. I made no complaint about that at the time because it seemed the right move to make. However, what worried me—and, tragically, what came true — was that Alcohol Concern would receive less funds in real terms than the other three or four organisations received together. That proved to be so in 1980. How can that be desirable?

The alcohol industry spends millions of pounds on advertising. It produces an enormous quantity of a powerful drug which we accept and know is a drug. The social consequences of that are enormous, yet the percentage that we spend on prevention, rehabilitation and cure is tiny. Unless this or a future Government have a proper policy on alcohol, it will remain a major problem in crime.

A good scheme was introduced by the Government — I give the Conservatives credit where it is due — to enable police officers to caution a drunk defendant and then take him to a rehabilitation centre. Only recently we read in the newspapers that two rehabilitation centres had been closed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): The hon. Gentleman must not gild the lily. I am not sure what he means by "rehabilitation centres". Is he referring to wet shelters where people can stay overnight? If in the hon. Gentleman's view staying overnight is rehabilitation, he should consult a dictionary.

Mr. Soley: The Minister cannot cope with the stress of criticism.

Mr. Mellor: Answer my question, rather than making silly remarks.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman was right to correct me. Perhaps I should have referred to them as detoxification centres. Two of them have been closed, and the Minister does not deny that.

I recall telling the Minister at an all-party meeting upstairs that the danger of the scheme he was introducing was that if there were only wet shelters—that is, places where people could go overnight — we should have a revolving door. The police would simply take a person to the police station, take him into a wet centre where he would stay overnight — if there were only unskilled personnel there, that could be dangerous for the personnel — and the next day he would be out on the streets again, with the cycle repeated time and again.

The only way to deal with the problem—at the time the Minister agreed with me — is to have permanent staff, suitably qualified, to handle cases brought to them by the police. That has not happened. The Government have failed to deliver, and if the Minister wishes to intervene on that, I shall willingly give way.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's recognition that overnight shelters are not rehabilitative. The figures on which we had to take a decision about cost effectiveness—in relation to the rate of occupancy of beds and so on—show why we took the decision that was finally taken.

The hon. Gentleman appears to have a blithe optimism about all this. He seems to assume, for example, that provided enough of the right people are available, the problems of chronic alcoholism must be susceptible to treatment, when he knows that there is no evidence to that effect.

We hear a constant and incessant parade of statistics and allegations about public expenditure. His right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has already committed the next Labour Government, should we ever have one, to £50 billion of additional expenditure. I do not know at how much the hon. Gentleman would cost his alcohol proposals, but has he given any thought to whether the community could afford them? Has he considered the consequences on jobs and prosperity in the community?

Mr. Soley: I have given much thought to the subject, possibly more thought than the Minister has. The hon. Gentleman agreed when we discussed this issue a couple of years ago that the expense of continuing as we are is too high. I agree that there is the problem of the initial capital cost. That is why the Minister should consider the amount that is paid by the alcohol industry. One of my suggestions was a tax of perhaps only 1 per cent. on the advertising of alcoholic drinks. That would pay for virtually all the proposals that I have made.

If the Minister wishes to interrupt again to tell me that such a step would not be possible, or that the Government do not wish to take it, he must tell the British people that he is content to see the alcohol rate rising, with more and more vagrant alcoholics staying on the streets. Is he prepared to say that? What is the cost of that to the community, and what does he propose to do to stop it? Or will he simply sit back and say that nothing can be done which is what he seems to be saying?

If a single act on the part of the Government has done more than any other act to produce crime, it is their board and lodging allowance proposals. It is clear from Home Office figures that the link between crime and homelessness is strong, yet their proposals will create homelessness. Yesterday, I was lobbied by the unemployed workers centre in Hammersmith. Among those who came to see me was a man aged about 25 who had been sleeping on the floor of that centre. He had been a paratrooper in the Falklands and had fought at Goose Green. He told me his story, and when I told him that I was thinking of mentioning it in this debate he was happy for me to do so and added that I was at liberty to use his name. I shall not do that, because it would not be helpful to him.

He told me, in effect, "I cannot take much more. I have been trained, and I know, how to kill. I get so angry at times that I turn to drink or drugs, but I do not want to do that any longer." He is now attending a project in Hammersmith, which, I hope, will help him. The point of his story was that he had nowhere to go.

The Department of Health and Social Security supplementary benefit office in my constituency was smashed up recently. It had to close for a day and a half because of that. As a result, many people could not get money and gravitated to the unemployed workers centre. That is another indication of the stress that exists in the population. Staff at supplementary benefit centres are asking for security guards. After intervention by me my local office now has two security guards. Such requests are becoming commonplace.

When speaking to people such as my ex-paratrooper, one gets the feeling that one is talking to ordinary, capable people from decent backgrounds who have become trapped by a failed social and economic policy. They may comprise only a minority of the population, but it is a minority who matter.

I accept that the majority of British people are becoming better off. If they are doing so at the expense of that minority, and if those who are getting better off do not contribute sufficient resources to protect that minority, we shall be storing up appalling problems for ourselves.

The influence of television may not be as important as it is sometimes made out, but I am open to argument and to be dissuaded from taking that view. I recognise that it may be a problem. However, the press, especially the local press, increases the fear of crime. The press reports crime far more often than crime is committed. Camden produced a good survey which showed that to be so.

There was a classic example in my constituency. A number of elderly people were worried about the three murders about which they had heard. In fact, one murder was reported under headlines in the same local paper on three occasions, once when the crime was committed, once when the offender was caught and once when he was sentenced. The way in which the press plays up crime is important. Newspapers such as *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and others of that nature use sex and violence to sell copies, while condemning the rise in the number of crimes committed, and sexual aggression. They are like the drug peddler who accuses the drug addict of being a wicked person. They are guilty of double standards of the worst sort. I know that the hon. Member for Wealden is sympathetic to that view.

I tabled a question recently to ask whether the Minister would refer the Howard League report on unlawful sex to his Department with a view to making recommendations on changes in the law. I received a one-word answer, which was no. I ask the Minister to reconsider that answer. Many intelligent and able people spent a great deal of time and expended much energy through the Howard League considering the problems of unlawful sex and the background to it. I was one of the speakers at its conference. I understand that someone from the Conservative party addressed the conference in my absence before I spoke. It is important that we receive a better answer from the Minister than we have had so far.

When we discuss crime, we often talk about the availability of weapons. With a number of my colleagues, I saw the Home Office Minister with responsibilities for the police some months ago. We asked for a clampdown on the availability of guns, replica guns and knives. It is absurd that we do not allow young people to enter betting shops because we consider them in some way to be immoral, while we are happy to have shops displaying guns, replica guns and knives for everyone to see and purchase, subject to certain conditions, which are not especially stringent.

When my colleagues and I saw the Minister, I recommended that the Home Office should set up a

[Mr. Soley]

standing committee to make recommendations to the Minister about the type of guns, replica guns and knives that should be available for sale, the conditions that should be imposed on their use and the way in which they should be kept. Sadly, the Government turned down that recommendation. That did not surprise me. They talk about crime as if the only way to respond to it is by kicking people into submission. That is not the answer. The problem of crime raises sophisticated and complicated issues. If we try to deal with it by introducing simplistic and punitive measures, we shall not solve it. Our failure to do so will be at great cost to all our constituents.

12.4 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I am glad to be able to contribute to the debate immediatley after the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who has great knowledge of the subject. I shall make one point, emphasise it and then move on to other issues.

Violent crime worries people, and the public should know that anyone who is convicted of mugging on the streets can reasonably expect to receive an immediate custodial sentence. That is what the public would expect and that is what should happen. In fact, that is what happens in the courts, and the Lord Chief Justice has made it clear that that is right. The public should look to the courts for protection and they should be confident that it will be forthcoming.

The thoughtful motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) makes the point that the problem of crime among young people is a problem for us all. We cannot stand back and expect the police alone to deal with it. If that argument needs any emphasis, it must come from police numbers. The Government have an excellent record on increasing police manpower. There are 13,000 more police active and on the streets now than in 1979. We now have 156,000 officers, but they have to police 56 million people. That means that there is one policeman for about 400 citizens. It would be sheer folly to regard the prevention of crime as a matter for the police alone. As the motion says, it is a matter for the family, for the schools and for us all as citizens in our neighbourhoods. It is a matter also for sophistication and deep thought.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden and others that education must start at the youngest age. If a child receives a good start before school, he or she will do well at school. We should encourage nursery education and, above all, the tremendous value which comes from mother and toddler clubs and pre-school playgroups. The value of such organisations can hardly be overestimated. The teachers can assist the child and involve the mother. The mother will be taught how to teach her child, boy or girl, when he or she is at home. To some extent, a social outlet is provided for the mother. It must be recognised that bringing up young children is a tough and often lonely job in which skill and help are needed.

I can give an illustration from my constituency. In Bedfordshire, we are lucky enough to have a pre-school playgroup association that is flourishing throughout the county. At any one time it is assisting no fewer than 8,000 children. That means that 8,000 families and about 8,000 mothers at any one time are learning how to bring up their children and to develop them. This means that children are given a good start. If a child is given a good start in school, he or she is likely to make progress.

I speak with some personal knowledge because I lived for 10 years in Lambeth. Railton road, the front-line Mayall road and other roads which were so much in our minds at the time of the first Brixton riots in 1981 were places where I shopped frequently. My wife is an infant and junior school teacher and she taught for many years in Lambeth. She often had 45 pupils in her class, among whom there was often a high proportion of young West Indian Lambethians. There can be no doubt that many of them must have been of the age to have been involved in the riots, about 13 years after my wife had been teaching in the area.

The help and guidance that the schools can give and the clear standards that they inculcate, in co-operation with the parents, are factors of infinite value. I am sure that that view will receive support on both sides of the House. The value of that approach continues through the age scale.

Truancy is a real problem. Although our intentions are good, we often blind ourselves by the nomenclature that is attached to those who are involved in preventing or controlling truancy. The term "education welfare officer" does not give a clear picture to the child of the function of that person. The hon. Member for Hammersmith, speaking eloquently from the Opposition Front Bench, rightly observed that truancy and the incidence of crime in an area are intensely closely linked. He will remember, as I remember, that about 10 years ago the police carried out what were called truancy trawls in a number of parts of London. In one instance they carried out trawls over a fortnight and the volume of reported crime dropped by 30 per cent. The police were going around the streets, finding young people of school age who were wandering about and asking them why they were not at school and they were taking them in. The fact was then, and it remains so, that the police were doing something that they had no power to do. Truancy by a child is not an offence. The only offence is committed by the parent who does not send the child to school.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to an idea that comes from across the Atlantic. In some states there is a statutory obligation on a parent whose child truants, when summoned by the head teacher to whom the truancy is reported by the police, to go at once to the school and explain the circumstances. That applies whether the parent is at home or at work, perhaps busy on a lathe or writing an important report. It applies to the father or the mother. If they do not go at once, they can be fined. That requirement has a beneficial effect upon the parents. It brings home to them immediately and tangibly their responsibility to ensure that their children are at school. It had a significant and beneficial effect on truancy levels. I recommend that we should consider that suggestion here. It would have no effect upon the parent who takes care, but it would bring home to the lax and uncaring parent his or her duty.

I shall develop what I thought were unfair points about higher education made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. He and his colleagues always make unwise and, in a sense, blinkered points about money. If one believes that the problem can be tackled only by throwing at it money that the country cannot afford, one is failing to consider the correct solution.

My hon. Friend the Minister has correctly pointed out that the policies that the Labour Front Bench has put forward would cost about £50 billion. We all know that if a Labour Government were returned to office they would never implement even one third of their policies because they would not be able to find the money. After a few years, when they had implemented some of them—probably not the correct ones—they would go back to the International Monetary Fund. However, I do not want to get too caught up in that debate.

I wish to return to the practical things which can be done without spending excessive sums of money. It is not true to say that the problem of violent juvenile crime comes from young people who can get two Bs and a C in their A levels and who may or may not find a position on a particular course at a particular university. I am surprised to hear that anyone who obtains two Bs and a C cannot find a place in a university. I accept that they may not find a place on a course and at a university that they want. I believe that they would find a worthwhile course somewhere else which would benefit them. The word "university" does not have a special magic.

I hope that the chairman of ICI will not mind if I quote what he said. He is not a Conservative, but he is worthy of respect. He pointed out that in some respects there were too many universities but too few centres of excellence. Excellence and high standards are crucial to this debate, whether we talk about nursery or higher education. As high a proportion of the relevant age group as has ever been able to enjoy higher education can do so today. I am not saying that I should not like the proportion to be even higher, but that remains the fact and it should not be gainsaid.

I wish to deal with some of the practical things that can be done without enormous cost. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to give sympathetic consideration to them even when there are pressures on funds—and pressures on funds there are. One was mentioned by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. It leads me to the subject of out-of-school provision. I am vice president of a body known as the National Out-of-School Alliance. It deals with latchkey children. I became involved with the problem of latchkey children because when I lived in Lambeth there were children who roamed the streets with nowhere to go between leaving school at 3.30 pm and 6 pm when their parents returned from work. Comparatively small sums of money can help to provide them with sensible things to do on school premises or in public halls and playgrounds.

Those matters are relevant not just to inner city areas such as Lambeth, of which I have experience; they are relevant to large parts of the new towns. I remember that from when I represented Hemel Hempstead. It is also relevant to portions of my constituency, whether it be Kempstown or Biggleswade where many children would benefit from out-of-school provision while their parents were at work. The amount of money needed to organise such provision is often catalyst money. It is often a matter of persuading a local authority, with its beleagured funds—if they be beleagured—that this is a high, sensible and cost-effective priority.

I wish to discuss how one deals with and assists the young person who has often transgressed and come before the courts on many occasions. The key to the solution is to try to bring them back into the mainstream of life and, above all, to try to get them into work and give them the opportunity to meet "Miss Right"—the girl in their life—and to settle down and have a family. Thank heavens, that is what most of them ultimately do.

Many young people who transgress and go into the youth custody centres, as borstals are now called, have had a barren existence. I shall describe just how barren that existence can be. However, they can be brought back into the mainstream and taught how to obtain a job, help themselves, and return to the type of life that most of us hope to enjoy.

My involvement in such matters arises from the fact that I sit for 20 days a year as a recorder. I am therefore faced with the problem of sentencing young people. As a result of the training properly provided for recorders and magistrates, and my interest, I have visited a number of those institutions. I commend three, in different tiers, as models of the way in which we should approach the problem. The three that I commend are Sherborne house, the Burnbake Trust, where I am on the committee of management, and Project Full Employ. Sherborne house is in Southwark. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is not in the Chamber, but he will know it. I wish to explain what they do and the valuable assistance that they provide.

Sherborne house is an institution to which one goes as one of the conditions of a probation order. Under a probation order, pursuant to the provisions which the Government provided or expanded in the Criminal Justice Act 1982, magistrates or the Crown court can make it a condition of the order that someone should attend for up to 60 days at a specified place for instruction. They must do what they are asked to do by those who are in charge.

Sherborne house caters for people who have drifted into the alternative society or sub-culture where no one gets up in the morning because there is nothing to do. It provides them with training. It helps them to find a useful skill. That does not just mean bricklaying, although that is a useful skill; it includes carpentry, joinery, photography and a number of other technical skills. An outlet is provided. Life is often boring. Someone aged 16, 17 or 18 needs an opportunity to obtain self-confidence. To take young people out of themselves, even for a weekend, as part of their probation, getting them to the hills of Cumbria or Wales, providing them with a challenge and giving them a sense of self-confidence and self-respect enables them to hold up their heads among those whom they will meet. It shows them that there is more in life than the activities which have so often led them into crime. Those ideas are fostered by the Burnbake Trust, which is based in Southwark and at Wilton in Wiltshire, because it applies to rural as well as to city areas. It helps to provide training and a lead into work.

Similar help is provided by Project Full Employ. The ethos is the mainstream ethos that we all have to recognise if we are to live full and worthwhile lives. It is the ethos of getting up in the mornings. Project Full Employ sets out to find those who are most disadvantaged in our society. A large proportion of the 1,000 or so young people whom it helps every year are black. Almost exclusively they have never had a job, or never held down a job for more than a few days or weeks, and they are nearly always heavily under-educated. They have come through 11 years of the education system and gained all too little from it.

There is nothing remarkable about what is provided for them. They are given office training of the kind that Pitman's provided. The first Project Full Employ

[Mr. Nicholas Lyell]

institution was behind the Royal Exchange in the City. The young people had to get up early to start their training by 9 am, properly dressed. For 13 weeks they were taught office skills. At the end of the 13 weeks the project could reasonably expect to place in mainstream employment 70 per cent. of those for whom there had hitherto been no hope, putting them on their way. That is the kind of practical approach, funded partly by charity and partly by Government assistance, which is so valuable in this area.

The community programme has an important part to play, and I will give a final example from my own constituency. In helping people back into the mainstream, we are talking particularly about helping young people to find employment. It shows them that they can be employed. It shows others who might employ them outside a Government programme that they are willing to get off their backsides and work, if only they are given the opportunity.

The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders runs excellent schemes for about 200 people all over Bedfordshire. The work that they do is often simple, such as removing the concrete from the jungle of back gardens of those who live in rather poor quality council houses. That is of value to the people who live there and also to those who do the work. It can be constructive in other respects.

I visited two houses which had been rehabilitated. They were empty large, old-fashioned, council houses, not particularly convenient unless occupied by a large family. They had been burnt out at a result of vandalism. The first of them has been rehabilitated to provide a youth club for the local neighbourhood. The youth club is run by the youth of the neighbourhood and by nobody else. Perhaps I should not say that it is going like a house on fire, but large numbers of people come to it. It is entirely self-organised. There is a pool table, and it provides a real outlet for those who, in that poor quarter, have no other outlet. It has all been done by severely disadvantaged people.

Government schemes, charitable funding and local authority initiative can all come together to provide help for the young offender. It can help those who have transgressed to get back into the mainstream and into the life that we would all wish them to enjoy.

12.24 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate, and I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on initiating it. I am sure that we would all readily agree with the words of the motion. Whatever part of the country we represent, we know from the many letters we receive of the increasingly deep concern of people of all ages — especially the elderly in my constituency—about the growing violence in society, in which so many young people are often involved. The problem exists all over the country and there are no easy answers for its solution.

We and the general public would be very foolish if we thought that the Government could introduce a new law so that within a few months the problem would be solved. I accept that we all have a role to play. Parents in particular have a major role to play. In our day-to-day involvement in our constituencies we meet parents and we know that many decent, honourable and hard-working parents have real problems to face within their family circle.

Whether we like it or not, the attitudes of young people have changed enormously. There may be an age difference of 20 years or less between parents and their children, and the difference in attitudes is often amazing. For example, many young people see nothing basically wrong with drug taking, which we regard as wrong. They say that it is something they do within the circle of their friends, that they are not causing problems for anyone else, and that they should be allowed to do it.

I warmly congratulate the Government on the action that they have started to take on drugs. It may be somewhat late in the day; nevertheless, a start has been made and that is to be welcomed. The sooner the courts take action on the menace of drugs in our society, the better it will be for all of us.

I represent one of the inner city areas of London. The hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) mentioned the kinds of problem with which he has to contend in his constituency, which, although not far from London, is not in the London area. The problems that we are discussing today have been experienced by many of us in all parts of the country. Those of us from the inner cities have more of the problems than other hon. Members.

Today, the public do not want to see what they describe as a political dogfight between the Government and the Opposition, because we are debating a serious issue. Unfortunately, the Government do not always take the action that could be helpful in trying to overcome the issues that we are talking about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned board and lodging allowances. We have had some rough debates on that subject. I spoke on it about a year ago. Board and lodging allowances still present real problems as many young people move around the country because they are unable to find employment. In some parts of the country board and lodging allowances have been abused, but I do not believe that we needed nationwide action to resolve the minor abuses that have taken place. When we speak to young people about board and lodging allowances, they say that the Government are hostile towards them.

There have been comments about unemployment. It is a sad fact, and we would be fools to run away from it, that young people genuinely do not believe that the Government are doing all they can to help create employment. We need only to go to a local school—I am sure many of us do—and chat to young people about the issues of the day and what concerns them and we find that top of the list is employment. They ask about their employment prospects. Sadly many of them see no hope at all. They believe that the Government are not showing much concern about the problems that they will have to live with when they leave school.

Another issue that is of concern to young people and the organisations that seek to help them, certainly in the inner cities, is local community projects. In my area of Tooting, in Wandsworth I find such problems. Many organisations there cater for a wide range of youngsters, both black and white, some in employment but many unemployed. Those organisations look to the Government to give them some security for the future. Last Session we spent a great deal of time talking about the abolition of the Greater London council. We have heard many accusations

about how the GLC spends its money. However, in the GLC area many of the worthwhile projects came into being only because of GLC funding and still exist only because of that funding.

I am sure that many hon. Members, whether they are members of the Government or of the Opposition, know from the approaches that are being made to them that when the GLC is abolished many of the local organisations that have a role to play and are respected by young people and their parents will be concerned about their future at the end of 1986. Most of them can tick over into the early part of 1986, but many of them wonder whether they will still exist by the end of the year.

Over the next few weeks the Government must say that they will look sympathetically at projects that have a proven record of help to young people in a community. The problem is much wider than that, but today we are specifically talking about young people. The Government must show those organisations that their projects will receive support. It is no good for the House to talk about the problems that young people create when young people are saying that the projects that provide services and facilities that they can make use of no longer exist, because the Government, in co-operation with the local authorities, will no longer help to fund them. That is the problem.

Many local organisations in my area want help as they start to become established because of the cost of purchasing and refurbishing premises, supplying equipment and so on—all very expensive. However, if they do not get that help initially, unfortunately they do not get off the ground. I cannot stress too strongly how important that is.

Last Session we spent a great deal of time on rate capping. Opposition Members will never have the same point of view as the Government on rate capping. I served in local government before I came here, and I believe that it is the responsibility of the local authority to decide how it spends its money. Many people might not like that, but when the council elections come up those people have the choice of saying, "We do not believe that the authority has spent our money wisely, which we paid in taxes and rates, and therefore we do not support it." If parties announce their policies to the electorate, the Government should not say, "You may say that, but no way will you do it because we shall stop the funding that we could give you to allow such projects to get under way." All those things are incorporated in this overall issue.

This morning I was in Wormwood Scrubs prison, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith. In virtually every prison in the United Kingdom, there are increasing numbers of young people. I do not have the statistics for the breakdown of age, but perhaps the Minister does. It is not difficult to find out the reasons why the young people have been sent there. Many of them have been charged and found guilty of the most atrocious crimes of violence. Many of our prisons are overcrowded, and we have the problem of the closure of prison workshops. We often hear that men are locked up for 23 hours a day, and if workshops are closed more men will be locked up for longer each day. I cannot believe that that does not add to the bitterness felt by people who are already unhappy with their lot in our society. That matter has to be considered. It is no good saying, "This youngster has offended against the rules of our society, and we shall send him away," and then sending the youngster to prison under the present conditions.

My constituency, as well as the Minister's, is in the London borough of Wandsworth. We are both members of the Wandsworth police consultative committee. At the meeting last month a request was made to the three hon. Members with constituencies in Wandsworth to approach the Home Office and ask for more funding, which would allow for more police officers to be made available in the borough. I am sure that it is not only our police committee that is making such a request. We know from the many letters that we receive that the general public want more policemen on our streets. I wrote to the Home Secretary informing him of my support of the police committee's views and saying that it asked me to write to him. The members of the committee and I will await the response with interest. If funding is made available so that we have more policemen on our streets, that will be welcomed by our constituents. I am certain that more policemen on the streets will deter much of the unfortunate violence. It is no good the Home Office expressing deep concern at the violence if at the same time it does not do what I and many people believe is necessary — ensure that more policemen are seen.

Ministers and Conservative Back Bench Members often tell us that the Government have put more funding into the police and that we have more police officers than X number of years ago. That may be true, but society's demands on the police force are greater. It is no good having an approved ratio of police officers for a division, and when the division arrives at that figure to refuse it extra officers. One must consider the part of the country that one is dealing with. If, as in the inner cities, we have increasing problems of violence, the Home Office must respond by allocating additional officers and making additional funding available for that area. Until that is done the general public will not accept that the Government are doing all that they can or should to combat vicious crime and personal attacks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith referred to shops which sell a wide range of guns and knives. There is such a shop in my constituency, but I shall not say where it is because I do not want to give it publicity. I visited it, and it has an enormous range of all kinds of firearms, including machine guns, knives, daggers and even a hand grenade. I am prepared to accept that the hand grenade may be an imitation, but it is a most lifelike one. They are all openly displayed in the shop window. Local people who have approached me have named the shop the muggers' shop because it is where those who are interested in crime and violence could go. People can visit such shops freely and purchase whatever is on sale.

I have told the police in Wandsworth that local people are extremely worried about the shop and the types of items that it sells. The police are also extremely worried. A couple of weeks ago the commander of W division of the Metropolitan police force told me that he believes that in virtually all the apparently armed hold-ups imitation weapons are used. If an expert saw a person draw one of those imitation guns and heard him say, "This is a hold up" and "Hand over the money" or whatever, I defy even that expert to declare that the gun is an imitation. The guns are extremely lifelike.

When I take up this anxiety with the police, they tell me that they can do nothing about it because the shop and people are not breaking the law. I beg the Minister to reconsider the issue because it is becoming a problem. I have not discussed it with my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Tom Cox]

Hammersmith, but he faces the same problem, and there must be many more similar shops throughout the country. They are extremely frightening to the local community, and we should not allow their numbers to grow because they undoubtedly cause problems to local people. Although the Minister may be unable to say much about it today, I hope that he will ask his officials to consider the matter and make recommendations that will help not only my constituents but the police.

Many people, especially the elderly, are worried about the violence of very young people, often school children, against the elderly, who are not mobile and who cannot run away if they are threatened. There is a project in my area called Tooting Action for the Pensioners. Its representatives were extremely worried about attacks made on elderly people in the area, so they contacted the head teachers of local schools and asked that members of their group be allowed to speak to youngsters in schools. The scheme was successful, because for the first time many youngsters were forced to think how they would react if their grandparents were mugged, robbed or beaten up with the atrocious violence about which we hear too often. With the right presentation, youngsters began to realise that the elderly were unable to defend themselves. We should try to encourage such involvement in our education system, because the more we bring home to youngsters the serious consequences of the violence with which many of our constituents must live daily, the more it will do to prevent the appalling problem.

The more we discuss this issue, the better. Of course, not all hon. Members accept everything that the Government or the Opposition say should be done, but today there has been a meeting of minds. We are all deeply worried about increasing violence, because it affects all our constituents. However, I hope that the Minister will not repeat what we have heard so often about the Government providing more police and resources than ever before. Let him tell us what the Government will do to build on that. What will they do to curb the offences that I and many of the hon. Members who have spoken today have tried to highlight? The more we do that, the better will be the understanding of the general public. Sadly, people often say to us, "You do not really understand our views or our worries." We must say that we do understand and share their anxieties, and we wish to do all that we can to reduce the sad menace that is creeping through our society—in many areas, it is travelling very quickly.

12.48 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Issues come and go, but I have received more letters on this issue than on any other during my two and a half years as a Member of Parliament. I shall convey to the House the views of my constituents, because they have asked me to do so. No issue disillusions ordinary people more with the political process. To them, the solutions are clear. They cannot understand why politicians find it impossible to deal with the problem.

Ordinary people feel that the pendulum has swung too far in education. *[Interruption.]* I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am having some trouble with the tooth about which I went to see my dentist earlier this week. You will have to excuse my speech, which may not be as brisk as it normally is.

Ordinary people feel that the pendulum has swung too far from the inculcation of self-discipline to self-expression. They do not argue with self-expression, but they believe that it has resulted in the chaos of the abstract painting, not the order of the classic composition. They feel that there needs to be more talk of duties, not of rights. They remember the words of President Kennedy:

"ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

People also feel strongly about the media. People used to sneer at Mrs. Mary Whitehouse, but most of my constituents do not. They believe that those who seek to entertain the nation must instruct it as well. They have a duty to inculcate respect for the Christian values, compassion and morality and humanity, and not for violence and hatred.

My constituents also express concern about the occupations of young people. They believe that inactivity should not be an option for young people, particularly for those under the age of 20. They welcome the Manpower Services Commission schemes that the Government have brought in, which have led to £1 million being spent in the Gainsborough area alone this year. They fear, however, that the YTS scheme has not gone far enough and hope that it will be extended beyond the 18-year-olds to the 20-year-olds. I appreciate that there are problems of cost, but this is what my constituents are telling me.

After the worries about education, the media and occupation, my constituents still feel that the Government have not gone far enough in redressing the swing of the pendulum against punishment. They believe that justice is too slow. In my time practising in criminal courts in London, I have also felt this. More stipendiary justices should be appointed, and 24-hour courts set up. There has to be some limitation to right of jury trial for minor crimes. Justice needs to be fair, to be just, but it must be swift as well.

My constituents — the political establishment may sneer at them for this—still write me dozens of letters about capital and corporal punishment. I have referred these letters to Ministers. I appreciate the arguments used against the reintroduction of corporal punishment, but I must bring my constituents' feelings before the House.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with those three subjects of full occupation for young people and redressing the declining standards in education and the media, and assure my constituents that we can thereby deter young offenders.

12.53 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I had not intended to speak, but I have been prompted to do so by the speech of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the other speakers in the debate for not having been present to hear the earlier speeches. I have not had an opportunity of hearing what has no doubt been a good Friday morning debate.

I am incensed by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle saying, when dealing with the slowness of the administration of justice based on his experience, that there is a case for abolishing the right of trial by jury for certain minor offences. That was what I understood the tenor of his remarks to be. Presumably the hon. Gentleman does not remember the great difficulties experienced by Parliament when it considered the James report on this

subject, particularly in the other place. It was difficult to draw the line between offences that are serious enough to be tried by a jury, where the election is by either the defence or the prosecution, and the abolition of that right, with restriction to summary trials only.

An example of that, which is relevant to young people, is the offence of criminal damage. In the other place, the argument, which took place several years ago, was that offences of criminal damage below a certain value should be only summary offences, but that above a certain value the defence should have a right to trial by jury. It broke down because nobody could agree about the value to be placed on the act of criminal damage that would remove the right of trial by jury. It was unworkable because there could be conflicting evidence from the prosecution and the defence about the value of a particular piece of property. If, for example, the right to trial by jury were abolished for property under the value of £100, one witness might say that it was worth more than £100, while another witness might say that it was worth less than £100.

I understand, although I do not know whether the rumour is reliable, that the eminent committee that is headed by Lord Roskill—which, among other subjects, is considering whether trial by jury should be abolished for commercial fraud, on the basis that cases of commercial fraud are too complicated for a jury to understand and that it should be replaced by a panel consisting of a single judge and assessors—will recommend when it reports in the near future that trial by jury should be retained in all cases, including those of commercial fraud.

One needs to be very careful about accepting the argument of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, with whom we all commiserate because of his toothache, that the right to trial by jury should be limited or possibly abolished. I believe in juries. On the whole they get it right, although in many cases perverse verdicts have been recorded and guilty men and women, in the face of the evidence, have got off. This point is topical at a time when suggestions are being made about an alteration to the rules relating to peremptory challenges in trials by jury. I believe in jury trials, and the House of Commons should be very slow to interfere with a right that has been fought for over a very long time and is one of the principal safeguards of civil liberties in this country.

May I deal with another matter that is germane to a point that was made earlier in the debate—the hoary old chestnut of capital and corporal punishment. I fully understand the feelings of constituents about capital and corporal punishment. When they read about a bad case that involves terrible violence, they are revolted by the facts of the case, as reported in the press. There is an understandable feeling of revenge. Strong feelings are aroused against the perpetrators of the offence. However, corporal punishment is a wholly impractical sentence to be carried out by any court. To have any salutary effect, corporal punishment must be carried out immediately after conviction and when sentence has been pronounced.

The very nature of the appellate procedure — the length of time that is taken to get an appeal under way, whether from a Crown court or a magistrates court—means that a sentence of corporal punishment would be postponed for many weeks, if not months, and therefore would not have a salutary effect. I ask the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle to consider the practical implications of his recommendation. This argument has been aired on many previous occasions. People would like corporal punishment to be reintroduced, but it is not a practical option in a civilised country whose administration of justice includes various appellate courts from the original sentence. To be effectiye at all it must be carried out immediately, and the very nature of our administration of justice system prevents that.

I shall not deal with capital punishment, because that has already been dealt with by Parliament on many occasions and the arguments on both sides are well known. I shall not weary the House with any repetition.

I do not know whether juvenile courts were mentioned in the speeches that I did not hear, but a lot of nonsense is talked about them by many well-meaning but misguided people. Any juvenile appearing before a court merits special consideration whether he is prosecuted on his own or as a co-defendant with adults. The machinery of juvenile courts must be geared to special considerations, and defendants must be treated sympathetically and with sensitivity. Some of the things that go on in our juveniie courts today are a disgrace. If we are to do anything about juvenile crime, the way not to do it is to deal with the juvenile defendants as they are sometimes dealt with by our juvenile courts.

Many years ago there used to be a juvenile court behind Harrods, presided over by a distinguished sociologist who is a member of the other place. The most terrible offences were tried at that court. I remember vividly on one occasion a horrible little juvenile defendant who was charged with a number of serious robberies involving acts of violence on old ladies. He was just on the point of making an admission in the course of a gentle and understanding cross-examination when the noble Lady adjourned the court after asking the defendant whether he felt unwell and would like some refreshment before continuing his cross-examination. I mention that simply as an illustration of the over-indulgence shown by some juvenile courts to defendants who, on the facts of a case, as subsequently proved, have committed serious offences.

I am all in favour of juvenile courts producing masses of reports—social, probation, education, medical, and psychiatric—because they help the courts in sentencing juveniles before them, but I am completely against the wishy-washy pussyfooting attitude which permeates through some magistrates courts because some magistrates do not seem to have in mind the serious consequences of offences committed by the juveniles before them.

I entirely agree that more stipendiary magistrates should be appointed. The Government have the plans, but do not produce the resources to pay for them. Stipendiary magistrates should deal with juvenile cases, and that would be a jolly good thing. Some of the things that go on in juvenile courts are incredible. Procedure is sloppy, despite the advice of qualified clerks, people are kept waiting indefinitely, and sometimes adjournments take place month after month because the courts are so congested. It is a lamentable state of affairs. I would support any measure which would produce more Government resources to improve the quality of juvenile courts and the speed with which they deal with cases.

In fairness to the Government, I should say that things have speeded up in the past two or three years. There is a far shorter waiting period between committal and trial now than there was several years ago in London and elsewhere. Progress is being made by the establishment of more Crown courts, the appointment of more circuit

[Mr. John Ryman]

judges and the growth of new court complexes in London and the provinces. Progress is being made, but a great deal more needs to be done.

1.5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad to have the opportunity to respond to a debate on the motion of considerable thoughtfulness proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). My only regret is that the debate has not attracted as much interest as it might have done. Although we had a valuable infusion of interest part way through the debate, it is somewhat surprising that an issue of such significance has not attracted a larger turnout of hon. Members.

I commend the spirit in which the debate has been conducted. While it would be wrong to say that it has been free of any partisan assertions, there has been evidence of valuable across-the-House thinking. Obviously, I shall seek to respond in kind.

The thoughtful motion that my hon. Friend proposed is one on which he is eminently well qualified to speak, having had a most distinguished career in the media before entering the House and having served with distinction as a member of the Conservative parliamentary education committee and for a number of years as chairman of the media committee. Therefore, he raises issues with which he has been familiar for many years. Of course, we must not ignore his added qualification to speak about young people as the father of three children. As I am discovering to my cost as the father of two very young children, that gives one some expertise on juvenile misbehaviour.

It is worth picking up some of the points made in the debate—especially those made in the interesting speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), as well as those made by my hon. Friends the Members for Wealden and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman)—about what precisely are the dimensions of juvenile crime, especially that involving violence. The evidence is interesting and does not all point in one direction, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said.

It is true that our society has become increasingly violent during the past 30 years. The number of reported offences of violence — which are not an accurate indicator of the level of crime in our community, but give us some guidelines — has shown a dramatic increase during that period. In particular, there has been a very steep increase during the past 10 years. In 1974, 64,000 offences of violence were reported, compared with 114,000 in 1984.

As some of the responsibility for the increase in violent crime was laid at the door of the Government by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and his colleagues during Home Office Question Time yesterday, it is worth remembering that while the increase in violent offences under this Government has been 20 per cent. during the past five years—a disturbing enough figure—the real increase — 49 per cent — occurred between 1974 and 1979. That suggests that those who look for narrow partisan points to make are, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said, throwing their seed upon somewhat stony ground.

I define juveniles as being between the ages of 10 and 17. There is no doubt that they are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime. It has been well said that 15 is the peak age for offending among boys and 14 for offending among girls — something that causes us all, especially parents, great distress. Some 30 per cent. of those found guilty of or cautioned for indictable offences last year were in the 10 to 17 age bracket. If we add to that the 24 per cent. in the 17 to 21 age bracket, that means that more than 50 per cent. of those brought to book by the courts were aged between 10 and 21. That goes some way towards explaining the phenomenon of young men in custody mentioned by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox).

Before we paint too black a picture, we must remember, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, that juveniles are proportionately less involved in violence than in other types of crime, especially criminal damage, burglary and the like. As I said, 30 per cent. of those found guilty were aged between 10 and 17, but only 20 per cent. of those convicted of or cautioned for crimes of violence were in that age bracket. It is interesting that the proportion of those between the ages of 10 and 17 who have been convicted of violence has fallen during the past 10 years. Eleven per cent. of those convicted of or cautioned for violence in 1974 were aged between 10 and 17, but by 1984 it was only 8·5 per cent. It is important to recognise that the currents are not all flowing in the same direction. Young adults — those between 17 and 21 — are disproportionately prone to violence. Of those convicted last year for wounding, assault, robbery and rape, 50 per cent. were between 17 and 24 and 75 per cent. were between 14 and 24.

We know that criminality is very much a problem of adolescence, but it is interesting to see the changes over the decade. In 1974, 480,000 people were found guilty of or cautioned for indictable offences, of whom 185,000 were between 10 and 17 and 96,500 were between 17 and 21. In 1984, 571,000 people were cautioned or found guilty of indictable offences—an increase of 91,000—but the number aged between 10 and 17 so cautioned or convicted fell by 16,000 to 169,000, while — this is perhaps a trouble point—those convicted or cautioned in 1984 between the ages of 17 and 21 increased by no fewer than 40,000, or just over 40 per cent., to 136,000. Thus, between 17 and 21 is the real growth area where there is the likelihood of serious offending.

Even then, there is good news among the bad. While it came as a shock to some people that a research survey showed not long ago that one in three of those under 28 would have been convicted or cautioned for at least one offence, only 5 per cent. of those become seriously involved in the longer term in crime, and most of those who pass out of the 17 to 21 age group do not reoffend. One has the spectacle, therefore, of the teddy boy of yesteryear sitting in his armchair watching "Coronation Street" today and tut-tutting about the evils of the younger generation.

A crucial theme of Government policy is to try to make sure that what we do, while it satisfies the public in terms of the amount of crime cleared up and shows that the punishment fits the crime—I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) about the need to demonstrate that muggers will be

sent to prison and so on — ensures that our criminal justice policies do not impede that process by which people grow out of crime.

That is why the Government have given equal attention not just to revising the way in which we treat younsters in custody — particularly through the much more sophisticated training in the youth custody system than was ever possible under borstal—but to increasing the amount of money made available to intermediate treatment, which is an important development, and, for instance, to making community service, which has been one of the great success areas in our penal policy, available to 16-year-olds.

We must try so far as possible not to enhance the liability of youngsters to continue to offend and one way to do that is to put youngsters who do not really need custody into custody, where all they learn are the bad habits of that small hard core of recidivist offenders who are not only serious offenders in their teens but who go on to become serious offenders for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I accept everything that the Minister has said on this subject. There is a problem in trying to go further down that road in that there are occasions when the courts are inhibited from making community service orders because of a lack of community service provision nationally. Remembering that community service is often a far more effective alternative to custody, is there any hope that in the coming year the Government will apply an extended variety of options for community service?

Mr. Mellor: We are anxious to do that and to build on the success of community service by moving down tariff to reparation and similar schemes, which would command support across the House. In proportionate terms, the increase in the number of probation officers has exceeded the increase in the number of police officers. The number of probation ancillaries, who do the work of supervising community service, has gone up in the last six years by over 40 per cent.

However, a consequence, which has many virtues, of having many independent probation areas throughout the country is that it gives the opportunity for the probation service to be genuinely responsive to local needs, because they do not all move at the same speeds. There is a time lag during which initiatives are put into practice. It is an abiding principle of the Home Office to try to ensure that there is no logistical reason why the courts should not pass sentences that they think proper. We would not want to think of people going into custody because, although the court was prepared to take a non-custodial option, that option was not available in practical terms.

It is interesting to consider the causes of juvenile delinquency. This factor was at the centre, and rightly so, of many of the contributions to the debate that I enjoyed especially. I remind the House of a long review that was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Home Office and published by the Research Planning Unit in 1982. The causal factors of juvenile delinquency were examined and that led to a number of conclusions which echo some of the comments that have been made today.

Five causal factors were nominated. The first factor was personality, including cognitive and educational retardation, hyperactivity and attention-seeking. It considered that all these factors were linked to recidivist delinquency. It should be possible to determine the children who are exhibiting these personality traits and to try to address the problems within the home, school, education and medical services that are provided.

The second causal factor was found to be the family, which is so important. Under this head appeared parental criminality, which plainly encourages the criminality of children, ineffective discipline within the home, family discord, weak parent-child relationships and large families. All these circumstances can be numbered among the causal factors.

Another factor is the system itself, which includes court appearances at which offenders are labelled as delinquents, which has an effect on those who are subject to self-deception. There is some inevitability about that in many instances. The survey found that pupil intake and school ethics can have an effect on delinquency.

The fifth factor was the environment. There are marked differences in delinquency rates in rural and urban areas. I recall that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made that very point.

There are no real explanations, but it is becoming increasingly clear — even more so than it was to the authors of the report in 1982 — that physical design features may contribute to what is now called situational crime prevention. Broadwater Farm was a showpiece of the previous decade, but we look back now with a somewhat jaundiced eye at something which seems to have built into it an open opportunity and invitation to criminal behaviour. These are matters that all of us have to take seriously.

In this generation of politics—this applies especially to those of us who represent urban areas—we are the inheritors of what took place in the 1950s and 1960s. We are reaping a somewhat bitter harvest from some of the rather pie-in-the-sky aspirations of previous generations, which thought that large housing estates were an improvement on what had gone before.

Mr. Chris Smith: I accept what the Minister has said about the nature of housing estates that were built in the 1950s and 1960s, but the Government have reduced expenditure on housing from the Exchequer by about 60 per cent. over the past six years. That has undoubtedly had an effect on the inability of many local authorities to improve the estates to which he is referring.

Mr. Mellor: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's statistic tells anything like a fair story. I know that the borough of Wandsworth is able to contemplate spending about £20 million on upgrading the Roehampton estate alone. It is one of the LCC's showpieces. As it has not had purely Socialist management since its construction, it has survived in a rather better state than some of the estates which were built at the same time. The Pepys estate at Greenwich and the Broadwater Farm estate have suffered somewhat more that the Roehampton estate. If Wandsworth is able to contemplate spending £20 million on one estate, one wonders why other local authorities are not able to do likewise.

The Government have focused on the rehabilitation of older property. There has been a dramatic increase in the amount of money that is available in the form of grants to renovate our older terraces. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey bears a quizzical expression.

[Mr. Mellor]

I shall write to him and set out the figures. I am not, of course, trying to do the job of Ministers at the Department of the Environment. I have an interest in that matter as a Member representing an inner London area which has benefited from the enormous rehabilitation of and improvement to terraced properties.

In yesteryear people took the bulldozer to viable communities and replaced them with soulless and heartless housing estates. If we are now learning that lesson and rehabilitating houses which have plenty of life left, it must be a step in the right direction. That is what we are trying to do.

A tremendous amount of money has been injected into the criminal justice system. The hon. Member for Tooting correctly pointed to the improved expenditure on the police. It has been about 35 per cent. in real terms, and has led to an increase of about 4,500 in the Metropolitan police. However, it still leaves many communities feeling that they want more. We are alive to that fact, and there is to be an increase in Metropolitan police manpower this coming year.

We are also glad to see the way in which the community has welcomed with open arms the return of police officers to the beat, and the home beat system, which the hon. Member for Tooting and I know because W division is especially good at maintaining it. That is a tremendous improvement on police in panda cars. I was glad to hear what he said, because respect for the police and wanting more police on the streets should not be the monopoly of one party.

I have been troubled by the extent to which some members of the Labour party have wanted to retard the natural development of police-community relations, in particular with regard to what I see as one of the most exciting developments—the ability of the police to be in the neighbourhood and to act as the catalyst to make the community resist crime through neighbourhood watch schemes. I know that the hon. Member for Tooting favours such schemes. I wish that he would have a word with one or two other prominent Socialists in London, especially in inner London, who are doing their best to sabotage that exciting development. It is about communities responding to the threat of crime.

What some hon. Members have said in the debate is true. People will succumb to temptation when it is placed in their way. Kids with nothing to do, who may have been turned out of school early as a result of industrial action, or latchkey kids, find the opportunity to burgle a house or take a car—the Devil does make work for idle hands—so the community must be better able to prevent the opportunities for crime being so many and varied.

I should like to deal with the three issues identified in the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden—the home, the school and the media. The Government are placing increasing significance on crime prevention. I am glad that there was a welcome, other than just from my hon. Friends, for the Prime Minister's initiative in calling together in January a number of leading citizens from industry, commerce, the unions and elsewhere to discuss crime prevention.

I am sure that the criminal justice system alone cannot defeat crime because, by the time someone falls into the hands of the police or the courts, the community has already failed. The crime has been committed. We must study the roots of crime. That takes me neatly into the home.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden began the debate by emphasising the home. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey spoke of the despair of parents who are bemused by the fact that, however carefully they have tried to bring up their children, they have fallen into bad company and committed offences. It is wrong to see all parents as being indifferent to whether their children turn to crime. That is not the case. In relation to drugs, I have learnt how cunning some kids are in disguising from their parents what they are up to. We must not underestimate the sophistication of teenagers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington was also correct to make it clear that adults' willingness to take mood-changing drugs was not the best example to give kids. He pointed to the examples of some adults. All those factors are relevant.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to a Home Office research study published this year about parental supervision and juvenile delinquency. It contains a mixture of good and troubling news which is crucial to a proper understanding of the position. The study was based on interviews with 751 families with a 14 or 15-year-old child. The sample was divided between families with boys and girls and included a proportion of one-parent families. The report aimed to give an overall picture of the lives of the families in relation to supervision.

The general findings of that interesting report were encouraging in the sense that the delinquency was not linked either to having a working mother or to being part of a one-parent family. It is important to remember that when one sometimes hears the whole of the juvenile crime problem being blamed on those two phenomena of modern life. It is particularly important to people in my constituency, where at several schools over 50 per cent. of the children now come from one-parent families. It is plainly wrong to link that factor with delinquency.

The clearest finding was the link between an individual child's delinquency and the levels of delinquency among his or her friends. It is the pressure of the peer group that is important. It confirms much of what I hear through my specific interest in the drugs problem. Youngsters start to take drugs because of two factors—the pressure of the peer group of their friends and curiosity. Parents need to know who their youngsters are mixing with, and to encourage the kind of confidence which will enable their children to talk about the pressures to which they are subjected by their friends. Then, particularly if there is interchange between parents, youngsters can be steered away from those among their peer group who are most likely to lead them into trouble. It will also help us generally in battling with the problem of juvenile crime.

I referred earlier to people growing out of crime as the pressure and influence of friends begin to decline. That is not to say that friendship is not important but, as youngsters get older, the need to be doing exactly what their friends are doing begins to decline. If we could attack the problem of negative peer group pressure and find positive ways of counteracting it, we could begin to take a major step forward.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I think the Minister will accept that, although it is not a matter of direct cause and effect,

high unemployment provides an opportunity for peer group pressure to be much more influential from the time that young people leave school. Youngsters spend much time with each other. They watch each other's activities and mimic them, instead of doing their own thing and making their own way through training into work. I hope the Minister will confirm that the Government now accept that there is a factor contributing to criminality when there is no activity or interesting occupation to distract youngsters from each other's company, and when at least one of them is doing something criminal and leading others astray.

Mr. Mellor: My answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is a combination of yes and no. It is yes in the sense that, where we are dealing with those who leave school and are not getting jobs, we accept the need to offer them something positive and challenging. That is why we are building on the success of the youth training scheme and introducing the two-year YTS which will cost £1·1 billion in a full year. That is a crucial figure in the context of the criticism that we are not providing money to help solve the problem.

No one now needs to go through the crucial years from 16 to 18 without being given something worth while to do. It is not simply a matter of keeping them off the streets or keeping them quiet. It is the training they get that will help to give them a future. All the evidence is showing that already two thirds of those who go on the courses are either getting jobs at the end of the course or being stimulated back into higher education. The hon. Member for Hammersmith was right to say that not everybody catches the education bus straight from school. Some people under-achieve at school and go back into education later. We have to recognise that in some cases the education engine can be started later. We are trying to find ways of doing that.

The only reason why I say no is that the study from which I quoted dealt specifically with children who were still at school. We know that many youngsters in their mid-teens are getting involved in offences. They are not the most serious offences, but they are offences which could establish a pattern of behaviour. The reasons of those youngsters for getting involved in offending are clearly not related to unemployment.

It saddened me that there was an absence in some of the speeches, and a marked absence in the document recently published by the Church of England, of one important factor — personal responsibility. That is important to young people everywhere, particularly in the inner cities where the stresses are greater. The need to promote self-control was also absent but it is important, whether one is considering a child in a school, youth club or the home.

The reason for many offences is the instant gratification of impulse. That is the motivating factor behind the way in which so many people behave. Frustration gives way to the instantaneous response of criminal damage or violence. The long walk home on a wet night gives rise to instant gratification of the impulse to smash a car windscreen, get in, and drive it away. It is in the offences that reflect giving way to the impulse of the moment that we have seen recent growth — criminal damage and motor car offences. Personal responsibility is crucial to the issue. Parents must foster that, the Government must help and schools have an important duty to encourage it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden proposed a neat Morton's fork in the approach to the schools that I would say is unanswerable. Schools cannot say that they are more than just examination factories if they do not take on board the need to ensure that what they should do during school hours—which is a large part of a child's day — is to promote the wider concept of good citizenship. That must involve stressing personal responsibility, the need for self-control and maturity. If I am right in saying that peer pressure is behind much of the behaviour, it is in the school that one of the positive attempts can be made—I know in many schools it is being made—to counteract such pressure.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is taking several initiatives to promote that approach. I shall mention three of them. First, he will issue guidance making clear the responsibilities of school governing bodies in the promotion of good citizenship. School governing bodies are to be recast to give parents more impact. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey sympathises with me, but the dead hand of political control of school governors that we see in the Inner London education authority is awful.

Secondly, Her Majesty's inspectors of schools are carrying out a review of good practice in schools in the areas of relationship, behaviour, attitudes to work and discipline so that good practice may become standard practice. That is a legitimate aspiration. It is not just handing out tablets of stone, but looking to the schools to see where leadership is being given and trying to encourage others to follow.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend is agreeable to giving positive consideration to making education support grants available for local education authority schemes to combat juvenile crime. That is a potentially important development. I echo the rebuke of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire about the uncritical approach to public expenditure. It can be demonstrated, though not by a mere Home Office Minister, that the Government have increased public expenditure in real terms and as a proportion of our gross national product. If resources were the answer to the problems that we have been dealing with, the dramatic increases of resources in key areas that we have seen over the past 30 or 40 years should have rid us of them, if it were that simple.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) mentioned the ILEA. That authority is well resourced. The money comes from the ratepayer, not from the taxpayer, but it is the same person who is footing the bill. Some 46 per cent. of my rates in Wandsworth go to the ILEA. Does that expenditure justify the fact that last year, despite a 4·5 per cent. increase in the number of children, there was a 10 per cent. increase in non-teaching staff? Why should it cost 50 per cent. more to light and heat a classroom for a child in the ILEA than anywhere else in the country?

One sees the uncritical approach to public expenditure. If we had been told a few weeks ago that the London borough of Brent, not a large area, spent £30 million on its social services and employed 2,000 people, would we not think that little Jasmine Beckford should have been a good deal better off than she turned out to be? When one considers the £1 million that the GLC will spend on the

[Mr. Mellor]

Brent Irish centre, one begins to realise that the idea that public expenditure is the sole determinant of human happiness is well wide of the mark.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Minister is less than fair in his comments on the Inner London education authority. It is one of the six education authorities out of over 90 which, in Her Majesty's Inspector's report, qualified as providing an adequate standard of education. The ILEA is rightly proud of that. Improvements are needed in many respects, but surely there is a connection between the cost of providing a good education service and the provision of resources to meet those costs. The Minister ignores that.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is not disagreeing with me. Whatever else we say about the ILEA, it is not under resourced. He agrees with me about that. That does not mean that kids coming out of schools in Brixton are in harmony with the community in which they live. We must recognise that the problem of alienation among teenagers there — I represented some of them when I was practising at the Bar — is not resolved by their having been through the most expensive education system yet devised in this country. I am asking that we do not simplify the arguments too much, and think that it is all a matter of expenditure. I am sad if I have not made one thing clear in my speech. I am not denying the role of spending. In fact, I gloried in some of the spending increases that we made. However, it must be properly targeted. Just throwing money at the problem does not make it go away. I wish that it did. We would all have less to do if that were so.

We must not ignore what was said in the motion and some of the more thoughtful contributions about the media. Several hon. Members referred to concern about violence on television and its impact. Like so many of those matters, it is not easy to determine what that impact is. Many think—I am one of them—that we are entitled to rely on common sense, and common sense must lead us to suspect that the constant diet of violence, particularly for young and impressionable minds, leads to some desensitisation, and, if dwelt on lovingly, can encourage people to go out and engage in violence. It can create the impression that violence is a normal response to everyday problems in society.

We must also look at what research tells us. Again, the message is not entirely clear, but there is no doubt that the overall conclusion is that, despite extensive studies, it is not possible to demonstrate that films on television do or do not exercise a socially harmful influence. There is no positive correlation between the increase in violence and the increase in television viewing, distressing though it is to me, as well as to my hon. Friends, that over 20 hours a week of the average teenager's time is spent watching television.

Research has confirmed our worries in two areas. First, if young children under six watch violent films, that can give rise to violent imitative behaviour. Far too many youngsters of that age are allowed freer access to the television than they should have. Many who believe, as I do, in the value of pre-school education know that many attitudes are formed at that age.

Secondly, and just as distressing, older children whose development has been impaired are more likely to seek gratification in television violence and are more prone to be influenced by it. In other words, those who are already damaged are damaged further. That ties in with some court evidence where people convicted of serious offences of violence maintain that they felt some pressure to act in that way as a result of what they had seen on television.

The duty of parents was well set out by my hon. friend the Member for Wealden when he reminded the House that there was the "off" switch. Certainly, broadcasters are right when they say that they cannot work on the assumption that young children will be allowed access to the television, however late in the evening. The maintenance of standards is plainly a matter for the broadcasting authorities which act under a clear statutory duty. The IBA, for example, has a statutory duty to satisfy itself that so far as possible nothing is included in the programmes broadcast that offends against good taste or decency or that is likely to encourage or incite crime or lead to disorder or be offensive to public feeling. It also has a duty to ensure that programmes maintain a high general standard, a proper balance and wide range in subject matter, and to secure a wide showing for programmes of merit. The responsibilities of the BBC mirror that. Broadcasters do not jib at the concept of public service, of being trustees of the public interest, and of being responsive to the public will. That is right and proper.

It is not part of the Government's duty or intention to dictate to the media on this or any other issue. Their duty is merely to voice any concern when they feel it and to echo public concern. The principal channel of communication between the public and the media is by the public making points directly to the media when there is concern — for example, about the diet of violence. One may think it a paradox that, at a time when more people are undoubtedly becoming alert to the worries about the influence of the constant diet of violence on the screen on youngsters, only a small proportion of the public takes the trouble to complain to the media. In the year to March 1985, for example, only 1·3 per cent. of the complaints sent to the IBA were about violence on television programmes, and the BBC showed the same figures.

There are guidelines about violence. I have the guidelines of the IBA, which are contained in a full document, which was revised as recently as February 1984, and I also have the BBC's guidelines on violence, which reflect a report of a committee of senior BBC executives chaired by Mr. Wyatt, the head of documentary features television, and published in 1983. Clearly the BBC is only too well aware of the problems that violence may pose in the wider community.

The House may be interested to know that the BBC told us that it has recently decided to re-establish the Wyatt committee to see whether further modifications are needed to its document. The committee will not only consider whether the guidelines need amending, but will assess their application during the period in which they have been in force. Many hon. Members will see that as an encouraging response by the BBC to what is being said.

In the new year we shall have the opportunity of considering a proposal by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) — that the Obscene Publications Act 1959 should be made applicable to broadcasting, and I shall not pre-empt the discussions about that. The point that emerges with clarity from

today's debate is that we are not raising anxieties that material in breach of the 1959 Act is being shown on television.

The question which is raised in the correspondence that we receive and in our speeches is whether material that is accepted as being within the law is harmful, and whether the debate about films being shown — most notably recently two films on Channel 4 — relates not to the question of material said to be outwith the 1959 Act, but to whether such material should be shown on television uncut, even at a late hour, and even though it has a cinema certificate.

It is important to remember that broadcasters are applying standards far stricter than those contained in the 1959 Act. Thus, last weekend, a specially edited version of a film well known in the cinema—"Dressed to Kill" — was shown on television. Equally, the BBC has decided—most hon. Members will believe rightly—that "First Blood" is an unsuitable film for Christmas, even though it obtained a 15 certificate when it was classified for the cinema. The problems of violence on television are distinct from the problems of what should be seen in any form in our community. I do not envy the broadcasters their task of making those difficult judgments, but they, and we, know that they cannot shirk those judgments, and there is clear evidence that they do not.

I am grateful for the opportunity of responding to the debate and to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden for introducing such a thoughtful motion, which I wholeheartedly commend to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House views with great concern the problem of violent crime committed by the young; notes the important influence which parents, the schools and the media can have in their formative years; and calls upon the Government to lead a renewed and vigorous effort to develop in our young people an increased sense of responsibility and awareness of the interests of their fellow citizens, and to encourage their more active participation in their communities.

Electricity and Safety in the Home

1.46 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I beg to move,

That this House notes with concern the increased numbers of domestic fires and accidents caused by defective electrical wiring and the misuse of electricity; notes the cost of this increase in terms of human tragedy and finance; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to include the electrical re-wiring of homes in the criteria for all home improvement grants, and to make available grant aid for the re-wiring of older properties, to bring forward long-promised legislation regarding the safety and availability of electrical fittings and appliances, to establish nationally agreed and recognised standards of competence for electricians, and to ensure that all children are properly educated in the use and mis-use of electricity.

I am grateful for the opportunity to draw attention to the fact that, despite the valuable contribution that it makes to modern living, electricity has become an increasingly large factor in household fires. Of all fires reported in 1950, about 7,000 were identified as having an electrical source. By 1970, 17,000 fires were so identified. That represents an increase of 10,000 in 20 years. Only a decade later, in 1980, 35,000 fires were identified as having an electrical source.

A moment's reflection to consider how rapidly the use of electricity and electrical appliances expanded in households during the 20 years between 1950 and 1970, and the improved safety standards of appliances in the latter part of that period, highlights and puts into perspective an increase in electrical fires of about 17,000 a year by 1980. According to Home Office figures, almost 50 per cent. of domestic fires started by accident are caused by household electrical equipment. In 1983, 173 people died and 2,268 people were injured, sometimes grotesquely, in such household fires — tragedies compounded by our knowledge that almost all those deaths and injuries could have been avoided if the proper measures of care, maintenance and use of electrics in the home had been carried out.

If it is necessary to make a point by putting a measurable cost on the problem, I should tell the House that, in 1950, fire losses cost Britain £20 million. In 1970, losses were £110 million, and in the five years from 1975 to 1980 costs increased from £225 million to £470 million.

There is no doubt that the public are often complacent about and, indeed, unaware of the dangers of some of their practices with regard to electricity. During the past few weeks I have consulted the chief fire officer of the county of west Glamorgan and representatives of the South Wales electricity board, who told me hair-raising stories about apparently widespread bad practices by consumers. Quite apart from practices such as electric fires and hair dryers being used in bathrooms, there are examples of steam irons and televisions running at the same time from a flex connected to light fittings. Wall sockets hang from the wall because the plaster is so wet from damp that the socket cannot be firmly fixed. Electric heaters are completely covered with dripping wet clothes to dry them faster. People break into the main electricity supply to make adaptations to defraud the electricity boards—the famous black box is one of those items.

How often has one seen the Christmas tree syndrome of adaptors being plugged into adaptors and a mass of electrical connections being concentrated on one point? The problem that this can create is extremely serious, for it is often not realised by the consumer that his socket

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

outlet is designed only to operate on a maximum of 13 amps and with the use of adaptors it is all too easy to overload the unit by use of high-rating products at the same time. Not the least of the serious problems created is that of over-heating, which can take place at the socket and thus provide a potential fire risk.

Another factor that is not appreciated is the way that an adaptor assembly can cause a weakening of contact pressure, leading to intermittent contact. This can again lead to overheating and the possible risk of damage to lighting and property. It amazes me that people in Britain today can be so foolish when they are dealing with such a dangerous element as electricity.

There is a need for a public education programme. The Association of British Insurers, with which I have been in contact, has a keen interest in this debate and has sent me samples of the leaflets that it produces and distributes as part of its public service activities, and I commend that work. I should like to see its excellent leaflet "It can happen to you" distributed on an annual basis by all insurance companies and agents to each householder with home insurance renewal notices.

I should also like electricity boards to send out home safety literature with quarterly bills to every electricity consumer. They should organise inter-school competitions geared to electrics and home safety. It is surely not beyond the wit of our school system to ensure that, before leaving our institutions of learning, all children know how to change a fuse safely and how to connect a plug and the basic do's and don'ts of using electricity in the home. Such lessons would take perhaps one dozen sessions in the general, consumer studies or domestic science curriculums and a small section of an examination paper at the end of term could serve a useful purpose.

Much of the teaching material is readily available from institutions such as the Association of British Insurers and the Fire Protection Association. The former has also produced an excellent video called "Nobody told me" which is available free to organisations, as are the electricity boards' leaflets and those of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. I am sure that county officers, as in my county of West Glamorgan, will be happy to advise teachers on facts to cover and material available to use. However, this effort needs to be co-ordinated so that all the organisations that I have mentioned, as well as the Electricity Council, Government Departments such as the Home Office and the Department of Education and Science, insurance companies and chief fire officers work together.

I very much welcome the Home Office decision to mount a major publicity campaign in 1985 on the theme of action to be taken in the event of fire in the home. I hope that a campaign of this kind, on a co-ordinated basis, will be carried out in the future.

Apart from the much-needed sharpening of a public education campaign, the Government could actively encourage and promote safety by means of home improvment grants for defective wiring. This is a major cause of electrical faults and fires. There were 2,350 fires in 1983 that could be attributed directly to the permanent wiring system. This problem is particularly acute in properties that were built and wired more than 30 years ago before the widespread use of plastic-coated wires. Such wiring was sheathed in rubber or it was leadcoated. Both materials become brittle with age, which leads to cracking and to the potential uncovering of wires.

Older properties also have insufficient electrical point outlets. In a real sense these properties are sub-standard in terms of safety for modern living, yet no provision is made in the home improvement grants criteria for rewiring. The condition and safety standards of the electrical wiring system of a house are of as much importance as the height of the ceiling or the size of the windows. They should therefore be included as part of the improvement work that is eligible for grant aid.

Local authorities have faced this problem for a long time. When they carry out adaptations for the elderly or disabled — chairlifts on stairs, or the installation of showers and central heating systems—councils find that the work cannot be completed safely in older properties because the old electrical wiring is unable to cope safely with the improvements. Rewiring, therefore, is the only option. Although grants are available for showers or chairlifts, they are not available for the necessary rewiring. This poses a dilemma for councils. Are they to adopt the solution that people in older houses cannot have the convenience and help of modern aids? Of course not. Councils therefore pay for rewiring. But this means either that money is diverted from other parts of their budgets at a time of financial stringency and limitations or that fewer adaptations are carried out because of the limited budget.

The 1961 Parker Morris report is completely out of date and does little to meet the requirements of the modern household. The growth in the number of domestic electrical appliances shows clearly the need for better facilities in the interests of safety and flexibility for householders. It is important to point out that, although many organisations have considered updating the Parker Morris report of 1961 and have issued their own reports, the recommendations relating to the Parker Morris standards have not been implemented. It is left to individual designers to indicate what they believe to be the immediate and future demands of the potential householder. That anomaly needs to be remedied.

It is inevitable that if there is no convenient socket where the consumer wishes to place his appliance he will take steps to overcome the problem. That could well mean lengthening the flex by a crude do-it-yourself extension or even trying to do something such as feeding two appliances from one plug. Whatever he does, there is always a chance that it will not be done in such a way as to avoid a potentially dangerous electrical situation. In particular, it is most important that it does not involve a loss of earthing at the point where it is vital.

In an article that was printed in the journal of the Faculty of Architects and Surveyors, the director of external relations of M. K. Electric Limited, Mr. J. J. Fallon, said:

"If longer flexes are provided there is the serious risk of there being a hazard, particularly to the elderly. Falls are a common cause of accidents in the home and are much more serious to our senior citizens. In statistics it must be admitted, such accidents are not considered as being due to electrical matters and thus it is difficult to indicate just how serious the problem really is but there is a general consensus it does make a substantial contribution to the nature of accidents in this area. Certainly no one can quarrel with the hazardous situation which can be created by the unauthorised flex connections placed under a carpet and subject to continuous traffic over them; it can only lead to a potentially hazardous situation."

There are other equally positive ways in which the Government can assist in solving the problem. For example, in July 1984 the Government published a White Paper on the safety of goods, which, if implemented, would do much to reduce the availability of cheap imports of electrical appliances with unsatisfactory safety standards. I understand that no firm date for implementing the proposals in that White Paper has yet been considered.

On 8 October 1984 the Department of Trade and Industry issued a press notice saying that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) was to remove substandard electric plugs from the United Kingdom market. The notice said that new safety regulations covering plugs and sockets would, it was hoped, be introduced by the Minister in Parliament early next year. The year was 1985. In March this year the *Sunday Telegraph* reported that the draft regulations were expected to be published shortly — one of the words most often used by the Government along with the word "soon". Since then, over a year since the first announcement, nothing has been done. I am sure that the House will want the Government to implement those proposals as soon as practicable, and I hope that they will do so.

The Government could also follow the example of many European countries and Australia in making the installation of an approved residual current circuit breaker mandatory in British homes. The first step in that direction could be the mandatory fitting of such a circuit breaker in new homes.

The local consultant for engineering services, fire and accident investigation in Swansea, Mr. Alan Jones, calls the rewirable fuse

"the damnable, notorious rewirable fuse."

He says that the fuse is like

"the brakes to a car. It is the fuse that limits energy dissipation, or so it should, but these fuses . . . are no longer functioning properly. The biggest problem with a rewirable fuse of course is that it can be rewired with anything by anyone.

A 30 amp fuse will take 100 amps for three minutes before it eventually blows.

It means sufficient energy is discharged at the source of the fault to ignite associated combustible materials.

After a fuse has blown a number of times, we have large carbon deposits on the asbestos sleeve together with copper globules which impregnate the lining. So in fact eventually the fuse does not blow at all, and will conduct electricity without any fuse wire in it.

At that point we have lost our electrical breaks, effectively we are driving without breaks, so if you see an article and it says, 'The fire was due to a short circuit', it is wrong, it is not due to a short circuit, the fire was due to the fact that the protective device back at the distribution board did not clear the fault quick enough.

If you see a statement saying 'the fire was due to cable overheating', it is singularly and profoundly incorrect. The fire occurred because the rating of the fuse did not tie up with the rating of the cable.

I suppose a useful analogy would be this. If a lorry loses its brakes, careers down a hill and kills 5 people at the bottom it would not be true to say that the accident happened because the lorry was travelling too fast, surely the true cause of the accident was the brakes failing."

Certainly Mr. Jones, with his expertise as a consultant engineering contractor, makes it clear that a great step forward would be the fitting of the mandatory, residual, current circuit breaker.

Action is also required to stop the way in which almost anyone can set up as an electrician. There are no nationally recognised formal qualifications for an electrician before he can give himself that title. Perhaps the Manpower Services Commission could organise a formal training course with an approved qualification. Judging by the evidence, many do-it-yourselfers and handymen, on finding themselves unemployed, have set up as electricians. Therefore, such a course would be popular and to the national advantage.

I hope that in proposing the motion today I have at least pointed to a number of serious problems with electricity. Government action is required to promote greater awareness along the lines of the Home Office initiative to which I referred. In addition, the rewiring of older properties should be included in home improvement grants. It should be mandatory that all electricians who rewire properties should be on the register of electricians.

If such measures were implemented, far fewer tragedies would occur, and far less money would be lost, in properties that are at risk because simple precautions have not been taken.

2.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I welcome this opportunity of speaking on the important subject of electrical safety in the home, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on his good fortune in the ballot, on his choice of subject and on the extensive research that he has carried out in support of the arguments that he adduced.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am responsible for consumer safety. I shall talk about that aspect first, before going on to answer in detail the points raised. The consumer safety unit at the Department of Trade and Industry, for which I am responsible, deals with all aspects of consumer safety and is concerned with the safety of most goods sold in the shops. The main exceptions are food, pharmaceuticals and cars, for which responsibility lies elsewhere.

At this time of year there is particular interest in the safety of toys, and I hope to put out a Christmas message to shoppers drawing attention to the need to think carefully about the safety of toys before they buy. I see my job as one of making sure that the ordinary consumer is not endangered by the goods he buys, and I shall pursue as vigorously as I am able the minority of unscrupulous suppliers who are not concerned or as careful as they should be about the goods they put on sale.

I have at my disposal powers under the Consumer Safety Act 1978, including the power to issue prohibition orders to stop the sale of dangerous goods that come to my notice. I shall not hesitate to use those powers if I deem it necessary.

The home accident surveillance system, which was set up on 1976, has proved particularly useful in pinpointing those areas of consumer safety which need particular attention. The surveillance system is a rotating sample of hospitals located throughout England and Wales gathering details of accidents involving consumer products. Details are collected centrally and processed by a computer in my Department.

All the information from the system is widely disseminated, including to manufacturers and consumer groups, but the main purpose is to help the Government identify priorities in consumer safety. So successful has the system proved that the European Community is considering the adoption of similar systems for use throughout the Community countries, and we are

[Mr. Michael Howard]

encouraging the Community in that regard. The pace of change in consumer safety is every bit as great as in other fields. We are currently preparing fresh legislation to protect the consumer.

On the electrical side, we are taking positive measures to make safer environment for ordinary people. We are drafting new regulations to outlaw the kind of substandard plugs and adaptors that were being imported in recent times and caused disquiet among safety experts. I shall expand on this later and explain why the measures have not been forthcoming as speedily as the hon. Gentleman, I and many others would have liked.

Concern has also been shown about cookers that get too hot on the non-functional outside surfaces. We are taking action on that. New regulations are being drawn up to set limits to the temperatures that can be reached on the outside surfaces of cookers.

We shall be introducing the Goods and Services Bill to the House as soon as parliamentary time permits. This will close loopholes in the existing law and give powers of seizure to trading standards officers of local authorities who enforce safety legislation.

In the longer term, we have plans for dealing with other safety problems. Perhaps the chief among these arise from secondhand goods. Legislation already exists — the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations—to stop the sale of dangerous secondhand electrical products. We will do everything possible to encourage trading standards officers to enforce the law. There is, however, no similar legislation to stop the sale of unsafe new and secondhand gas appliances, although the law already prohibits their installation. We are, therefore, carefully investigating the possibility of drawing up new regulations to outlaw the sale of dangerous gas appliances.

Many of the points that the hon. Gentleman raised are the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy and of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction. However, I shall do my best to answer them.

The hon. Gentleman draws attention in his motion, and he did so also in his remarks, to the increased numbers of domestic fires and accidents caused by defective electrical wiring and the misuse of electricity. If we examine the statistics on these accidents we find that the consequences were somewhat different from those that were cited by the hon. Gentleman. The figures held by my Department and the Home Office show a steady decrease in the number of electrocutions and no discernible increase in the number of fires recorded as being ignited by electrical wiring over the past five or six years.

I shall send a copy of the statistics to the hon. Gentleman, but the essence of them in summary is that the number of fatalities per year in the home due to electrical causes has been falling over the past 15 years or so. In 1970-71, there were 75 deaths, while in 1984-85 there were 38. This fall is extremely encouraging, particularly when it is realised that the consumption of electricity has increased by about 20 per cent. during that same period and the number of electricity consumers has increased by 18 per cent. The number and complexity of the household appliances in use has also grown at an astonishing rate. Every death of this kind is a death too many, and we must continue to do all that we can to reduce the number still further, but we can, I think, derive some encouragement from the trend to which I have referred. The numbers that I have given cover deaths from all sources of electricity in the home, including appliances.

The hon. Gentleman is concerned especially about household wiring — he used the term "fixed wiring" during his observations. Fixed wiring does not give rise to a large number of accidents. Deaths attributable to fixed wiring in the home run at rather fewer than three a year. The reason is, no doubt, because fixed wiring is hidden and therefore less accessible. Also, it is not an area where the unqualified person would normally venture.

Technical standards for household wiring are laid down in regulations prepared by the Institution of Electrical Engineers and are regularly revised and kept up to date, the most recent edition being produced in 1981. They are concerned with the design, selection, erection, inspection and testing of electrical installations in and about buildings generally. When these regulations are complied with, as is the case with all reputable electricians, the risk to the consumer from the fixed wiring is negligible. The document includes one part devoted to "Protection for Safety", which is divided into chapters which, among other things, deal specifically with protection against electric shock, thermal effects and overcurrent. However, the regulations are voluntary and not mandatory. Some firms may offer a cheap installation by cutting corners and not complying with the IEE regulations. This raises the question of how the consumer can be protected against bad installation.

The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting has been formed specifically to set and maintain the required standard in fixed household wiring. It is a non-profit making organisation, registered as a charity, which was set up in 1956 by concerted action of all sections of the electrical industry. Its aim is to protect the consumer against faulty, unsafe and defective electrical installations. It has a roll of approved contractors containing nearly 10,000 names and addresses of firms which will work to the standards laid down in the IEE regulations.

All contractors who apply for council approval must sign an undertaking that they are prepared to ensure that all their work will conform to the required standard. One of the council's inspecting engineers then inspects their business premises, staff qualifications, equipment, and a representative selection of their work. Those that pass the examination are accepted as approved contractors on the roll and are then subjected to periodic re-inspection to ensure that standards are maintained. All complaints about the workmanship of approved contractors are investigated.

That is an excellent example of an industry regulating itself in order to maintain standards, service to the public and, above all, safety. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the chief engineering inspector of the Department of Energy acts as an observer on the governing board of the council.

There are always risks when unqualified people carry out wiring work. Accidents resulting from household wiring are reported via the electricity boards to my hon. Friend the Parliamentay Under-Secretary for Energy.

Accidents stem from a wide variety of simple slips. The earth connection may be missing to a socket, or the wrong size wiring or fuse may be used. Each may lead to a tragic accident or to a fire. Education—as in so many other things—is the key, and many bodies are involved in the education process. I shall deal with that in more detail, but

I would refer here to the excellent publications of the electricity area boards and of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. These bodies stress the dangers from do-it-yourself work and the need to employ a qualified and registered contractor to undertake wiring work. They urge consumers to have periodic checks on the wiring system, which are normally simple and cheap.

I welcome the tribute paid by the hon. Gentleman to the work of the Association of British Insurers. I am sure that it will note the point that he made about the possibility of sending out its leaflet with renewal documents. I also welcome the tribute that he paid to the Home Office publicity campaign on the action to be taken in the case of fire in the home.

The hon. Gentleman proposes that nationally agreed and recognised standards of competence for electricians should be set. The Government see no advantage here over the standards imposed by the IEE regulations and the policing of work which the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting undertakes. The question of Government supervision in this area has been raised on a number of occasions. It is the Government's view that any such control system would duplicate the work undertaken voluntarily by the national council. This would be expensive and out of proportion to the risk, even if Government supervision could improve safety standards over those that already exist. We are, therefore, unwilling to create the additional bureaucracy which would be required.

On the question whether grant should be available for the rewiring of older properties, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the joint circular issued by the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office on 8 December 1980. This makes it clear that the renewal of existing electrical wiring is normally regarded as replacement, and should not, in the opinion of my right hon. Friends, attract improvement grant unless it is carried out in conjuction with other improvements and accepted by the local authority as necessary to enable the dwelling to reach the relevant standard. The installation of electic wiring as a power supply for the first time may properly be regarded as an improvement.

The present position is clear. Rewiring in itself does not attract grant, but where it makes sense to do so as part of a wider scheme of improvement, and provided the property is otherwise eligible, the work can attract grant. This must be right. The first priority of the improvement grant system is to bring properties in poor general condition up to an acceptable standard. Local authorities, at whose discretion such grants are awarded, should not direct their attention to what is on most judgments a less pressing issue.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government's proposals on the reform of home improvement policy were published as a Green Paper earlier this year. My right hon. Friends are currently considering the many responses that have been received following consultations, including a number seeking the inclusion of electrical rewiring in the proposed fitness standard.

The Green Paper itself proposes that satisfactory electric wiring should be included in the standard in which a dwelling should be expected to be after discretionary assistance has been paid. I assure the hon. Gentleman that this and other representations which my right hon. Friends have received will be considered very carefully.

The hon. Gentleman called upon the Government to bring forward the admittedly long promised legislation on the safety of electrical fittings and appliances. This we are doing. In the light of what was said about the matter on previous occasions, I realise that I may be on somewhat delicate ground in giving assurances that we intend to introduce the regulations in the near future, but we intend soon—and I mean soon—to introduce to the House two new sets of regulations, the plug and socket safety regulations, and the surface temperature regulations. They should go a long way towards dealing with some of the main complaints from consumers about the safety and quality of electrical products in shops.

I should like to say why we have not been able to bring the regulations before the House as speedily as we should have liked to do. It is because the consultations in which we have been engaged have been more extensive and more lengthy than expected. There are obviously clear advantages, in a matter of this kind, in proceeding with the general consent of those concerned, including the industry. It is because we are anxious to bring the industry with us in the measures that we have consulted so extensively and thoroughly. That is what led to the delay. I hope that it will be possible to bring the regulations before the House before much of the new year has passed.

In addition, as soon as parliamentary time permits, I shall be introducing to the House the Goods and Services Bill. This, as the hon. Gentleman recognised, will close existing loopholes in the safety legislation and give powers of seizure of unsafe goods to the trading standards officers of local authorities, who enforce the legislation.

Electrical equipment presents all of us with special considerations regarding safety. Electrical appliances are vital to the running of our homes, offices and factories, and yet are a potential source of real danger. I have already given the latest figures that we have on those who died in the home as a consequence of accidents arising from this cause in 1984-85. The last complete year for which figures are available is 1983, when 44 people were electrocuted in or around the home. Although that figure, as I have indicated, has not increased in recent years, despite the increasing use of mains powered appliances, it is still too high.

I know that my ministerial predecessors have given considerable thought to ways of reducing hazards from electrical appliances. I know that responsible manufacturers do their best to ensure that the public are protected from buying dangerous electrical accessories. However, as some hon. Members know, unscrupulous suppliers have been selling poor quality plugs and sockets which are often dangerous. The public are rightly concerned about the safety of these products, and new regulations are now clearly needed to control these goods. The new regulations for electric plugs, sockets, adaptors and related items, such as fuses for 13-amp plugs, which will be introduced early next year, will require these products to comply with British standards, and we hope to introduce an approval scheme, at least for 13-amp plugs.

I know that some United Kingdom manufacturers still have reservations about an approval scheme, but there seems no other effective way of preventing dangerous 13-amp plugs — particularly those from the far east — from reaching the market place. It is at present all too easy for unprincipled importers to mark their goods as complying with British standards when in fact they do not comply. Genuine certification from a nominated testing

[Mr. Michael Howard]

body must be required of anyone wishing to market 13-amp plugs. I know that my officials have been discussing special arrangements with United Kingdom manufacturers to overcome any problems that might arise, and I am confident that an approval scheme, or its equivalent, can be set up which is acceptable to all concerned. I emphasis again how anxious I am that it should, if at all possible, be acceptable to all concerned. We shall do everything that we can to satisfy any reasonable apprehensions that may be expressed during the consultation period.

In dealing with the question of imported goods of this kind—I may be anticipating, but it is a convenient way to bring my remarks to a close—I should like to refer to the subject which will be raised on the Adjournment on Monday evening by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), when he will deal with imports of dangerous consumer goods. I look forward to returning to that aspect of the subject in replying to my hon. Friend on Monday evening.

I conclude by repeating the congratulations that I expressed earlier to the hon. Member for Gower—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Andrew Hunter and Mr. Jim Spicer be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Mr. David Maclean and Mr. Andrew Stewart be added. — *[Mr. Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordered,

That Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and Mr. Steve Norris be discharged from the Social Services Committee and Mr. Charles Kennedy and Mr. Tim Yeo be added.—*[Mr. Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENERGY

Ordered,

That Mr. Spencer Batiste be discharged from the Energy Committee and Mr. James Pawsey be added.—*[Mr. Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Tony Baldry be discharged from the Employment Committee and Sir Philip Goodhart be added.—*[Mr. Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Housing Defects Act 1984

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): This week has seen the anniversary of the implementation of the Housing Defects Act 1984. A great deal of legislation has gone on to the statute book since 1983 when I became a Member of the House, and I have profoundly disagreed with and voted against much of it for many different reasons. I do not think that any legislation has caused more problems that the Housing Defects Act—problems for the local authority, for home owners in my constituency whose homes are classified as defective and for the tenants living on estates which have also been classified as defective.

I said in a previous debate that the legislation put the cart well before the horse. As every month passes, in my constituency and in the constituencies of many hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber, that cart is further in front of the horse.

There is no current scheme in Rother Valley for reinstatement or repurchase of the three different types of houses for which the local authority could give grants. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) tabled a parliamentary question on 7 May 1985 asking the Minister for Housing and Construction when the reinstatement schemes would be accepted by PRC Homes Ltd. and would be approved, so that the Housing Defects Act 1984 could be implemented by the local authorities. In his answer the Minister said:

"I hope that the first approvals of repair schemes can be given this summer and that the first repairs to PRC houses under the scheme can be completed before the winter." — [*Official Report*, 7 May 1985; Vol. 78, c. *300.*]

The Airey houses have had a scheme of reinstatement since 1981, but it took until 6 November 1985 for the National House-Building Council to give good news to PRC Homes Ltd., saying that the first two repair systems had been accepted. The Minister said in May that he thought the homes would be repaired by the winter of this year. That is another example of where the Minister who brought forward the legislation and the Conservative Government have fallen foul of promises made under the Act.

The major problem facing my local authority is in relation to the reinstatement scheme, which means that houses can be repaired and mortgages granted. More than that, under the Act, when a house has been given a grant and the scheme has been accepted, the house has to be "saleable", so that it can be sold on the open market and the cost of repairs recouped.

Section 3(4)*(c)* of the Housing Defects Act 1984 gives a clear instruction to my local authority and other local authorities with such houses. It says that

"giving assistance by way of reinstatement grant is justified having regard, on the one hand, to the amount of reinstatement grant that would be payable in respect of the dwelling in pursuance of this Act and, on the other hand, to the likely value of the freehold of the dwelling with vacant possession after the work required to reinstate it had been carried out".

That gives us major problems in Rother Valley. I am sure that Rotherham metropolitan borough council, given money from the Department of the Environment through the Exchequer, would be able to keep up standards on its estates, on houses which it owns, which have not been sold. On the estate at Laughton Common in my

constituency, 190 houses were bought by Rotherham metropolitan borough council from the National Coal Board a while ago, and nine have since been resold to the occupiers. I have no doubt that when there is a scheme, and if the local authority is given money, the authority will put right those nine houses and they will become resaleable by their present owners. The local authority is responsible for making sure that the other 181 houses on the estate are reinstated, so that we have a good housing estate.

My local authority also owns some Unity and Tarren houses. I have had discussions with local building societies, which believe that mortgages will become available when a proper repair scheme is implemented. There will be no problem about that, but there is a problem in three estates. One estate is in a village called Aston, where there are 151 Reema houses, 71 of which were sold by the owners — the National Coal Board — to sitting tenants. The second is Kiveton Park, which has 150 houses owned by the NCB, 34 of which have been sold to sitting tenants. Thirdly, at Maltby there are 250 Reema houses on the estate, of which 98 were sold to sitting tenants. The coal board has told me by letter, and when I have met representatives, that it intends to do little about the housing that it owns on those estates. Even if there was a scheme, my local authority could not put the Act into effect because of the section that I mentioned about the saleability of the houses if money is spent on them.

If £10,000 were spent on those homes to bring them up to standard so that they were no longer classified as defective, the owners who bought the properties from the NCB in good faith only a few years ago would have to find £1,000 — that is, 10, per cent. of the cost of the reinstatement of those dwellings.

The coal board wrote to me on 6 September, saying:

"As I believe you know, the Board's policy has been and continues to be to dispose of its housing stock to its sitting tenants, usually on favourable terms, or to local authorities."

I told the NCB that the houses were blighted by the Act and by Ministers' attitudes, and that the authority was unable to implement a scheme to repair the houses.

On the estate at Maltby, the houses are being boarded up, and there are almost slum conditions there. In the letter of 6 December the board said:

"When Reema houses have become vacant, therefore, we have had no choice but to board them up pending their future sale or re-letting. It seems this is only likely to come about when the outstanding points on the Housing Defects Act are resolved."

The Housing Defects Act does not affect the NCB. It was introduced as a short stop-gap measure, and under it people who have bought council houses and houses from local authorities and other public bodies are offered help when these houses are classified as defective. The Act does not offer the NCB any help for the reinstatement of the houses that it owns. As a result, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the Rother Valley about the NCB's attitude, which seems to be one of inaction. The uncertainty of the NCB and of my local authority, which cannot make a decision because of the saleability section, has led to mistrust and the growth of residents' associations in the three villages.

I have extremely good contact with the residents' association at Maltby, but the associations at Aston and Kiveton Park have had little contact with me, although I am their Member of Parliament. In May they visited my surgery, and I arranged a meeting with Rotherham metropolitan borough council for 7 June. The meeting was helpful, but the council said that it could not take any action over reinstatement schemes, or over the provision of money for the local authority to enact its liability under the Act until the Government had acted.

The council also told us that the Department of the Environment had produced a booklet for owners only in June 1985, which was four months after the Department said in answer to parliamentary questions that it would produce a booklet for owners, to allay their fears. I know that that is true, because I tabled parliamentary questions on that matter. It was nine months after the Bill was enacted that the booklet was sent to my local authority. The Department and the Minister should have ensured that the booklet and as much information as possible was provided prior to the implementation of the Act.

I am sorry to say that the residents' associations, except for the many people in Maltby who have kept in constant contact with me, have been used by other organisations. The Social Democratic party has used two of the organisations in an attempt to create problems in my local authority, while playing political shenanigans in my constituency. I have a press cutting which said:

"SDP MP pledges Reema support."

It refers to a visit made by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) to my constituency. I have given him as much notice of my intention to mention this matter in the House as he gave me of visiting my consitutency in October. My local paper said:

"He wasn't too pleased at the type of reaction we had been getting from the Borough Council . . . He has agreed to raise the matter in Parliament . . . He did make a definite promise that he would do whatever he could to assist in a national sense by putting questions down in the House of Commons".

On 10 October the hon. Gentleman may have travelled 170 miles from his constituency to the Rother Valley, but this morning I went to the Library to check exactly what has been put on the official record by the hon. Gentleman since his visit. The answer is absolutely nothing. The hon. Gentleman comes to play political stumps 170 miles away, but he cannot even attend a debate on the very matter about which he was showing concern when it is held in the Chamber, which is only a few miles from his constituency. That has been the consequence of the introduction of a Bill which was far too premature and which should not have been introduced until the Government had conceived of something more substantial to put in its place. The legislation, which promised so much but delivered so little, has increased the incidence of blight, not its solution.

On behalf of the owners and tenants of those homes, I wrote to the Minister twice this year. In October, he replied saying that the NCB was responsible. It is obvious from the letter that I read earlier that the NCB will do nothing about the problem until the details of the Housing Defects Act are resolved. In both letters I asked the Minister to visit the Rother Valley. I did not make my invitation public, because I wanted the Minister to visit my area without publicity and to try to resolve the serious difficulties of those who live in such homes and of my local authority. I wanted him to see for himself the conditions on those estates and to meet representatives of the local authority. I ask the Minister again to meet urgently representatives of my local authority and of the National Coal Board.

Public confidence on the estates will not be restored easily, if at all. I urge the Under-Secretary of State to ask the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

to reconsider his decision and to visit Rother Valley to see the problems created by Housing Defects Act 1984 in my constituency, and to help to ease the burden of the tenants and home-owners on the estates in those three villages.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) for initiating a debate on the operation of the Housing Defects Act 1984. He said that the Act has caused problems, but I wonder what would be the reaction of the 267 private owners of defective houses in Rotherham if the Act was not on the statute book. He said that homes have been blighted by the Act. The homes were blighted by a series of reports stating that the houses suffered from structural defects. The Act was a genuine response by the Government, supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House, to give reassurance and compensation to many people who, in good faith, had bought their houses from public bodies, which sold them in good faith.

The hon. Gentleman ended by asking for a visit and meetings. I have visited Doncaster at least twice, met owners of PRC houses and spoken to representatives of the local authority. But if he believes that it would be helpful, of course, I shall consider either a visit or a meeting with the hon. Gentleman, representatives of his local authority and his constituents who are in difficulty.

Mr. Barron: Another problem is the attitude of the NCB. Although the Minister has no responsibility for the NCB, will he try to include its estates department in discussions? If its houses remain in their present state, my local authority will have great difficulty in reinstating those houses under section 3 of the Act.

Sir George Young: Responsibility for the NCB rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, and I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are brought to his attention. The hon. Gentleman was good enough to send me copies of his correspondence with the NCB. He is right to say that the Act does not cover the NCB. The rights are given to the owners who have bought houses from the NCB, and those rights are exercised against the local authority by way of reinstatement grant or repurchase.

Difficulties face one or two authorities when it comes to implementing the Act, especially during the interim period, while the repair methods are still being developed. I fully recognise that, for example, statutory obligations under the Act might place additional strain on local authority resources, but the problems facing Rotherham are not unique and other local authorities have even more houses covered by the Act.

On resources generally, we made provision for capital expenditure of £2,324 million in the current year. That comprises an additional allocation of some £1,600 million, plus reserves for supplementary allocation and provision for local authorities to augment that with spending from their own receipts. We recognise that the Act could place additional obligations on local authorities and we introduced an indicator into the generalised needs index for 1985-86 to reflect the need for expenditure on these houses. That increased the generalised needs index of authorities with a large numbers of such dwellings, and that is directly reflected in the allocations that they get from central Government.

Even so, we recognise that there could be particular problems this year in implementing the Housing Defects Act, and we have invited local authorities to submit bids for additional allocations. In August, we announced that we would make an extra £37 million available to help 28 local authorities, including Rotherham, to meet their obligations under the Act.

At that time it was difficult to know with great accuracy how much money would be spent this year and we decided not to specify formal extra allocations until actual expenditure was known at the end of the financial year. In deciding that level of resources, we had to take account of the overall capital spending by local authorities and the need to keep public expenditure under control. We looked at those authorities with firm contractual commitments and at their statutory obligations under the Act. We shall be monitoring closely the position on the extra allocations, and we have invited all 119 authorities that have sought assistance, including Rotherham, to submit an updated return at the end of this month setting out their best estimates at that date of their likely expenditure this year on obligations under the Act. For next year, we have increased the gross limit for local authority expenditure on housing by £200 million. We have again taken account of obligations under the Act in making the allocations. We hope to announce those shortly.

The hon. Member raised a specific problem about Rotherham. My Department is aware of the special problems in Rotherham arising from defective housing. We have had annual housing investment programme meetings between the Yorkshire and Humberside regional office and the borough council. We have seen the bid by Rotherham for additional resources, and I have looked with care at the correspondence from the hon. Gentleman. My urban housing renewal unit visited Rotherham on 5 November and, although it was looking at local authority housing, at the request of the council, it visited one of the NCB estates—Maltby—to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

We have recognised Rotherham's difficulties in its HIP allocation, and Rotherham has done moderately well. Over the current year it has been allocated £7 million of the initial resources available for allocation in Yorkshire and Humberside. This represents more than 5 per cent. of the allocation for the region, which is in excess of the allocation set out for Rotherham by the generalised needs index.

We have allocated an additional £117,000 this year to help the council to meet its obligations under the Act. It asked for more, but that assumed that it would have to meet all its obligations on the 208 properties this year, whereas the reality is that expenditure will be spread over a number of years. In those cases where repurchase is an option, the owners have nine years in which to exercise that option. Not all the money incurred under the Act will have to be met this year or next year.

Mr. Barron: The allocation made to Rotherham this year was welcome, although it was not what Rotherham asked for. If it had had a reinstatement scheme on the Reema houses, it could have given a reinstatement grant on between 17 and 20 this year, given that the average is £14,000, according to the Act. Would the Minister like to

go to my constituency and knock on the door of somebody who had bought such a house and tell him that his home will not be reinstated and brought up to a reasonable standard for another eight years?

Sir George Young: I have met owners of property in Yorkshire who have bought these houses. I said that they have nine years in which to exercise their rights under the Act. If they want to do so, they can exercise those rights at any time. I hope that we are making progress with an approved scheme for Reema houses, but it is most unlikely that Rotherham will have to find all the money this year under the provisions of the Act. It was on that basis that Rotherham made a bid for £3 million. The reality is that it will take some time to establish the reinstatement grants and the programme of expenditure will be spread over a number of years. If Rotherham has to spend more money this year, we shall take it into account at the end of the financial year and will make a retrospective allocation.

As for the problems that face some of the hon. Gentleman's constituents, he said that they might have to find £1,000 when their properties are reinstated. He is quite right about the fact that there is a basic 90 per cent. grant, but in hardship cases there can be 100 per cent. grants, up to an expense limit of £14,000. The hon. Gentleman criticised the delay in approving a reinstatement scheme. I hope that he accepts that we must ensure that the repair methods are effective. We do not want to have to go around this course again. It is taking slightly longer than we wished to get repair schemes approved, but PRC Homes Ltd. has recently approved a number of schemes and it hopes to approve more in the near future.

If I may refer to the problems that have been experienced on the Maltby estate, houses there have been vandalised. This has caused great concern in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I understand that a private sector party is interested in acquiring a considerable number of the National Coal Board's empty Reema properties in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I can give the House the good news that agreement has now been reached on the sale of 21 vacant NCB houses in Maltby. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be as pleased as I am to hear that news.

I hope that there will be an approved repair method for Reema houses when PRC Homes Ltd. has looked at the applications. We shall need to examine how its approved repair method works and I cannot prejudge the outcome. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that we are now making progress towards getting approved systems of reinstatement on the road.

My Department met the Rotherham borough council on 5 November when it was agreed that the council would write to my regional office with full details of the NCB's estate problems. When we receive that letter from the borough council, we shall have to consider its contents carefully in the light of the latest developments and decide whether the problems identified by the council could usefully be taken forward at a tripartite meeting — a suggestion that was made by the hon. Gentleman — involving, as necessary, my Department, Rotherham borough council and the NCB. My regional office is ready to help in whatever way it can. My collagues in the Department of Energy will monitor progress carefully to ensure that we do all that we can to find a satisfactory solution. If the hon. Gentleman feels that a ministerial meeting would be useful in helping to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion, we should be happy to consider it.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the delay in issuing information once the Act was on the statute book. On 7 November 1984 we issued a circular on the Act to all local authorities. It was fairly comprehensive and illustrated what the Act involves. The reason for the delay in the publication of the booklet was that we hoped to include details of the approved repair methods. We held back publication so that when owners received the booklet they would also have the latest details of the reinstatement grants. For a number of reasons, it has taken slightly longer than we expected to get this on the road.

The schemes are now coming through. Those for Airey and Cornish unit houses have been approved and licensed, and information about them has been given to the local authorities. There are now 49 other schemes in the pipeline. Eleven of these are for Airey, Cornish unit, Unity, Reema and Woolaway houses which are currently being appraised. A further five schemes have recently been received by PRC Homes Ltd. for assessment. A further 33 systems are currently being prepared by builders and designers for submission to PRC Homes Ltd. They cover Airey, Boot, Cornish unit, Orlit, Parkinson, Stent, Tarran, Unity, Wates and Woolaway house types. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that this represents considerable progress. We anticipate that several more approvals will emerge in the near future.

I have outlined the action that the Government are taking to deal with the problems that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. I hope that the news about the sale of some of the houses in Maltby will be of some consolation to his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 9 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

WALES

Patients (Statistics)

1. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the numbers of inpatients and outpatients being treated in National Health Service hospitals in Wales; in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the last year for which figures are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): In 1979, 349,695 inpatients were treated in Welsh hospitals. The latest year for which figures are available is 1984, when the number of inpatients treated was 412,866. Outpatient attendances in 1979 totalled 1,803,313 and, in 1984, 2,130,709. In both cases that was an increase of over 18 per cent.

Mr. Best: Does my hon. Friend agree that that enormous increase represents an extra strain on the National Health Service, which the Government have been able to fund? Is he aware that a Lloyd's Bank survey recently showed that public identifiable expenditure in Wales had quadrupled in the past 10 years and that a higher proportion of people living in Wales own their own television sets, refrigerators and telephones — *[Interruption.]* — than do people living in Scotland or Northern Ireland? How does he——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That goes very wide of the question.

Mr. Robinson: I note the welcome support that my hon. Friend gives to our policies in this respect. Perhaps I should point out that between 1979 and 1984 Welsh hospitals treated 60,000 more inpatients and 333,000 more outpatients.

Dr. Roger Thomas: Will the Minister comment on a statement by Dr. Whitaker of leukaemia fame that, two and a half years after the first transplant in Cardiff, we still do not have our own bone marrow transplant unit?

Mr. Robinson: I have knowledge of the statement to which the hon. Gentleman refers, which is not true. We are hoping to undertake 12 bone marrow transplant operations in this financial year and we have announced the setting up of a special unit for this purpose.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As an inevitable consequence of the expansion of the NHS since 1979, there are now six hospitals in south Glamorgan experiencing difficulty in recruiting an ample supply of nurses. Is my hon. Friend confident that the training provision meets the extra demand for nurses?

Mr. Robinson: We are constantly looking at training provision, as are the health authorities, which have responsibility for managing the staffing resources within their areas.

Mr. Ron Davies: How can the Minister justify the situation in Mid-Glamorgan, which has the third highest waiting list in England and Wales, where more than 60 per cent. of patients have been waiting for more than 12 months for surgery and where the area health authority is being forced by the Government to cut expenditure by £5·5 million, resulting in the closure of hospitals and wards and the sacking of 240 Health Service staff? Is that the sort of service the hon. Gentleman wants to see?

Mr. Robinson: Funding for Mid-Glamorgan since 1979 has increased, in line with funding for other health authorities, to the tune of 19 per cent. As Deloitte's report points out, Mid-Glamorgan's problems are connected with its own management, and the health authority concerned is now having to look at ways to tackle those problems. It is receiving additional resources, in line with every other health authority.

Mr. Harvey: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his new post. Is he aware that there has been a 16 per cent. real increase in Health Service spending throughout Wales since 1979?

Mr. Robinson: I am aware of that. In fact, the figure in terms of the GDP deflater is 21·25 per cent.

Mr. Barry Jones: The Minister has made a foolish and unwarranted attack on management in the Mid-Glamorgan area health authority. Will he consider withdrawing it? Will he bear in mind that Mid-Glamorgan is arguably one of the most deprived areas in Europe and that the deprivation levels are the result of the Government's economic policies?

Mr. Robinson: I cannot accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. We are making additional resources available to Mid-Glamorgan to help it out of its current difficulties.

Coking Coal

2. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him the question of the implications of the importation of United States coking coal for the future of coking coal collieries; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): The chairman of the National Coal Board is well aware of the damage caused by the miners' strike and of the even greater need now to make the industry cost competitive. In 1984, 2·9 million tonnes of American coking coal were imported. In 1983, before the strike, the figure was 0·8 million tonnes.

Mr. Powell: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Wales he is considered as a waster because he has wasted Welsh national assets and those of the Welsh coalfield? Is he further aware that since I asked a question about coking coal imports three weeks ago the St. John's and Garw collieries in my constituency have closed, making 1,400 miners redundant? How can he equate that with the

policies that the Government are pursuing? Is he engaged in a political vendetta against the miners and others in my constituency who supported the miners' strike to the hilt?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman knows that the south Wales coalfield has been losing massive sums of money, and now the management of the coalfield has begun to reduce those losses. As a result of the strike that the hon. Gentleman supported, imports were substantially increased, as I pointed out, and the orders then placed will affect the mining industry in south Wales for some time to come.

Mr. Terlezki: Are there any signs of resuming the export of coal from south Wales to France to the tune of 600,000 tonnes per annum — an order that was lost because of Scargill's political, unwarranted strike?

Mr. Edwards: Obviously, as the cost competitiveness of Welsh coal improves — it is improving rapidly — so will the chance both to expand exports and reduce imports, although there will always be a requirement for the import of some coking coal to get the required mix. I hope that with improved competitiveness that will be possible.

Housebuilding Land

3. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from builders' and housebuilders' organisations in south Wales concerning the availability of land for housebuilding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We are in regular touch with the Housebuilders Federation and I am aware of its concern about land availability.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my hon. Friend aware that while builders appreciate the need for protecting the environment, they are deeply concerned about this matter? Is he further aware that both the Housebuilders' Federation and the Federation of Master Builders have expressed concern about the view of the various county and district planning authorities that houses should be built where planners want them and not where people are willing to buy? Will he consult the builders' organisations, the planning authorities and the Land Authority for Wales about this problem?

Mr. Robinson: We are aware of the problem about the availability of small sites. It is with that in mind that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today issued a consultation document to local authorities in Wales concerning the availability of land for housing for senior management in Wales. There is a shortage of such housing in Wales. We hope that this important initiative will help to cure that.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the 15 per cent. VAT is having a disastrous effect on house alterations and the building trade? Has he any plans to abolish VAT?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that this matter is within the purview of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware of the contrary danger that the Welsh Office may acquire a reputation of excessively overruling local authority planning decisions so as to permit development in areas where it will be undesirable?

Mr. Robinson: We have at present no plans to change the pattern of planning procedures, which, as I am sure my hon. Friend is aware, involves a process of appeals that are considered by planning inspectors.

Welsh Language Education

4. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has had to his letter of 24 July to the chairman of the Welsh joint education committee on Welsh language education; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The Welsh joint education committee replied to my right hon. Friend on 1 October, and following discussions between officials I met the chairman and members of the joint committee on Friday 29 November. We discussed the implications of my right hon. Friend's invitation, and I anticipate another meeting to discuss its specific proposals when it has considered the matter further.

Mr. Thomas: With respect to the Minister and the WJEC, that is not a statement, but a report of discussions. Should not the hon. Gentleman now recognise that his right hon. Friend's proposals for the WJEC to undertake the work of the proposed language development body show that that body has been unable to take that responsibility on board? Will he now accept the need for an independent body?

Mr. Roberts: The WJEC has taken up my right hon. Friend's invitation, and according to its letter

"The brief answer is that expansion of its work in these directions"——

the directions specified by my right hon. Friend——

"would be within its capacity provided the necessary funds were made available to it."

Mr. Best: Have not the Government spent more on the Welsh language in every area than was spent by any of their predecessors, and is it not premature to talk of increasing resources? Instead, should we not be talking about organisation?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The first priority is to set up an organisation within the WJEC, and that was the substance of my talks in November. A great deal of money is already being spent on Welsh language education, and that is reflected in the fact that we spend about 9·8 per cent. per head more on primary pupils and 4 per cent. per head more on secondary pupils than do English non-metropolitan authorities.

District Councils (Capital Funding)

5. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the Welsh Association of District Councils to discuss capital funding.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met representatives of the Welsh districts at a meeting of the Welsh consultative council on local government finance on 25 November. Last Tuesday I announced my decision to increase total capital allocations for local authorities in Wales by £60 million in 1986-87. Housing allocations have increased by £32 million. I hope shortly to announce my decisions on the allocation of these resources to other services and to individual local authorities.

Mr. Wardell: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the increase of £32 million in housing capital allocations will be reflected in a similar increase in gross spending provision in the coming year based on a realistic capital receipts forecast?

Mr. Edwards: I shall announce the gross figures in due course in the normal way, but I have deliberately increased the allocations this year, partly because we expect slightly lower receipts from house sales, and partly because local authorities have tended to underspend their housing allocations. They spend about 85 per cent. To get the maximum possible spent on housing, we have taken account of that factor in making our decision on allocations. The local authorities regard the allocations figure as very important, because that is the figure on which they can confidently plan their capital spending programmes. However, the actual figures will be very much affected by the receipts as well.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since 1978-79 capital expenditure in Wales has increased in real terms? Will he remind the Labour party that the last Labour Government reduced capital expenditure as a proportion of total local government expenditure in Wales from 42 to 17·7 per cent.?

Mr. Edwards: It is important to remember that, following the disastrous economic policies of the Labour Government and their calling in the International Monetary Fund, they slashed capital spending not only in local authority areas but on health. As a result of our being able to persuade local authorities in Wales to control their current spending, we have been able to allocate substantial additional resources for capital spending in Wales.

National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

6. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure to date by National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. in Wales; and what is the estimate for 1985-86.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. informs me that almost £1 million has now been committed to projects in Wales to provide more than 1,400 job opportunities. In addition, it is providing £700,000 over three years for the support of enterprise agencies in mining areas of south Wales. Total expenditure in 1985-86 will depend on the number of acceptable projects submitted.

Mr. Davies: Although the expenditure is welcome, does the Secretary of State realise that the expenditure which has been incurred to date has been spent, not on developing new enterprises, but on existing enterprises, and that the jobs which have been created by that investment provide neither the scope nor the number required to make up the deficiencies caused by the Government's policy of closing colliery after colliery in south Wales? If the right hon. Gentleman will take time this afternoon to go to the Coalfield's Communities Campaign exhibition and talk to its hosts, he will get at first hand a genuine understanding of the depth of misery and insecurity which is being caused in the coalfields of south Wales.

Mr. Edwards: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The sum is part of the total resources coming from many different quarters to deal with the problem. So far the Government have authorised funding of £20 million for the company, of which more than £15 million remains. To date south Wales has received about one third of it. Most of it has gone to support individuals setting themselves up in work and business. Support is also being provided at 11 enterprise agencies, some newly created, in south Wales. That is an extremely good record in the starting period of this initiative.

Sir Raymond Gower: Will my right hon. Friend say whether he is in touch with the Manpower Services Commission to see whether extra training can be focused on the areas affected by closures of coalmines?

Mr. Edwards: The MSC is continually in close touch with my Department and with the other agencies. I assure my hon. Friend that the need for training priority in such areas is kept continually at the forefront of its mind.

West Glamorgan and Dyfed (High Technology)

7. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what success his Department has had in attracting new high technology business ventures to west Glamorgan and Dyfed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Since April 1983, when WINvest came into being, there have been 19 new projects and expansions attracted to Dyfed and west Glamorgan and known to my Department, including four in high technology. These have the potential to create more than 900 jobs and to safeguard more than 1,200 others.

Mr. Anderson: Certainly on the figures given to me by the West Glamorgan county council there have been no new high technology ventures in west Glamorgan. It would be interesting to hear the size of those claimed by the Secretary of State. Is he aware that in recent weeks there has been a deluge of job losses in south-west Wales, including those in Austin Rover, Addis, Inco and Lucas Electrical? Is it not crystal clear for anyone who wishes to see it that the present package of regional measures is not succeeding in south-west Wales, cannot attract industries further west along the M4, and must be strengthened if we are to save our economy?

Mr. Edwards: Some of the projects are in west Glamorgan. WINvest is well aware of the needs of west Wales. Twenty-one per cent. of the companies which first visited Wales in 1985 to look at possible locations have been taken to west Glamorgan. Since the changes in the assisted areas boundaries, the attraction of the M4 sites has undoubtedly moved westwards, and the Baglan industrial park is now proving an attractive location for incoming projects. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that the agency is collaborating with University college, Swansea, in the development of the innovation centre on the Singleton campus — an extremely imaginative and exciting project.

Mr. Barry Jones: There are 25,000 west Glamorgan people out of work, and my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has mentioned the 270 Ystradgynlais job losses, which are a major, severe, and very worrying blow to the Swansea valley. The right hon. Gentleman has been complacent this afternoon. Will he tell us whether the people of Ystradgynlais and west Glamorgan can look forward to new jobs in the near future?

Mr. Edwards: I am not being in the least complacent. I am telling the House of the practical steps that have been taken. The hon. Gentleman can point to closures, just as we can point to substantial new investment by 3M, among other very advanced and long-established companies. It was good news for the area that the Government and the company were able to introduce new plans for Borg Warner's site at Kenfig, which we previously thought would be lost to us. Therefore, there is a good deal of new investment going into the area.

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in Clwyd; by how much these figures have increased since May 1979 as a total and as a percentage; and how many in each case are long-term unemployed as a total and as a percentage.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 14 November 1985 there were 180,853 unemployed claimants in Wales, an increase of 103,653, or 134·3 per cent., since May 1979. On 7 November there were 24,854 unemployed claimants in Clwyd. A comparable claimant-based figure for May 1979 for Clwyd is not available.

In October 1985, 77,412, or 42·4 per cent., had been unemployed for over one year in Wales, while for Clwyd the figure was 9,835, or 39·4 per cent.

Mr. Jones: The county of Gwynedd has wretched dole figures, with, for example, about 5,000 jobless in Anglesey. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not ensure that the Conwy river tunnel is built at a faster rate so that a completed expressway can bring more jobs to north-west Wales?

What studies has the right hon. Gentleman made of the impact upon the Welsh economy of the building of an English Channel crossing? If he has made any studies, he should make a candid statement about them.

Why has the right hon. Gentleman allowed himself to be frustrated in the building of the second Severn crossing? He will carry the blame if a second crossing is not built and a Channel crossing is built. He should aim to get the second Severn crossing built at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Edwards: We shall shortly go out to tender on the massive scheme for the Conwy crossing. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the project and the very heavy expenditure by the Government on the A55.

Among those who have campaigned for the Channel tunnel are British Steel, which believes that it will provide many jobs in the regions.

The hon. Gentleman talked nonsense about the second Severn crossing. The Government have pressed on with the feasibility study. That study, to decide the details of the crossing—where it could go and what form it should take — is well advanced, and the findings should be available by the summer of next year. The Government do not merely talk about it, as the hon. Gentleman does. We get on with our planning to spend very large sums of money to improve the infrastructure of Britain.

Mr. Gryst: Can my right hon. Friend explain to the House, and perhaps to others, why the Opposition think that a policy of higher borrowing, higher taxation and higher inflation should lead to higher employment?

Mr. Edwards: Because they never learn from their previous disastrous experience.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Secretary of State not feel any concern about the fact that we have lost 11,000 jobs in coalmining in south Wales since 1979, when the Conservative party came to office? Is he aware that, under the NCB's enterprise scheme, we are promised only 700 jobs in south Wales? Is he further aware that my constituency still has the highest male unemployment rate in the whole of Wales? Can he tell me, so that I can tell people, where the rest of the jobs are coming from?

Mr. Edwards: Of course I am concerned, as I am sure the Labour Government were concerned in the period when they closed many more pits than the Government have closed. I am sure the hon. Lady will welcome the fact that the unemployment figure has come down in successive months and that, although the figure is still too high, there are signs that perhaps it is levelling off or even beginning to fall a small amount.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my right hon. Friend agree that last month's fall of 1,881 in the Welsh jobless will be welcomed by all responsible people because it was a fall for the third successive month in a row? The figures are confirmed by the seasonal adjustment showing the trend of unemployment. Does my right hon. Friend share my lack of surprise at the absence of welcome for this from the Opposition?

Mr. Edwards: Of course we must continue to be concerned about high unemployment, but, as I have pointed out, we have taken a massive series of measures to improve the infrastructure and employment prospects in Wales. I share my hon. Friend's hope that the small downturn that is shown in the figures is an omen for the future.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Does the Secretary of State have a Christmas message of hope for the youngsters aged between 18 and 25 in Wales who are currently unemployed? Is there a ray of hope that some of them will find employment in 1986?

Mr. Edwards: Undoubtedly the two-year training programme launched by the Government, the greatly improved training provision and the other measures specifically taken to help young people are beginning to have an effect. The measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the Budget are also beginning to have an effect. The Government have launched many significant initiatives to help those people to whom the hon. Gentleman refers.

Economic Prospects

9. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on prospects for the Welsh economy in the light of the recent enterprise and employment measures announced by the Government.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Against the present background of sustained growth and falling inflation in the national economy the prospects for Wales are more encouraging than for some years. The Government's measures to encourage and support enterprise and to help the unemployed will ensure that all sections of the economy and community can contribute to and benefit from the opportunities now being created.

Mr. Raffan: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the introduction of the the Government's imaginative measures. They are much more imaginative than anything that the Labour party has ever proposed, let alone done. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the £2·5 million increase in financial support for local enterprise agencies in England will be matched in Wales? Will he tell us how much of the increased funds made available to the British Tourist Authority will be used for the overseas promotion of Wales? When will the two six-month pilot schemes to help the long-term unemployed find work be extended to the rest of Wales, assuming they prove effective?

Mr. Edwards: We shall be monitoring the pilot schemes in Port Talbot and Neath and the other pilot schemes very closely. Obviously, if they prove successful, we shall wish to extend them. Tourism has been the subject of detailed cross-examination by the Select Committee. I believe that my hon. Friend is to give evidence again on that, so I shall leave that point, although the British Tourist Authority has said in a memorandum to the Committee that an estimated 10 per cent. of its total budget relates to the promotion of Wales overseas. As for enterprise agencies, in Wales we have an established system of providing support through the Welsh Development Agency, through the development board and through the urban programme. The level of central funding in Wales compares favourably with that in England, and I am continuing to review the progress of the enterprise trusts in Wales and will announce my spending plans in the normal way.

Mr. Rowlands: If the Chancellor of the Exchequer is saying that Britain is booming, will the Secretary of State say where the boom is in Merthyr and Rhymney?

Mr. Edwards: I do not think that I have used the word boom. I have said, and it is undoubtedly true, that for some years we have seen sustained economic growth. That is an absolutely essential precursor if we are to deal with the problems of areas such as Merthyr. The measures taken by the Government to build a road link from the M4 to Merthyr, and schemes started and completed by the Government will probably do more for Merthyr than any other single measure.

Mr. Best: Is it not a fact that, whereas the Labour party, during its term of office, turned its back on the plight of the long-term unemployed, this Government have taken unprecedented measures to help the long-term unemployed, in the enterprise allowance scheme, in the community programme, and now in the job start scheme? Is it not a fact that the Christmas message that my right hon. Friend can give to the people is that, because of the schemes introduced by the Government, there is a realistic prospect that many of them will have assistance, when otherwise they might have been faced with the prospect of never working again?

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of those schemes, particularly the community programme. The pilot scheme that has been referred to is also specifically addressed to the needs of those people.

Mr. Ray Powell: Despite the distortion of facts by the Secretary of State, can he explain why, in the Ogmore constituency in 1979, unemployment was 3·7 per cent. and is now 18 per cent.? In Maesteg, male unemployment is now 24 per cent., but will escalate to 40 per cent., as 800 people have been made redundant by the closure of a colliery there. In addition, only last night the Garw colliery closed, which employed 600 miners. That will raise the percentage of unemployment in Ogmore. What positive action will the right hon. Gentleman take, despite the comments by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best).

Mr. Edwards: Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that those people have a Member of Parliament who always encourages strikes, who always promotes anything likely to destroy jobs, and who has never in his life taken a single step ever to create a single job.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Since the Secretary of State took time off in his constituency last week to attack the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury—"Faith in the City"—does he accept that the same condemnations of the immorality of his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister apply to his tenure of office as Secretary of State for Wales?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to read that speech, he would have seen that I was careful not to attack it in those terms, but to answer the economic case that was advanced. I understand—and, indeed, proclaim the Church's right to do so—that the Church has advanced an economic and political argument. When the Church does so, we are entitled to meet that case with economic and political rebuttal.

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman carelessly talked of sustained economic growth in Wales. May I remind him of the 7,000 jobless people in his constituency and the 20,000 jobless people in his county of Dyfed? When will the people in his constituency have the prospect of real jobs, as over the past six years he has boasted of real economic growth? Is he not the apologist in Cabinet for policies that destroy jobs in his constituency?

Mr. Edwards: No. I did not use the words carelessly. I am happy to repeat the words "sustained economic growth", which is laying the foundation for improved job prospects, just as I am pleased that I have been able to carry out probably the greatest programme of infrastructure improvement and road building for the benefit of my constituents that any Minister has ever carried out, and to set up there an enterprise zone that is already beginning to produce results. I am concerned with taking practical measures to help instead of taking the measures that produced the hyperinflation and the unemployment problem that we inherited.

National Health Service

11. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current level of resources devoted to the National Health Service in Wales, and in Pembrokeshire in particular.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest estimate of expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales in the financial year 1985-86 is £911·8 million. Funds totalling almost £17 million are available to Pembrokeshire health authority for current and capital expenditure in 1985-86. In addition, the authority has received a loan of £418,000 to institute an energy saving scheme at Withybush hospital.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that I have received representations from all parts of the Principality complaining about cuts and the unacceptable level of service in the NHS in Wales? When he replies, will he not give misleading, irrelevant and tendentious statistics purporting to show that there has been real growth in the NHS, when the truth is that there have been unacceptable cuts, that wards and hospitals have closed and that some vital health services are not available to the people of Wales? May I ask the Minister this one question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness to others——

Dr. Marek: Can I ask one question?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that is unfair, because I hope to call others.

Dr. Marek: Will he write to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one question at a time.

Dr. Marek: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not even very briefly.

Mr. Robinson: I remind the hon. Gentleman that I said a few minutes ago that overall expenditure on the NHS in Wales had increased by 21·25 per cent. The Government have presided over the biggest hospital building programme in Welsh history.

Mr. John: Does the Minister agree that the reason why Mid Glamorgan health authority has proposed the closure of hospitals, including Pontypridd district hospital, is that the formula for revenue does not reflect the morbidity rates and social deprivation of Mid Glamorgan? The Attorney-General has given a moving account of the National Health Service at St. George's hospital. Will the Minister ensure that my constituents have as good a chance of decent hospital services as those who attend St. George's hospital?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the formula upon which we calculate the allocations for health authorities. A change in the formula would benefit some health authorities but be to the disadvantage of others.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy Wives and Widows

23. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what provision the Church Commissioners are making in the current year for clergy widows; what were the figures for each of the last five years; and what provision exists for deserted and divorced clergy wives.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Sir William van Straubenzee): While I am circulating full details in the *Official Report*, I can say that the widow of a clergyman with full service in the current year receives £2,175 per annum. For 1985, it is estimated that £7·6 million will be made available. The commissioners have no powers to make their funds available for deserted and divorced clergy wives.

Mr. Bruinvels: Although I am delighted that so much money is given to the widows of clergymen — it is a recognition of the tremendous amount of unpaid work done by clergymen's wives — is it not a shame that clergymen's wives who are deserted are treated so badly, sometimes by being kicked out of the vicarage the next day, and have to suffer all the attendant iniquity without any money coming in? Could not more be done for them? Should not the Church of England report "Faith in the City" have considered affairs within the Church, rather than financial and other matters?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I know that my hon. Friend appreciates, although not everyone does, that if the widow's total income is below £3,625, she is entitled to augmentation. I gave the exact pension figure. A recent inquiry by the House of Bishops recommended that divorced and deserted wives should be dealt with by the dioceses, but it will open discussions with the commissioners in respect of grants and loans.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Many hon. Members will welcome the initial response of the commissioners, who said that part of their provision may be allocated to a Church urban fund. When does the hon. Gentleman envisage an announcement confirming that? Will the commissioners also consider the transfer of what I believe are called historic resources from the affluent to the less affluent parts of England?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the recommendations of the report that has been mentioned. The Church Commissioners will wish to consider the matter carefully. It might have been a good thing if some other people had done that.

Mr. Frank Field: May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the report from the House of Bishops on the break-up of clergymen's marriages and say how much I welcome that report? When will he return to the House and report that the commissioners will underwrite the recommendations that need some financial backing?

Sir William van Straubenzee: A report on grants and loans, which I understand is the commissioners' approach to the matter, will be received very soon. If the hon. Gentleman tables a question after an appropriate interval, I shall do my best to answer it.

Following are the details:

The Commissioners' financial support for widows' pensions annually since 1980 has been as follows:

	£ million
1980	3·6
1981	4·2
1982	5·2
1983	6·0
1984	6·7
1985	*7·6

*Estimate.

Dilapidations and Other Works

24. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the average expenditure by the Church Commissioners in each of the past three years on dilapidations and other works on *(a)* bishops' palaces and *(b)* parsonages and vicarages; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Grants towards diocesan expenditure on parsonages in 1984 averaged £719 per house. The cost of capital works to see houses was more than offset by the proceeds of sale of see property. I will, however, circulate the detailed figures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Greenway: I appreciate the substantial improvement in the provision for clergy houses, but is my hon. Friend aware that too many houses for vicars are overlarge, rambling and unheatable, with golf-course-sized gardens? When will all vicarages meet the standards set out in "Faith in the City"?

Sir William van Straubenzee: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that the standards of some houses are still quite of out of keeping with the present day. It is a continuing process and I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support.

Mr. Fisher: On dilapidation, does the hon. Gentleman agree with the report, "Faith in the City", by the Archbishop of Canterbury?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I shall wish to consider it carefully and not come to immediate decisions.

Following are the details:

The average expenditure by the commissioners in each of the past three years on dilapidations to see houses was as follows:

	Dilapidations £
1982	14,192
1983	11,580
1984	7,869

In addition, the commissioners incurred a total gross capital expenditure of £862,036 on the replacement and improvement of see houses during the same period, but against this must be set a total sum of £967,954 which was realised from the sale of see property. The result was, therefore, that the commissioners received a net credit of £105,718 from their capital transactions on see houses in this particular period.

The estimated total diocesan expenditure on parsonage houses during the three years was:

	Repairs and other outgoings £ million	*Commissioners' grants*	*Capital works (net) £ million*	*Commissioners' grants*	*Total average per house £*	*Commissioners' grants*
1982	9·2	(3·9)	5·3	(3·7)	1,569	(822)
1983	10·6	(4·3)	4·0	(1·7)	1,599	(657)
1984	11·4	(4·6)	3·9	(1·9)	1,693	(719)

South Africa (Investment Policy)

25. **Mr. Frank Field** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the Church Commissioners' policy on investments in South Africa.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners do not invest in South African companies or in other companies whose activities in South Africa are a major part of their total business. Where companies have some stake in that country, their activities are monitored to ensure that they follow enlightened employment policies. This, we believe, represents a small but worthwhile contribution to the gradual disbandment of the apartheid system in South Africa, which we all abhor.

Mr. Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give information, either now or later, about any changes in Church investment policy since Bishop Tutu's enthronement speech asking Christians to make the maximum non-violent protest against apartheid?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The views of Bishop Tutu and others of great repute and distinction must be borne in mind against the background that, according to our best estimates less than 1 per cent. of the commissioners' total income derives from South Africa, so the involvement is already very small indeed.

Redundant Churches

26. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many churches in the diocese of Durham have become redundant in the last year.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Two, Sir.

Mr. Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that those and other churches would be fuller if there were not so much demoralisation of the laity in the Church of England as a result of the heretical and schismatic views expressed by the Lord Bishop of Durham? Will he arrange to use some Church Commissioners' funds to circulate the excellent work by Father Holloway of Newcastle upon Tyne, so that people can see that there is another case, which is one of faith in the Church of England?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I find myself, with somewhat monotonous regularity, explaining to the House that I am not answerable for the Bishop of Durham. I have quite enough on my plate without that. I note my hon. Friend's observation, but I do not think that it would be a proper use of Church Commissioners' funds to circulate the views of anyone, however distinguished, as Father Holloway certainly is.

Mr. Winnick: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the criticism being levelled at the Church of England by many of his hon. Friends arises out of the simple fact that the Church of England is no longer the Tory party at prayer?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I hope that it would be all parties at prayer. As I gaze across the Chamber, I think that it is an activity that could usefully be carried on elsewhere.

Redundant Churches

27. **Mr. Leigh** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many churches have been made redundant in Lincolnshire in the last 10 years.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Thirty two, Sir.

Mr. Leigh: Does my hon. Friend think that it would be wise for the Lord Bishop of Lincoln to recall the very large number of Church redundancies before criticising the Government for redundancies elsewhere, just as it might be wise for him to recall that the shop in his own cathedral is open on Sundays before he campaigns against Sunday trading?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I admire my hon. Friend's ingenuity. The views of the Bishop of Lincoln on redundancies must be his own. It is worth remembering

that the cathedral shop is staffed voluntarily. If the case for sweeping away all restrictions on Sunday trading rests on such flimsy argument, there must be something wrong with it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the hon. Gentleman concerned and angered by the repeated attacks on the Church of England by his Conservative colleagues?

Sir William van Straubenzee: What I think is encouraging, to judge from the record number of questions on the Order Paper, is the widespread interest in the affairs of a vital organisation—the Church of England.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Weekly Information Bulletin

30. **Mr. Fallon** asked the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the annual cost to public funds of producing the House of Commons Weekly Information Bulletin; and what proportion of copies are sold at cover price.

Mr. Beith: The cost borne on the Vote for which the Commission is responsible is about £8,000 per annum, comprising staff costs in the Library's Public Information Office. Much of the material in the Weekly Information Bulletin is, however, also required for the other work of that Office, so the amount cannot be regarded as wholly attributable to the Bulletin. Printing and publishing of the Bulletin are matters for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, but I understand that costs are fully recovered by sales. I further understand that approximately 28 per cent. of the print run of the Bulletin goes to hon. Members and House of Commons Offices and about 72 per cent. is sold elsewhere.

Mr. Fallon: In view of the ever-rising cost of running the House, will the Commission re-examine the cost of producing the Bulletin, especially in view of the existence of a lively and efficient private sector alternative?

Mr. Beith: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to *The House Magazine*, which provides a useful but a different service from that provided by way of public information in the Bulletin. The costs arising directly from the Bulletin are met from sales. Therefore, it does not fall to the Commission to find substantial funds for its production. The public information that is assembled and placed in the Bulletin has to be collected by the Public Information Office in any event to be made available to the public generally.

THE ARTS

Financial Promotions (Retained Receipts)

31. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he is planning to take to promote additional forms of financing of the arts, museums and galleries whereby the receipts are kept by the institutions.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): As announced in July, the Government intend to change the present system for the treatment of revenue generated by the national museums and galleries. The institutions have been consulted on a range of possible alternative arrangements and I am considering their responses. I hope shortly to make an announcement on proposed changes. It remains my aim to provide greater incentives to the institutions both to maximise their receipts and to use these more effectively.

Mr. Murphy: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that any future incentive schemes should be designed to maximise the amount of private funding of the arts, which benefits everyone?

Mr. Luce: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that everything must be done to encourage galleries and museums to raise extra funds. Such funds will not in any way replace the basic funding that the Government will continue to give to musuems and galleries.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Minister's reply mean that he is entirely satisfied with the level of basic funding that his Department gives to museums, galleries and other artistic institutions through the medium of the Arts Council? Is he satisfied with the Arts Council's most recent announcement, which will almost certainly ensure the closure of five nationally known institutions, including Sadlers Wells, which is in my constituency?

Mr. Luce: The Government are committed to maintaining their support for the arts and arts institutions. In the past six years we have more than doubled the amount of money given to the arts. The Arts Council's funds have increased by 7 per cent. in real terms in the past six years. I am satisfied that we are maintaining our support for the arts.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister agree that the real problem is the relative collapse in public funding through the demise of the GLC and the metropolitan authorities, which means a shortfall of at least £10 million or, as I believe, £90 million? Does that not mean that in Liverpool, the Philharmonic Hall and the Empire are likely to close, that in Newcastle the Theatre Royal is likely to close, that in Sunderland the Empire Theatre is likely to close and that Sadlers Wells in Islington is likely to close? If all of those authorities are being faced with cutting, capping and one at least with abolition, how are they to maintain those institutions? Will the Minister intervene?

Mr. Luce: I remind the hon. Gentleman, although he does not need reminding, that I recently announced a £25 million increase in the amount of money that will be made available to the Arts Council. We now look to successor authorities to play their part. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that, as a result of changes and the abolition of the GLC, there is considerable uncertainty — among receiving theatres for example. We are looking to the local authorities urgently to find a local solution to a problem which is of considerable concern.

British Film Institute

32. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will increase the grant to the British Film Institute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I hope to announce the British Film Institute's grant shortly, along with the rest of my arts budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Dormand: Is the grant to be reduced? Is the Minister aware that if the present policy is pursued, some

of the excellent films that are now being made with the help of BFI money will be seriously threatened, especially as the Eadie levy will not be available to the institute next year? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the films that are being made have a commercial value in addition to their artistic value? Surely that should appeal to a Tory Government. When will he take more interest in this sector of the film industry?

Mr. Luce: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I am taking an interest in this sector of the industry. I visited the institute last week to learn about its work. The institute is one of the largest recipients of British grants and I believe that it will continue to be so. It has an important role to play. I have noted that prominent in its activities are those in the Tyneside region.

Mr. Freud: As the season for bids to the Treasury is about to commence, will the Minister press the cause for a better fiscal structure for the film industry with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Luce: There is a division of responsibility in the film industry. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has responsibilities for it as well. However, I note what the hon. Gentleman says.

Sponsorship

33. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on progress on the encouragement of private sponsorship of the arts, including the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: Business sponsorship of the arts has risen rapidly from £½ million in 1976 to around £20 million this year, including £4 million in new sponsorship under the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme. Because of the success of the scheme, I have recently transferred another £¼ million to it for this year, and I shall shortly be announcing the amount for 1986-97.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the progress that has been made and I applaud the initiatives that have been taken. However, does my hon. Friend think that civic leaders could do much more to promote local business sponsorship of local arts? Does he applaud the initiative taken to that end by the mayor of Barnet earlier this year?

Mr. Luce: I do indeed. I have noted that my hon. Friend, the mayor of Barnet and others have been involved in an exercise that has been undertaken by Barnet to raise with industry the question of sponsorship of the arts. I must congratulate the borough on winning a business sponsorship incentive scheme award of £1,700 for the sponsorship of its arts programme. That should be an example to other boroughs and authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I assure the Minister that the GLC has never been reluctant to take capitalist gold for arts funding? As the hon. Gentleman pins so much faith on raising money for the arts from business, will he explain what steps he is taking to ensure that the arts sponsor and fund new arts, new plays and new music instead of living off the past to entertain their clients?

Mr. Luce: If the hon. Gentleman examines the analysis of all the awards that have been given during the first year of the scheme—it must be remembered that it has operated for only one year—he will find that the support that is given by business and commerce is extremely wide, and certainly includes the live arts in all the regions. Three quarters of the schemes are outside London.

Mr Cormack: Is my hon. Friend aware that the capitalist gold to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred would be increased and his ambitions fulfilled if only he would adopt the proposals that are set out in the report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, which are designed to provide wider and greater tax inducements to individuals and companies to give to the arts?

Mr. Luce: I know that my hon. Friend played an extremely prominent part in the Select Committee's report. I am studying the report with the greatest care, and I note what he has said in his supplementary question, that our objective must be to create an environment in which people are encouraged to give to the arts.

Mr. Heffer: Has the Minister had the opportunity to see the excellent film entitled "Letter to Brezhnev", which had a budget of £50,000, raised by private enterprise? Would it not be a good thing if the Government and local authorities, with Government money, were prepared to give assistance to ordinary people to produce films that would be of the greatest interest to the mass of British people? These productions would have a real significance as films as well as containing a political message.

Mr. Luce: I wish that I had time to see all the excellent films that are available. I believe that the British Film Institute does an excellent job. It has a production unit which is there to help people of modest means produce their own films. That is something that should be encouraged.

Fawcett Library

34. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the future of the Fawcett library.

Mr. Luce: The Fawcett library is in the charge of the City of London polytechnic, and thus falls within the field of responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Nevertheless, with my broader co-ordinating responsibility for libraries, I hope that the recent appeal for funds by the Fawcett library trust will be successful.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am grateful to the Minister, especially for the second part of his answer. Given that those who are endeavouring to support the Fawcett library believe it to be an important part of our heritage, is the Minister prepared to receive a delegation that includes myself and others associated with the library's future?

Mr. Luce: As I do not have the authority to give funds direct to such libraries, I suggest that the trust should go direct to the British Library or the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Both those bodies might be suitable for a particular appeal.

Strategic Defence Initiative

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on British participation in the United States strategic defence initiative research programme.

The Government's policy towards the strategic defence initiative remains firmly based on the four points agreed between the Prime Minisster and President Reagan at Camp David in December 1984: that the Western aim is not to achieve superiority but to maintain balance taking account of Soviet developments; that SDI-related deployment would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiation; that the aim is to enhance, and not to undermine, deterrence; and that East-West negotiation should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive weapons on both sides.

It was in that context that, at Camp David, the Prime Minister told President Reagan of her firm conviction that the SDI research programme should go ahead as a prudent hedge against Soviet activities in the same field.

Earlier this year, the United States invited her NATO and certain other allies to participate in the SDI research programme.

Following that invitation, we have engaged in detailed discussions with the United States Government on the nature and scope of the research which could sensibly be undertaken by United Kingdom firms and institutions.

Those complex discussions have now been completed and agreement has been reached on an information exchange programme, on the areas where British companies and institutions have expertise which might form part of the United States-funded SDI research programme, and on the mechanisms to facilitiate that co-operation.

The confidential memorandum of understanding reached between the two Governments safeguards British interests in relation to the ownership of intellectual property rights and technology transfer, and provides for consultative and review mechanisms in support of the aims of the memorandum.

The SDI research programme goes to the heart of the future defence technologies. Participation will enhance our ability to sustain an effective British research capability in areas of high technology relevant to both defence and civil programmes.

Now that agreement has been reached on the memorandum, British companies, universities and research institutions have the opportunity to compete on a clearly defined basis for the research contracts which are on offer from the United State Government, as well as to participate in an information exchange programme on a fully reciprocal basis for the mutual benefit of the United Kingdom and the United States.

To act as a focal point for British participation, and to liaise with the United States SDI participation office, I am establishing immediately within the Ministry of Defence an SDI participation office with representation from other interested Departments. That office will work in the closest concert with British firms and institutions interested in such participation.

This agreement opens for Britain research possibilities which we could not afford on our own in technologies that will be at the centre of tomorrow's world. It will bring jobs that would otherwise be created abroad, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): We deplore the agreement which the Secretary of State so hastily signed on Friday with Mr. Caspar Weinberger. We deplore it because it gives total Government endorsement not only to the details of star wars but to the principle and strategy behind star wars. We believe that that project will again escalate the arms race by initiating another quest for nuclear superiority, that it will make the attainment of arms control agreements more difficult and that it has been imposed on NATO without notice—I challenge the right hon. Gentleman to say whether he had notice of President Reagan's speech setting out the star wars project — consultation or discussion. The project has been trenchantly criticised by the Foreign Secretary and those criticisms have never been answered in the House by Ministers. The agreement has been brought forward without any discussion, debate or endorsement by the House of Commons.

Is the Secretary of State aware that he was duped on Friday by the Americans? Mr. Caspar Weinberger got everything he wanted — British endorsement of star wars. Perhaps even more importantly, he got endorsement of star wars by one of the major NATO nations, and no doubt that will have consequences. Mr. Weinberger gave nothing at all in return to the right hon. Gentleman. He did not even give the crumbs of commerce because he had no authority, power or guarantee from the United States Congress to do so.

What has happened to the $1·5 billion which we have been told in the press would come to British industry? How many contracts and how much money shall we get because of the agreement? Will the agreement be endorsed and ratified by the United States Congress?

What miserable returns have come to British companies from that other office which the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor set up in Washington to try to get contracts for the Trident programme? Will the paltry sums that the right hon. Gentleman will get under this agreement be even less than those we received in relation to Trident? Is it not a fact that there will be a brain drain of British technologists and physicists to the United States because the security implications will be such that those scientists, as General Abrahamson said, will, have to work for American research teams in California and Texas?

Will the right hon. Gentleman at least tell the House that he is prepared to deposit this miserable agreement in the Library so that hon. Members can judge its context and then debate the matter in the House?

The agreement represents a substantial erosion of independence for British defence and foreign policy. The right hon. Gentleman talks about setting up offices, but his Department and the Foreign Office are rapidly becoming the outer offices of the Pentagon and the White House.

Mr. Heseltine: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman feels better for that extraordinary comment. I shall be delighted to answer his questions. It is indicative of the views of the right hon. Gentleman and the Leader of the Opposition that they believe that I should have turned down the opportunities that are available under this programme. That means that Britain would not have had the chance to participate in these research programmes,

that no jobs would have been created in Britain from these programmes and that, instead of contracts coming to this side of the Atlantic, our scientists would have been persuaded to go the other side to help American companies get ahead and prevent our companies from competing with them. It therefore seemed to the Government that it was right to recognise what almost every other Government invited to participate will recognise—that in one way or the other the industries of the western world will participate in the research programme. That is what will happen. The Opposition want Britain to be the one country that does not participate in the research programme.

The basis of the right hon. Gentleman's next line of questioning and criticism was that we are backing the ultimate deployment of the strategic defence initiative. The British Prime Minister secured the clearest possible undertaking—before anybody else—from the President of the United States in the Camp David communiqué that we were backing a research programme which was within the anti-ballistic missile treaty of 1972.

The third fascinating omission from the right hon. Gentleman's questioning was any reference to the fact that the Soviet Union has been working at almost all the technologies of the SDI for many years.

The Opposition believe in the extraordinary concept that it is all right for the Soviet Union to pursue defensive technologies but that it is wrong for us to do so in our interests. The one unpalatable truth for the Opposition is that perhaps the most single significant factor in persuading the Soviet Union to come back to the conference table, in defiance of everything that we were told by the Opposition that they would do, was the decision by the United States Administration to pursue the strategic defence initiative. Far from destabilising the position and threatening peace, SDI has opened up perhaps the most comprehensive range of arms control discussions for a decade.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members warmly welcome his political endorsement of SDI research, not only because in terms of defence it will help reduce the possibility of a pre-emptive strike but because it will help benefit British research? Can my right hon. Friend tell us a little more about the review procedure?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, particularly since he recognises that research programmes are continuing all over the world, independent of the strategic defence initiative. They would embrace the technologies of tomorrow's defence capabilities, even if there were no SDI.

As for the review procedure, the American Secretary of State recognises, as I do, that over a number of years it is impossible to predict the precise pace or direction in which a research programme will unfold. When one is dealing with the highly complex issues of intellectual property rights and the letting of contracts, it is necessary for both sides to believe that there is a fairness in the protection of the legitimate interests of the other. So that both Governments can have the maximum possible interest and involvement, we have decided that both will take a personal interest and that if problems develop of the type that can reasonably be anticipated they will be referred to both for resolution.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Secretary of State take note that he will receive no support from this Bench for this agreement? Does he accept that in return for questionable technological advance we are becoming locked in politically to a system which was best analysed in derisory terms by his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs?

Can the right hon. Gentleman say more about the safeguards for intellectual property and transferred technology? What steps have Ministers taken to promote the advancement of technology with our European partners, in terms of military and civil programmes?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that it is unpalatable for the hon. Gentleman but the support of empty Benches does not add up to a row of beans in international diplomacy. The pursuit of co-operative technology schemes within Europe is receiving significant momentum through the EUREKA programme and, in the context of the independent European procurement group, it is receiving equal momentum in the defence rationalisation programme.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Opposition fail to appreciate that SDI is a non-nuclear defence system? Will the research include studies of how western Europe can develop an operational shield against short-term ballistic missiles? Will that research be part of the British studies?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those comments. It is impossible at this stage to predict with accuracy precisely how the European dimension will unfold, although the subject to which he referred must receive critical analysis at some stage within the context of European defence. It is equally the case, in terms of the intercontinental threat to the continent of Europe, that if certain configurations of the strategic defence initiative were to advance, the mere capability to take out ICBMs on launch would be as essential for the defence of Europe as it would be for the continent of the United States.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Why have the Government brushed aside so brusquely the important statement made by the Foreign Secretary — made subsequent to the agreement in Washington between the Prime Minister and the President — that there was no real distinction between research and deployment; that there was an unstoppable momentum; and that, if one started on the course, one would have to proceed with it? The Foreign Secretary went out of his way to say that. Why have the Government abandoned that view?

Mr. Heseltine: The Foreign Secretary believes, as I do and as the rest of the Government believe, that the research programme is already under way on both sides of the iron curtain, that it has been under way for many years and that, simply because any checks would never be verifiable, it would be naive to believe that it could ever be stopped. It is also naive not to understand that SDI embraces large numbers of technologies — miniaturisation, advanced computing, lazer technology, and so on—which will be essential in weapons development, including defence, in the next century. There is no conceivable way in which the western world will not pursue these technologies. It is important to remember that the British Government were the first to agree with the United States Government on the importance of the existence of the ABM treaty of 1972, which governs not research but the development that could flow from it.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Is my right hon. Friend aware how much many of us agree with the Government's decision, particularly because it means that we are taking part with out allies in an expensive research programme, which in turn means that we shall have better value for money for our conventional weapons? Is he also aware of the confidence we have in General Abrahamson, who was in charge of the successful shuttle programme? I feel sure that this programme will succeed now that he is in charge of it.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will appreciate that the programme to which we are committed is a research programme. It is not a decision to proceed to deployment of the ultimate capability. It is clear—this point was implied in my hon. Friend's question—that virtually all advanced industrial nations are taking part in this type of research. To deny Britain the opportunity to be up with one of the largest programmes of one of the largest nations in technological terms would be a grave diservice to this nation.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why earlier this year Dr. Keyworth, the recently resigned President's scientific adviser, stated that within the period of office of President Reagan they would be able to demonstrate the technology that could shoot down Russian ICBMs? He seemed to make that statement disregarding any support that he would get from anywhere else in terms of research and development. Why, then, is this research now necessary? Do we have centres of excellence that beat those of United States industry, which are heavily subsidised and which filch and misappropriate public money in the way General Dynamics has? Having got this so-called bargain from Weinberger, may we be told what else has been put on offer? For example, has the right hon. Gentleman put on offer assistance to the United States in out-of-area activities such as activities in the Gulf?

Mr. Heseltine: There would be no need to put on offer the understanding that where the legitimate interests of this country were concerned out of area, we should play our full part with our allies in the maintenance of peace, for it would be as threatening to us as it would be to them if it were to be prejudiced. That does not need any separate discussion. It has long been the policy of this Government.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about Dr. Keyworth is that so many statements have been made by so many people, and it is so easy to quote them out of context, that I see no purpose in addressing one of them in particular. The essence of the matter is that there will not be a demonstration effectively of the strategic defence initiative in the immediate future. It is a long-term programme and there is no conceivable way, in terms of the immediate Administration with which we are dealing in the United States, that it could be proved to a demonstration capability.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): My right hon. Friend will be aware that this announcement will be welcomed by my hon. Friends representing Bristol constituencies and those in north Avon, where there is a heavy concentration of space commitment industry. Will the office to which he has referred be adequately manned to give assistance to all the companies in the United Kingdom that may be interested in bidding for the contracts in the United States? Have not the French and Germans had delegations in Washington since the beginning of September in an attempt to get a head start over the United Kingdom on contracts such as these?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will realise that it is difficult for me to be able to comment on what either friendly neighbours or other allied Governments have done. All the Governments of which I am aware will, in one way or another, either directly or through industries, participate in this programme, and the effect on the ground in their technology capability will be the same whether they have done it either at an industrial or an administrative level.

My hon. Friend spoke about the participation of industry, to which I attach much importance. I hope that there will be industrial representatives within the strategic defence initiative office, and the arrangments to which I have come have been arrived at after the closest discussion with British industry. The key question for the Labour party is whether it will withdraw from the contracts that the Americans could offer to British industry if the Labour party ever formed a Government.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, in his view, this agreement cannot but have implications for Britain's foreign policy as well as the other policies for which he is specifically responsible? Should not this matter be debated before Christmas?

Mr. Heseltine: The Opposition have every opportunity to ask for a debate, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, attentive as always, will no doubt do his best to accord with with their requirements.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Is it not amazing that there has not been a single word from the Opposition Benches about the Russian research effort in this sector, which last year involved 100 space launchers, of which 80 were for military purposes, compared with the United States with 20 space launchers? Can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance that our involvement will not be restricted to university research but will also involve our major industrial companies?

Mr. Heseltine: I can give that assurance. However, I do not find the Opposition's reaction amazing. It is predictable that they have no harsh words to say about the Soviet Union. If one understands the analysis of their defence policy, it is to further the foreign policy of the Soviet Union by the single greatest abdication of British defence capability that we have ever seen.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Can the Secretary of State assure the House that any research undertaken as a result of this agreement will be based on the original narrow concept of what is allowed under the ABM treaty and not on the rather more elastic view espoused by Mr. Caspar Weinberger? Will the Government be pressing for the updating and strengthening of the ABM treaty to prevent a sudden breakthrough on either side?

Mr. Heseltine: We welcome the interpretation of the ABM treaty that is current United States policy. If, in the negotiations at Geneva, the ABM regimes need further explanation, or exploration between the super-powers, we would support that initiative if it were necessary.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to Opposition Members not

only that have the Russians been working on star wars projects for 10 years but that they are still carrying on work at six sites in the Soviet Union without let or hindrance? Will he also make it clear that this treaty is for the protection of the people of the West, and we should welcome it on both sides of the House?

I have a question about how the agreement will affect British industry. My right hon. Friend says that this is a confidential memorandum of understanding. He knows my concerns about the intellectual property rights. If such information cannot be shared with the House of Commons, can we have an assurance that the rights can be shared with industry and that industry will be allowed to use what it learns from research programmes?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. We wanted to achieve an overall memorandum of understanding about intellectual property rights because inevitably, large numbers of companies, research organisations and universities will come to the Government to ask for guidance about the sort of contracts into which they can enter. We shall not make available the memorandum of understanding, but we shall now be able to give the clearest answers to questions about the legitimate protection of intellectual property rights on both sides of the Atlantic. I support what my hon. Friend said about research in the Soviet Union. I have made available to the House a copy of the document that sets out broadly the lines of the research programme that the Soviet Union has been pursuing for some time.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Secretary of State repeatedly stressed the importance of the opportunities that star wars research would present to British industry. That was perhaps his key point. Will he assure the House that that is the unqualified view of all the British industrialists likely to be involved? There are not many of them, given the crumbs that came to them from the Trident programme as well as all the difficulties, both political and legal, surrounding the transfer of United States high tech.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He obviously understands the issues that I have had to address. I can assure him that the agreements I have reached have taken fully into account the views of British industry. They recognise that we will now be able to protect the intellectual property rights on this side of the Atlantic while any general advances are available to research authorities on either side of the Atlantic. This is a fair understanding of a significant kind.

The hon. Gentleman quite fairly mentioned the Trident programme. Indeed, perhaps I was not uninfluenced by that programme when I originally approached the United States on this matter. There is one fundamental difference. In trying to bid for contracts in the Trident programme, we were trying to break into a programme where the contracts had already been let and the programme was already well under way in the United States. That is extremely difficult to do. We are not in such a situation here. We are in at the beginning of a programme, and we have now the clearest understandings about how we can share and advance within it.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Given that the Soviet Union has long had a lead over the western allies in anti-ballistic missile and anti-satellite technology—both of which it demonstrated and deployed many years ago—should not we welcome the fact that the British Government are taking the lead in Europe by working alongside our American allies to make good the ground lost over many years?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is important that Britain has been able to secure the first of these agreements. I believe that other of our European allies will not be very far behind, and I am sure that that will be for the better interests of Britain and the wider interests of European technology as a whole.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman clear up one of his answers? Will the fundamental results of the research be available only to the American Government—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head. Does that mean that research will be protected under section 1 of the Official Secrets Act?

Mr. Heseltine: As this involves some of the most advanced technologies, it is possible that there will be a very substantial categorisation of defence secrets. As for the right hon. Gentleman's basic question, I assure him that the legitimate interests of both countries have been fully protected in relation to the intellectual property rights.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): How can it possibly be suggested that if we do not participate in the research programme our scientists will no way be seduced into going to the United States to participate in their programme, whereas if we do they will go rushing across to the United States from profitable companies in this country?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most interested in my hon. Friend's question. I do not think that it can be suggested that such a hypothesis exists in any sane or rational world, but perhaps my hon. Friend had in mind a world that was neither sane nor rational.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that despite this agreement there is no guarantee of a single new contract or job for British companies? In view of his previous answer about Trident, can we now be assured that his success rate, if any, on contracts as a result of this agreement will be better and greater than it was on Trident?

Mr. Heseltine: If one wants to guarantee the minimum chance of jobs and contracts in Britain——

Mr. Hamilton: No guarantee.

Mr. Heseltine: —the way to do it is to have a parliamentary Opposition who behave like this one.

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): Is my right hon. Friend aware that last week this was a major subject of debate in the Western European Union and that before then it was of concern to the WEU Committee on Scientific, Technological and Aerospace Questions as well as industrialists throughout Europe? Will he elaborate on the review procedure? Will this Government be able to share with America the application of any results if positive, and to what extent will that fall within the orbit of the Western European Union or even NATO?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. This is a bilateral agreement between the United States of

[Mr. Heseltine]

America and the United Kingdom. Therefore, it does not fall within the WEU or the NATO Alliance arrangements. I can only repeat that in the memorandum of understanding, which we shall not publish, the arrangements to protect our technology are fair. It may not be as clearly understood as it should be that the United States has as much interest in protecting technology as we have because it has a vastly larger technological base than we have. In partnership agreements with us, the risk is that we gain disproportionately, not the United States.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Secretary of State agree that Edinburgh university probably has the most distinguished department of artificial intelligence in Europe, and, indeed, in the world, including the United States? Did he hear the public doubts raised by Edinburgh university scientists, not only about the difficulty of testing any such system, which is a thousand times more complicated than any personal computer, but on other grounds? Is the Secretary of State prepared to have his chief scientist or senior scientists meet those who have doubts at Edinburgh university about the militarisation problem? Is the complaint of British scientists who may have expected to be consulted but who were not consulted fair or unfair?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall make arrangements for any meetings to give effect to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): While I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, may I press him further on intellectual property rights? Clearly, the Americans are paying the bill for the research, and the rights will belong to them. However, it is important that British companies should be able to indulge in commercial exploitation of their research. To what extent will they be inhibited from doing so?

Mr. Heseltine: There will be no inhibition of the proper and full exploitation of research developed in British facilities. I hope that it will not be misunderstood if I tell the House that it is not 100 per cent. true that in pure research all the bills will be paid by the United States of America. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] No—this must not be misunderstood. Most Governments, either through their defence industries or through their research laboratories, have for many years been developing the technologies which in certain configurations are necessary to explore the SDI concept. A large sum is flowing now into those technologies in many different countries. To that extent money is already being spent by the taxpayers of other advanced economies, as it has been in the United States and is in the Soviet Union. There are many pools of expertise which, drawn together, could add to the sum of knowledge and experience available. That is not to say that in any specific way the British Government will add sums to the SDI programme, which we will not.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Does not the Secretary of State understand that the consequences of this major political act of commitment to SDI will make the world an infinitely more dangerous place in which to live? Is he aware that the British people will soon realise that the last chunk of their remaining safety and security has been sold for thirty pieces of silver?

Mr. Heseltine: That is the argument that was explored thoroughly by the electorate at the general election, when we were supposed to give up our nuclear capability. We did not, and the Soviets are negotiating with us, as I have outlined. There are absolutely no grounds for believing that pursuing legitimate research into matters of our self-defence is a destabilising prospect.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is it not as logically implausible for the Opposition to claim that SDI will result in a brain drain, when surely there would be brain flood if we refused to take part in this most exciting development in science, as it is ludicrous to suggest that SDI hinders peace in some way, when the object is to begin to replace mutually assured destruction with mutually assured survival by raising the threshold against the first strike?

Mr. Heseltine: I support my hon. Friend's view that in free societies our companies and scientists are free to take decisions either to work here within the SDI programme or to move to the United States to work within it. I do not know whether the Labour party will introduce some new legislation to stop British companies entering into negotiations and contracts — that may be an innovation, about which we could hear more. There are no powers to stop British companies freely entering competitive opportunities of this sort. The issue is simply whether one negotiates as a Government to secure a fair deal for Britain in the widest sense, or whether one allows the ordinary interplay of market forces.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Merionnydd Nant Conwy): May I revert to an earlier answer from the Secretary of State? Will he explain how he can make available to the House his Department's version of the Soviet research programme—his hon. Friends have already verified it—yet be unable to make available documentation relevant to the United State's programme?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman must realise that there is a world of difference in making available to the House details of the Soviet research programme, which, in exactly the same form, can be made available in the context of our research programme and that of our Western allies, including the United States, because it is general and explains the specific fields. I am making available to the House, as I did to the Select Committee last week, the detailed areas of research in which Britain has an opportunity to become involved, the areas where British companies can compete, and the areas in which there is to be an exchange of information on some of the advanced technologies. That is available to the House. I am not prepared to make available commercially and security sensitive information embodied in the memorandum of understanding.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No fewer than 28 right hon. and hon. Members have asked to take part in the debate later in the day, so I shall allow questions to continue for a further five minutes, which will have given a full half hour for Back Bench questions.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Does my right hon. Friend recall that the climate in which the anti-ballistic missile treaty was drawn up was one of mutual apprehension between the super-powers over the inability to obtain superiority in anti-missile and anti-anti-missile

systems? Does he agree that such fears are as real and alive today as they were then, that nothing in the agreement undermines the basic tenets of the treaty, and that, if anything, the Government would seek to tighten the terms of the treaty and its observance?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend strikes at the heart of one of the most important aspects of the issue. We have yet to establish whether the ABM treaty needs to be tightened up. If so—this can be negotiated by the two super-powers — the British Government would undoubtedly welcome it warmly, just as they welcome the existence of the AMB treaty itself, which has operated as a discipline in this whole area. Given that one cannot stop the research, that everyone is involved in it and that it is recognised to be legitimate under the ABM treaty, it is right for us to join. However, to go beyond that and not to recognise the ABM treaty would be wrong. It is to the credit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that she was the first Western statesman to agree this in public with the American President.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Can the Secretary of State give the House any guarantee that the agreement will not divert resources, time and research capacity into military purposes from the extremely important civil work on advanced information technology, at present being carried out under the Alvey programme, which could promote the future of British industry and jobs?

Mr. Heseltine: No one could be more enthusiastic about the Alvey programme than I am; the Government are wholly involved in the concept, which we created. We give it great priority. I cannot technically give the categorical answer which the hon. Gentleman seeks. However, there is as much ground for believing that the civil spin-off from the sort of programmes about which I am talking today will be at least as big as, if not bigger than, any diversion of resource in any one company which might occur.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the SDI research proposals are neither about stars nor wars, as the Opposition would seem to have us believe, but are about scientific advance and peace? Will he further confirm that the spin-off in jobs and industrial advance for British industry could be as great as the advance which flowed from the original United States space programme?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises an important historical precedent. For the United States of America, the advance in terms of military and industrial capability in technology will undoubtedly be of the order of magnitude associated with that earlier programme. Therefore, the issue for Britain is whether we wish to share in this research opportunity in a way that we did not on the earlier occasion. My belief, without the slightest shadow of doubt, is that in sharing in it, and gaining the civil and military benefit from it, we shall be taking the sort of opportunity that we would have been wise to take on that earlier occasion.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Given that the Secretary of State can provide no assurance about jobs or how much money is at stake, can he tell us what is the status of the American extra-territoriality legislation in relation to the stage beyond paper technology? Will British research be put into operation or will it have to go to the United States? There has been no mention of any amendment to that legislation within Congress as a result of the agreement.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member will have heard what I said. The purpose of the two Secretaries of State has been to be fair to the research laboratories and companies on both sides of the Atlantic. Obviously, there is a fundamental question as to where the research originates, to whom the licences belong, what exploitation possibilities there are, and as to the protection of the benefits of the joint research, so that, if it is developed in one country or another with a pooled resource, it can be legitimately recognised as having a relation to either country. There are many issues of that sort which require the most detailed examination of all the legal ramifications in the United States and in Britain. That is why the negotiations have taken so long and are in such detail.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As one who saw at first hand how much Britain lost by rejecting the opportunities that President Kennedy offered us in space exploration, I greatly welcome what my right hon. Friend and the Prime Minister have achieved to ensure so that we do not lose out on the next half-century's development.

What is to be the relationship between the new SDI participation office and the national space agency recently set up? Will my right hon. Friend confirm to the Opposition that the project is going ahead, and that the only question is whether it will be with us or without us?

Mr. Heseltine: As my hon. Friend rightly says, there is no question but that the Americans are determined to pursue the research programme, and we shall not have any opportunity to prevent it, for the very best of reasons—that we are already doing it ourselves and do not want to prevent it. As my hon. Friend says, the issue is whether we do it in partnership. I believe him to be correct, because the opportunities for Britain are considerable.

The space agency is sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry, and there are representatives of the Ministry of Defence on it, just as, within the strategic defence initiative office, there will be representatives of the Department of Trade and Industry. There will be a very close relationship, if it is relevant, and it could well be.

Mr. Denzil Davies: On jobs, can the Secretary of State again tell us what guarantees he has, under the agreement, of contracts coming to British industry? What has happened to the $1·5 billion that we were told he was seeking from the Americans?

Does research include development? In particular, does it include the actual testing of weapons systems as part of that research and development?

The Secretary of State has told us that he will not publish the agreement. Does that also apply to the American Government? Are we to take it that it is confidential from their point of view and will not be disclosed to the American Congress?

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, it certainly is as confidential there as it is here. It is an understanding between two Governments.

On job guarantees, the framework of the agreement covers the very large number of areas of joint exploration that are listed in the schedules to it. I have no doubt that my aspirations for substantial British participation will be

[Mr. Heseltine]

fulfilled. They are not qualified, because one cannot quantify what will be done in a research programme which, of its own nature, is unpredictable, but the scale of the opportunity for Britain, if we are competitive at prices and with a quality that are acceptable, are very substantial.

Austin Rover (Redundancies)

4.14 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by the Austin Rover Group on Friday of the decision to make redundant 600 toolroom workers at the Austin Rover plant at Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, in my constituency, and 150 at Dunstable and Llanelli."

The matter is important because unemployment in this part of my constituency is now 23 in every 100, with more than half of them out of work for more than a year. In the whole constituency, 8,364 are jobless — virtually the same as a year ago.

The matter is specific because the number of jobs in the west midlands machine tool industry has fallen from 8,750 to 3,500 in the past five years — a loss of six out of every ten jobs.

It is rumoured that the Austin Rover group plans, against the background of those redundancies, to order millions of pounds worth of machine tools for its Sherpa van and Land Rover production from West Germany, when the men with the skills and experience to make the tools for the production of the Metro, the Maestro, the Montego, the Acclaim, and even the latest Rolls-Royce are to be thrown on the scrapheap.

The matter is urgent because the redundancies mark one more fatal step in the rundown of toolroom capacity, which can only cost more British jobs and mean that, when the recovery comes, it is certain that the necessary machine tools will have to be imported.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Austin Rover Group to make 600 toolroom workers redundant at its plant at Castle Bromwich, Birmingham."

I fully understand the concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Strategic Defence Initiative

4.17 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the agreement between the British Government and the American Administration in support of the United States strategic defence initiative."

SDI is clearly specific. It has been specific since President Reagan's televised speech on 23 March 1983. SDI is important. If the American strategic defence initiative goes ahead, it could well herald the escalation of the nuclear arms race into space which is likely to make the nuclear holocaust come sooner rather than later. SDI is important because the agreement means that the British Government are the first Government in Europe to support the American "star wars" project. No amount of haggling over dollars or grovelling for Pentagon contracts can conceal that, as the demeaning statement of the Secretary of State has made clear this afternoon.

The matter is urgent, because there has been no debate or Division in this House on the principle of the strategic defence initiative. It is a scandal that the agreement should have been signed without Parliament first having an opportunity to discuss the principle of the SDI research programme. The Government are making a mockery of Parliament, and I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to end that forthwith.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the agreement between the British Government and the United States Administration in support of the United States strategic defence initiative."

I regret that I have to give the hon. Member the same answer as I gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

BILLS PRESENTED

Television Act 1964 (Amendment)

Mrs. Ann Clwyd, supported by Mr. Laurie Pavitt, Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Willie W. Hamilton, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Keith Best and Mr. D. E. Thomas, presented a Bill to amend the provisions of the Television Act 1964 to prohibit the mention or display in television broadcasts of the brand names, colour, logos or other identifying characteristics of tobacco products; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April and to be printed. [Bill 46.]

Dog Fighting (Penalties)

Mr. Harry Greenway presented a Bill to amend the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to increase the penalties for causing or procuring, or assisting at, the fighting or baiting of any animal: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April and to be printed. [Bill 47.]

Channel (Fixed Link)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Front Bench in this important debate, may I repeat what I said earlier? No fewer than 28 right hon. and hon. Members have already sought to take part, and there may be others. I have no authority yet, under our Standing Orders, to limit speeches to 10 minutes, but I hope that the House will take account of the large number of hon. Members who wish to take part.

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): On this occasion we want to listen to views on the Channel fixed link. We have not decided whether there should be a fixed link, nor which of the four schemes is preferable. I shall not therefore say much about their merits, but rather talk about procedures.

On 2 April, I announced the issue by the British and French Governments of the guidelines, which are the basis upon which promoting groups are to make their proposals. The guidelines made it clear that, while essential political guarantees would be provided by the Governments, it was essential for promoters to demonstrate that their projects could proceed without support from public funds or Government guarantees against commercial or technical risks. The guidelines also require promoters to set out in their proposals the engineering and other technical characteristics of their projects, and also their environmental, employment and social impacts. They laid great stress on the need for public consultation by the promoters themselves, to ascertain the views of people affected by the projects and, when possible, to adapt their schemes to meet local concerns.

The timetable set out last spring is still on course. The responses by the promoters have been, if anything, better than we expected. Four valid proposals were received by 31 October—Channel Expressway, the Channel Tunnel Group, Eurobridge and Euroroute. Those proposals are now being thoroughly assessed by the joint Anglo-French group of officials. Numerous outside expert consultants are looking closely at the financial, environmental, engineering and hydrological aspects of each scheme. The risks of plant and animal diseases using the link are being carefully assessed as is any vulnerability to terrorist attack. The aim is that the group should report to me and the French Minister of Transport by Christmas. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has planned to meet the President of France before the end of January to announce a decision on which scheme, if any, should in due course be brought before Parliament for approval. The Government intend, as soon as possible after that decision, to make a full statement to Parliament explaining the reasons behind their choice, backed up by a White paper giving as much information as possible.

Negotiations are also taking place with the French on the necessary treaty. We intend that, if the decision in January is positive, it will be signed before the end of February. It will, of course, be subject to subsequent endorsement by Parliament through the hybrid Bill procedure. The hybrid Bill would be introduced during March. The timetable of events that we announced last April is being followed.

The House will not expect me to give any advance information about the Government's assessment of the proposals today. Officials have not yet completed their assessment and it would be foolish of me to pre-judge their work.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Among the various criteria that the Government have considered such as terrorism or the prevention of disease entering the country, has any study been made of the possible economic effect of the development of the link on Scotland and the north of England?

Mr. Ridley: All such factors are being taken into account in the assessments that are being made. Such matters will be covered in the White Paper that will be issued by the Government when we make a statement on the decision.

When the guidelines were published, they were warmly welcomed. The prospect they offered, that — after a period of uncertainty that makes the Stansted saga look positively rushed! — a fixed Channel link was likely to be built, met with general approval on both sides of the House, and by commentators outside. Many people feel that a scheme for a Channel link was exactly the sort of exciting construction project that would stimulate economic activity and improve the flow of people and goods to Europe. Many previous doubters were reassured because the taxpayer would not be contributing a penny towards it.

Of course, as is always the case when we move from the general to the specific, doubts arise and questions are asked. Those who are against the link naturally play on those doubts and fears. That is followed by concern about the method by which the Government are proceeding to take the decision. That crystallises in the argument that we should hold a full public inquiry into any chosen link.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), on the Opposition Front Bench, confirms that that will be the thrust of the case that he will develop later. If I may say so, that is a most extraordinary decision taken by the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition is recorded in the press as saying that he is in favour of a link, but thinks that there should be a public inquiry. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape)—I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman is not in his place for this important transport matter — is joint chairman of the all-party Channel tunnel group. He must, by definition, be in favour of a link. I wonder whether he will support a public local inquiry. He should know—I am sure he does—that that would bring any chance of the link coming into effect to a full stop.

Opposition Members should think carefully about their proposals. When they revived the hybrid Bill in 1974 for the Channel tunnel, they made it clear that there would not be a public inquiry. Secondly, they know that there are massive numbers of jobs involved in the project, many of which could go to heavy industry in the north. How can the Opposition constantly demand more jobs and then make conditions that would frustrate them?

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I remind my right hon. Friend that, as long ago as 1973, my right hon.

and noble Friend Lord Peyton and I agreed with the then French Government that we would proceed to build a Channel link. The years have passed and nothing has happened. The remedy proposed by the Opposition of a public inquiry would simply ensure that the job that we have been waiting for for so long would not happen.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right, as I now want to go on to say in detail.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I am a supporter of the scheme. The right hon. Gentleman said that it would bring jobs to the north-east and to Scotland. Surely, under the EEC rules, the contracts will have to go out to tender within the EEC. Will the right hon. Gentleman reassure us on that point?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is right. The contracts must be placed without national discrimination. However, I shall be extremely surprised if British industry does not win a sizeable chunk of the contracts. Certainly, French industry will get its share.

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): The right hon. Gentleman talks about jobs that will be awarded and, as he says, they may or may not come here. Has he made an assessment of the number of jobs that will be lost as a result of the link?

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said earlier. All those matters are being assessed but I have not yet got the results. The right hon. Gentleman will have to wait until the Government have finished their analysis.

Thirdly, the Opposition know in their heart of hearts that it would be quite impossible for private promoters to proceed with the project if they were subject to the risks and delay of the public inquiry system. I make no apology for saying that we must proceed at reasonable speed. We take an inordinately long time in this country to take—albeit important—planning decisions: 17 years for the Okehampton bypass and 22 years for Stansted. Against the clamour for more infrastructure spending, we should all agree that that scale of delay is damaging investment in our infrastructure. Look at our competitors abroad — the French, for instance. They seem always to be able to do things much faster than we can. Of course, careful and proper consideration of the environmental and economic impacts of a project on a locality is vital. I yield to no one in my belief that we must consult and consider those things. But that should not be synonymous with delay—delay of year upon year. We should be able to take account of the interests of people affected without endless delay. Delay has become a weapon used under our planning procedures in order to frustrate development. I have to tell the House that a lengthy public inquiry would sound the death knell for the link.

The reasons are simple. First, the principle whether there should be a fixed link, and, if so, which scheme, must be determined by Parliament, in response to a proposal of the Government. It is a project of national importance, befitting of national decision.

Secondly, the project is unique in that it has to be facilitated by two sovereign states, Britain and France. As I have said, our two national systems for considering and implementing investment projects are very different, and the French have a much more abbreviated system than our own. Indeed, it is difficult enough to proceed in tandem on the basis of the hybrid Bill procedure in this country. In France, authorisation for the construction of a fixed link could be given in six months. In the United Kingdom, we require up to 18 months, even without a public local inquiry. To try and combine the French timetable with a British public inquiry and a hybrid Bill—for both would be necessary—would kill the project stone dead.

Thirdly, the project is unusual both in its scale and in that it is to be financed wholly in the private sector. The investment institutions would not be willing to give the sort of commitments necessary if they were faced with the long and protracted timetable and the uncertainty of a favourable decision resulting from the public inquiry procedure.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend amplify the most helpful replies that he has given so far? Will he make it abundantly clear that, in the unfortunate event of the tunnel being half built and the promoters running out of money, there would be no question of any guarantees for further borrowing being given by the Government or any public bodies such as the EEC?

Mr. Ridley: That does not follow the logic of my argument, but I give my hon. Friend that assurance. If what he describes happened, the promoters or others would have to decide whether to raise more money to complete the structure or to abandon it.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is it not clear that there will have to be some form of public expenditure on infrastructure for whichever project of the four is chosen? My right hon. Friend cannot produce answers today, but in due course will he produce for the House a full costing of each of the projects' requirements for infrastructure investment? Will he confirm that it remains the Government's policy, as it was of all their predecessors, to do what they can to encourage, by means of grant, the transfer of traffic from road to rail?

Mr. Ridley: There will be increasing traffic through the Channel ports, whether or not a link is built. We shall have to provide improved road communications, and they will be provided whether or not a link is built. If a link is built, it will be the responsibility of the promoters to connect it up to the motorway network, not of the state. Therefore, there should not be increased public expenditure purely because of that. I immediately admit that any railway investment will need to come out of public investment funds, but that is because the railways are nationalised and do not therefore have access to private capital. It happens all the time.

A public inquiry could not be a substitute for a hybrid Bill, but would have to be in addition to it. A public local inquiry would mean a great deal of duplication of effort for all concerned, not least for the objectors.

Those arguments convinced the Select Committee, which recommended in its report last week that there should be no public inquiry, broadly for the reasons that I have described. For the Labour party now to demand a public inquiry is to demand that a fixed link should not be built. If that is what Labour Members feel, let them stand up and be counted. But I beg the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North not to hide behind shallow and misleading arguments about public local inquiries.

[Mr. Ridley]

Instead, he should tell the House whether he and his party are in favour of a link being built. Nothing else will convince us.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I understand what my right hon. Friend says about a major public inquiry, although I do not entirely agree with him. Will he assure the House that if the scheme is approved, wherever public inquiries are called for, for wayleaves and so on, they will take place, or will that provision be overridden? Will there be one hybrid Bill and no public inquiries?

Mr. Ridley: There will be a hybrid Bill, which will give the promoters all the necessary powers. I shall describe the procedure for the hybrid Bill, which might help my hon. Friend.

Although the decision has to be taken by Parliament, we want maximum local consultation. The location of the portal of any link is dictated by geography. So the matters to be considered and consulted upon locally are principally, but not exclusively, first, the precise effects of the link on those immediately affected, on their properties and amenities; and, secondly, the effect on the local economy in terms of jobs gained and lost, in construction and upon opening, and, more importantly, the employment likely to be gained by this mammoth transport development—perhaps the biggest communications artery in Europe. It will act as a magnet for growth in Kent. Thirdly, there is the effect on the natural environment—bird and plant life, the cherished white cliffs, and the Garden of England which is Kent. Fourthly, there are the communications needs of the area as a result of the link—roads and railway services—which will alter as a result of its construction, and, fifthly, the effects any structure that would be built in the Channel would have on the safety of shipping and the freedom of navigation. It is impossible to comment on those matters properly before the choice is made, except in a rudimentary form, because we do not yet know which scheme, if any, we are considering. Nevertheless, we are doing, and will continue to do, all that is possible.

In our guidelines we encouraged promoters to undertake informal consultation with local authorities, expert bodies, persons affected and other interested parties. Some of the promoters have been very active indeed in consulting widely, as hon. Members can testify. The responsibility to consult did not come to an end when the schemes were submitted on 31 October. The adequacy of individual promoters' consultation arrangements will be one of the matters to which the Government will pay attention when they make their decision in January.

Nevertheless, we are having extensive consultations with local authorities in Kent and adjoining areas. We also placed advertisements in national and local newspapers, inviting comments on the four promoters' schemes. Arrangements have been made for public inspection of the proposals throughout Kent and in my Department's offices throughout the country. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has already visited the area, and I shall follow next week. We have discussed the matter with the local authorities and my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies. They have been assiduous in bringing the concerns of their constituents to our attention. We have already learnt a lot from them of the concerns of local people.

I should like to pay particular tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). He is unable to speak up publicly for his constituents. Nevertheless, he has been tireless and assiduous in telling me of the concerns of his constituents. I can assure the House that the comments that we receive from him, from other hon. Members, from local authorities, and from groups and individuals, will be taken fully into account before any decision is reached on the principle of a fixed link. We shall take very careful note of the comments made by hon. Members this afternoon, but I must also emphasise that, uniquely, we are consulting not about a chosen scheme, but about four possibilities. This is not a situation for which we have precedents.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): One aspect about the enforcement of British law concerns many people. With the multiple ports of entry at the moment, a large element of law enforcement falls not upon national but upon local resources. Weights and measures inspectors should ask themselves: are the imports of the standard required by consumer protection law? Because that is so expensive for imports coming into the whole country, it is not enforced because the cost is too heavy for local authorities. If a much larger proportion of people and goods coming into Britain are to be channelled through one location, be it by rail or road, or both, do the Government have it in mind that the cost of effective enforcement should then fall upon the national Exchequer, not upon the local exchequer? If it falls upon local taxation resources, the job will not be done efficiently. That is a matter of great concern throughout Britain.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend has raised many matters in one intervention. Customs and Excise, members of my Department who check lorry weights and documentation, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food inspectors and many other officials will be involved in those matters. I shall write a full letter to my hon. Friend setting out the precise answers to his questions, rather than attempt to answer them at length today.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I hope that the fixed link will be a rail link. A public inquiry should establish what information exists about the likely psychological effects on some drivers who drive through 25 miles of tunnel. In the Minister's Department is there a psychologist's report or information on how drivers would behave if there is a road link? Those drivers will be doing what has not been done before. Some people have enough difficulty in the Dartford or Clyde tunnels. Are we sure that those who would be driving through 25 miles of tunnel would behave rationally?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot think of any worse forum for investigating that matter than a public local inquiry. That is being carefully considered in the assessment studies, and it may be a matter that a Select Committee on a hybrid Bill would wish to pursue. Those channels are better suited to pursuing the matter than a public local inquiry, which deals with planning and not psychology.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Minister have any information about it?

Mr. Ridley: I shall go on to the next point——

Mr. Dalyell: The answer is no.

Mr. Ridley: There will be further consultations and opportunities for comment on a firm proposal. We shall consult local authorities, and amenity groups in particular, about the content of the proposed legislation. There would also be consultation throughout the passage of the hybrid Bill, so that any problems of detail could be resolved in the legislation. The precise effect on the environment, the economy and on transport links, and upon those personally affected, will be much easier to assess and take into account.

The hybrid Bill procedure contains every opportunity for those affected to be heard, including the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) with his psychological problem.

Mr. Dalyell: Vulgar and cheap.

Mr. Ridley: The procedure is well known to the House. It is comparable to the private Bill procedure, which has always been used for building railways and similarly requires no public inquiry. It was used when similar proposals were produced in 1974. The Select Committee recommended that we should follow the precedent of the 1974 Channel Tunnel Bill. We shall. If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, it will be committed to a Select Committee to hear and consider petitions. The Bill will already have been advertised; anyone who has an objection to it will have an opportunity to petition against it and, subject to his petition being accepted by the Committee, he will appear and present his case to the Select Committee. Subject to the rulings of the Select Committee, I would expect that those eligible would include individuals whose private interests are affected—those representing local trades, businesses and other local interests which may be adversely affected, those representing amenity, ecology, educational and recreational interests who believe that their interests are adversely affected to a material degree, and local authorities in any affected areas.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it parliamentary language to say that another hon. Member has psychological problems?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): There was nothing out of order in what the Secretary of State said.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned the psychological problem of driving through tunnels. That is all that I meant.

The Bill will then go to Standing Committee and Third Reading in the normal way. The Bill will then be considered in the other place and the same Select Committee procedure with consideration of petitions will apply before it proceeds again through the normal Bill procedure. This is a substantial and thorough procedure which ensures that the public have the widest opportunity to make representations as petitioners to the two Select Committees. This is, of course, in addition to the rights of members of the public to lobby hon. Members and noble Lords during the Standing Committee stages.

I understand the anxiety of local people about the impact that a fixed link would be likely to have on the economy and infrastructure of east Kent. Kent county council and other local authorities have already made representations. What such effects are will depend on the scheme chosen. The assessment that is currently being carried out will identify, as far as possible, the implications of each of the schemes.

I assure my hon. Friends that the Government will consider matters sympathetically, in the light of the scheme chosen, giving priority to necessary improvement in the national and local roads system. I intend to ensure that a high-quality route is provided along the M20 between the M25 and the entrance to the link. I hope that work on the Maidstone-Ashford section of the M20 will commence in 1987. Improvements are currently in hand on the A2. We shall consider whether further improvements are needed.

We already have plans to improve the A20 between Folkestone and Dover and, once a decision in principle has been taken on the Channel fixed link, we shall decide the precise alignment, design and standard of those improvements, and press ahead.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): My right hon. Friend discussed the impact on road transport. Will he consider the impact on air transport, especially in relation to the expansion of Heathrow and Stansted airports? Will he also consider the impact of a high-speed rail link through the Channel tunnel on short-haul European routes?

Mr. Ridley: That factor has to be taken into account in the assessment studies, to derive a forecast of the likely numbers of users of the link.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Bearing in mind the fact that none of us can look into the future with certainty and know which form of transport will be used in 20 or 30 years' time, should we ensure that a fixed link encompasses road and rail traffic?

Mr. Ridley: All four schemes currently include a rail link, three of them include a drive-through road link and the fourth proposes a road link on a shuttle service. Therefore, what my hon. Friend suggests is likely to be the case.

Local roads may also come under strain. I shall give special consideration, within the transport supplementary grant system, to schemes included in Kent's transport policy and programmes that are necessary as a direct result of the link.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: There may also be consequences for rail services. Each of the promoter's schemes would have different implications for British Rail. British Rail's investment proposals will have to be commercially justified.

Mr. Marshall: I had hoped that the Secretary of State would have given way before he finished dealing with road improvements. Road improvements in the Kent area are important, but road facilities are also important to the Scottish economy. Does the Minister agree, and would he recommend to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, that one essential of the construction of any fixed link is the upgrading to motorway standards of the A74?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member can hardly accuse me of not giving way when I was dealing with road improvements, because I do not believe that he sought to intervene. I gave way to the hon. Gentleman the moment

[Mr. Ridley]

he sought to do so. I shall convey to the Secretary of State for Scotland what the hon. Gentleman said. However, off the cuff, I cannot see the connection between the A74 and the construction of the possible fixed link.

I conclude on the wider interests. The Government want a fixed link built. Let there be no doubt about that. Whether it is built depends on whether the private sector is prepared to finance it. But, if it is, a fixed link offers immense opportunities for individuals, businesses and jobs.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Secretary of State mentioned investment. Will he consider the position of the major ferry operators across the Channel? What does he believe will be the future for SNCF, P and O Ferries and Sally Line?

Mr. Ridley: The effect on the ferries will vary enormously according to which link is chosen. Those matters are being carefully considered in the assessment, and we shall give our conclusions on that, as on many other points, in the White Paper.

The English Channel has always been a physical and a psychological barrier to the fast and economic movement of people and goods. A fixed link would remove that barrier. It offers the prospect of lower transport costs. Business men and exporters will have quicker and more reliable communications with their main markets. The European Community accounts for more that 60 per cent. of our foreign trade. Holidaymakers will have easier access and greater choice for journeys to and from the Continent. The British tourist industry will also benefit, because tourist traffic will be two ways.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): My right hon. Friend is about to reach his peroration but has not yet mentioned an important procedural point. If we put physical objects in the Channel, what will the Government do about consulting all the maritime nations? My right hon. Friend will recall that the 1981 Select Committee report drew attention to that problem. Perhaps it was wrong. Will my right hon. Friend express a view on the matter, because it would rule out the bridge option or any option that would place obstacles in the Channel if we had to consult all the maritime nations?

Mr. Ridley: All the maritime nations are represented by the International Maritime Organisation, which we have consulted closely about possible impediments in the Channel. The result of that consultation will be taken into account in our assessment.

Such a vast project offers a boost to the construction industry and to all the British companies that supply it. But, more significant than any of those matters, the construction of a fixed link will demonstrate the remarkable change that is taking place in the confidence of British industry. If it is to succeed, private promoters, investors and banks will be willing to undertake the most spectacular civil engineering project of recent European history and to take the risk, not only on revenue, but on the time and cost of construction without financial guarantees. Successful completion will set the seal on the change from public burden to private enterprise and from pessimism to confidence.

Let us all hope that such a scheme can go forward without delay, backed by political and financial courage.

4.52 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): As the Secretary of State said, a fixed link — or a Channel tunnel, as we used to call it — has been the subject of debate for a long time. I have vivid memories of it during the 1966 general election campaign, when the Labour party candidate for Aberdeen, North was Hector Hughes. He was a well-respected and much-loved Member of Parliament in Aberdeen, for as much as despite his occasional eccentricity. When asked what we should do to develop the economy of Aberdeen, he said that we should build a tunnel between Aberdeen and Oslo—of course, ignoring the 25-mile wide, 2,000-ft deep Norwegian trench. The press rushed to see the candidate in Aberdeen, South — my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) — to ask whether he agreed. He said, "Of course, Mr. Hughes is speaking metaphorically." The press ran back to Mr. Hughes and asked him whether his remarks were metaphorical or real, and he said, "Damned young whippersnapper should take the advice of his elders. Of course, I mean it." That story has been the source of merriment in Aberdeen from time to time, which I am sure the late Hector Hughes would have enjoyed. But, as I have told people since then, albeit tongue in cheek, had we taken Hector Hughes' advice in 1966, we might have found North sea oil much more quickly and cheaply.

I welcome the debate, although the first question in the minds of many hon. Members must be why we are having the debate today. We owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the Select Committee on Transport for producing their report, which helps to concentrate our minds. However, last week, the Committee had to meet two days earlier than planned to accelerate the production of the report. Indeed, it was available to the House only at 5.30 pm on Thursday. Furthermore, evidence submitted to the Select Committee will not be available to us for at least a fortnight. The report is valuable, but it is difficult to assess its recommendations. Although it is not my responsibility, I should draw the rushed production of the report to the attention of the Leader of the House and the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is Chairman of the Liaison Committee, because something must be done to regulate Select Committee reports and to dovetail their publication with the business of the House. This is not the first time that the Select Committee on Transport has been treated in that way. Indeed, it was treated much worse in the past.

However, there is no real mystery about why we are debating the matter today. The Department of Transport issued a press notice stating that the Under-Secretary of State for Transport—the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell) — would visit Dover and other areas affected for public consultation on the fixed link. Almost simultaneously, the Department issued a press statement stating that there would be no debate in the House until after the Government had made up their mind. When I saw that, I feared so much for the safety of the Minister that I checked the size of his majority.

It would have been outrageous if we did not have a parliamentary debate on the matter until after the Government had decided which scheme they wanted and the treaty had been signed, sealed and delivered. I hold the House in high esteem, but I do not regard the debate as a substitute for wider discussion and consultation. There is

no doubt that we are discussing the important principle of whether there should be a fixed link across the Channel. Nor is there any doubt from the interventions during the Secretary of State's speech that the issue raises strong feelings for and against a fixed link and on the sort of link that should be chosen.

Although the Secretary of State said that the Government have not decided whether there should be a fixed link, they gave us the impression even today that they are hell-bent on having such a link. No other conclusion could be put on the Secretary of State's speech —certainly not on his peroration. The first charge that I make against the Government is that they will proceed without a thorough examination of the fixed link and its impact on a range of policy issues.

We are told that, within 100 days of the promoters' scheme being submitted, the Civil Service will wade through 15,000 pages of detailed evidence in 31 days. We must ask whether that period is long enough for a reasonable appreciation of all matters, including driving through the tunnel, which the Secretary of State seemed to find so hilarious. However, it is an extremely important matter that must be discussed.

Mr. Adley: The arrival of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on the Opposition Front Bench will remind us of the pressures on the late Anthony Crosland to cancel the project in 1974. They are reinforced by the absence from the Opposition Front Bench of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who we know is strongly in favour. Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the Labour party must make up its mind on this issue? Will he, before the end of his speech, make it clear whether, dependent upon the decision of the House tonight, the Labour party will accept the decision of the House, or whether he will subject the decision — *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but the House must know where the Labour party stands on this issue of principle. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us before the end of his speech?

Mr. Hughes: Throughout his speech, the Secretary of State frequently said, "if any", "if any", "if any". To any question about the different considerations, he said that all matters would be considered. I accept in the spirit in which it was offered the hon. Gentleman's compliment to my intelligence and diligence: that, without having seen all the information held by the Department of Transport, and in a shorter time, I can give the House a definite answer this afternoon. I regret to say that the hon. Gentleman will have to wait and see.

We need to discuss a whole range of policy issues— the impact on transport policy; the impact on the environment in the areas most directly affected; the effects on regional employment policy; the importance of infrastructure developments in relation both to this sort of project and to investment in manufacturing industry. If we are to have sensible discussions on these and many other considerations on which I do not have time to dwell this evening, it is essential that there should be a public inquiry.

The proposal is a major step, and it is extremely important that we arrive at the right decision.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Does the hon. Gentleman accept, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, that if there is a challenge in the High Court it might be five, six, seven, or eight years before a decision is reached and there will be a blighting effect on many people, companies and businesses in east Kent? Does the hon. Gentleman accept the blighting effect that such a delay would cause?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman must be patient until I come to canvass the arguments about a public inquiry. There is at present a great deal of blight in the area that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. If he suggests that we should simply ride roughshod over public opinion, about which I have very strong views, he is wrong. That is one of the reasons why the Government will eventually be defeated. The hon. Gentleman has a dose of Whitehall centralitis, and the sooner people realise that the better.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is my hon. Friend aware that the *Folkestone, Hythe and District Herald* sent out a questionnaire in its area, making only one simple inquiry: "What is your view of some sort of public inquiry?" Of the people who replied, 86 per cent. were in favour and only 14 per cent. were against.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. Hon. Members who are passionate about the fixed link will cite various public opinion polls saying what percentage of people are in favour of the fixed link, what percentage prefer to drive, and so on. Other surveys, however, are not mentioned. They show that a minimum of 70 per cent. — in the Folkestone case more than 80 per cent. — are in favour of a public inquiry.

The Minister is embarking on a disintegrated transport policy. He has not taken any account of the tremendous investment in ferries and ports which has taken place in the past decade since the issue was last under consideration. It is argued—whether one accepts it or not it must be considered in good faith — that Dover traffic will collapse entirely. Depending on which scheme is chosen, that collapse would ripple out and affect all the ports from Hull down to Southampton. Even if we allow for some exaggeration — and almost everyone is prone to exaggerate on these issues — these matters need to be clarified.

There are many different opinions as to how the fixed link would affect transport policy. The only matter on which there is the broadest measure of agreement is that, if there is a fixed link, it should have a rail component. Many of my hon. Friends feel very strongly about that and would accept the Select Committee's recommendations in favour of the Channel tunnel proposals. Whatever final scheme is approved, all the proposals have a rail link, and very heavy investment would be required in British Rail. Without heavy investment, British Rail would not get the maximum benefit from rail users, whether passenger or freight. There needs to be a commitment to investment in rail and a commitment to deliver that investment on time.

Viscount Cranborne: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: There have been many interventions. If I allow any more, I may deprive the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) of the opportunity to speak later in the debate.

The Select Committee on Transport considered the environmental impact very seriously. Paragraph 92 of its report states:

"The Committee would therefore recommend that the Government look closely at the EIAs of all the promoters and

[Mr. Hughes]

subject the schemes to independent analysis and assessment especially with regard to cumulative secondary environmental implications, a subject which none of the EIAs adequately addresses."

That paragraph alone makes the case for a public inquiry. It clearly states that there must be assessments because the evidence submitted by the promoters does not measure up.

The Select Committee is not alone in suggesting that these matters be analysed. The local authorities in Canterbury, Dover, Shepway, Swale and Thanet have also suggested that, and they cannot be regarded in any sense as being Left-wing maverick authorities. In fact, I would describe them all as true blue Tory authorities. They have all condemned the lack of consultation.

Almost every conservation group has also called for a public inquiry. Kent county council appears to be in some difficulty. It opposed any link and now it opposes a public inquiry. It will have to make up its mind.

On Friday 6 December, the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) is reported in *The London Standard* as having said:

"The procedures under which it"—

the system of selecting the link—

"is being handled is full of indecent haste, unnecessary secrecy and starry-eyed optimism."

I know that the hon. Gentleman is in his place and I am sure that he will wish to reply for himself.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science told the nation on BBC that to proceed without a public inquiry would be unthinkable. I took the precaution of advising him that I intended to raise the matter in the House, but so far he has not denied the comment and he is not in the Chamber to do so now.

Regional policy is at the core of many people's suspicion about the impact of the fixed link. From Scotland, the north of England and the south-west, people have expressed anxiety to me about the effects of the fixed link. Many people believe that, quite apart from the size of the investment which is yet again going to the south-east, once the fixed link is in place there will be a magnetic pull which will attract investment in manufacturing jobs down to the start of the link.

I doubt whether there will be much investment in manufacturing, but if there is such investment we must consider these matters very seriously. We are told that we need not worry because the construction phase will create many jobs. At least one promoter is busily emphasising the regional dimension and how it will promote jobs.

It astonishes me that the Secretary of State can come to the House today and extol the virtues of capital investment, albeit private capital investment, as job creation. In Scotland we have fond memories of the Secretary of State when he was known to us as the butcher of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. His synthetic concern for jobs does not fool me at all. I do not believe that he has undergone a massive conversion.

Behind the arguments about job creation even in the short term is the assumption that jobs will be created in the United Kingdom. The only thing that is reasonably certain — we are not absolutely sure about it — is that the French and British promoters will each have roughly 50 per cent. of the construction costs to spend. We are told, however, that European competitive rules will have to apply, so we cannot guarantee that jobs will be created because they will have to go to open tender. We know from experience that the French Government will make sure that the French francs are spent in France and that not many jobs will go outside. Our Government blandly say that it is for British industry to put up the right competition. With 4 million unemployed we certainly need the jobs, but in embarking on a scheme of this kind we must examine the balance between jobs lost and jobs gained and between short-term and long-term jobs.

Although I appreciate the argument about magnetic pull, I believe that there is a counter-mechanism which one might describe as "magnetic push". So long as there is sufficient infrastructure investment in British Rail, for example, the development of a through rail system could benefit companies in Scotland, the north of England and elsewhere.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): My hon. Friend has referred to the conversion of the Secretary of State to job creation. Given the known attitude of the Secretary of State to regional policy, has my hon. Friend any confidence at all that the necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the magnetic pull effect does not have adverse consequences for the periphery of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend emphasises the point. The only way of ensuring long-term benefit for people whom some may regard as being on the periphery of the United Kingdom—some of us do not believe that the United Kingdom begins and ends in the City of London —is proper investment in British Rail, for example, so that it can compete over long distances and so that industry north of Watford can benefit from the increased speed of delivery.

It was suggested at the recent CBI conference that it might be a mistake to commit such large sums of capital to infrastructure rather than to manufacturing investment. All these matters involve a large number of imponderables. Moreover, some of the promoters are already amending the schemes that they submitted on 31 October.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman referred to the considerable benefit that this could bring to the railways, investment in rolling stock, and so on. If he had to choose between massive investment in development of the railway system with faster trains to the Continent and the joy of a public inquiry, which would he choose?

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Does the Secretary of State really think that that is the choice to be made?

Mr. Hughes: The parameters of the debate are constantly changing and the promoters are constantly altering their schemes. I doubt whether a decision could possibly be reached in the magical 100-day period, although the Government seem intent on going ahead as fast as possible.

The Government argue that if there is no public inquiry the hybrid Bill procedure will allow objections to be sufficiently canvassed so that all these matters can be properly tested. The Select Committee on Transport recommended by a majority that there should not be a public inquiry, but it had serious reservations about the hybrid Bill procedure. The Government reminded us that in 1974 the Secretary of State allowed wider objections to be canvassed, but the Select Committee pointed out in paragraph 27 of its report that once such a Bill has had a

Second Reading the onus of proving its expediency is deemed to be removed from the promoters. The Secretary of State has said that he will follow the 1974 precedent, but I do not think that that pledge was as firm as some might think because he went on to detail various different considerations that would apply. If he or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will give a specific pledge today that no one will be debarred from arguing the case before the Joint Committee, that might take some of the sting out of the situation. So far we have been told that the right of an objector to be heard will be a matter for the Committee, so the Secretary of State cannot slide round the matter by suggesting that the hybrid Bill procedure gives almost if not exactly the same possibilities as a public inquiry.

The Select Committee said that a White Paper should be published on the Government's choice. I am glad that the Secretary of State has confirmed that today. It is essential that that White Paper be debated and approved before any treaty is embarked upon. We do not know what the treaty will contain. The invitation to promoters suggests that it will probably contain a guarantee that there will be no interference by the Government in pricing policy. Does that mean that the successful bidder would be able to abuse a monopoly position? We also need to be sure, before the treaty is signed, that there is no suggestion that the work might have to be completed with public money or some other subsidy. The Minister has given that pledge, but I prefer to see these things in writing. I believe that for the Secretary of State to bind this or any other Government to treaty obligations without those obligations being debated and approved by Parliament is too much even for the present Government to exact from their compliant Back Benchers.

We agree about the need to provide the widest possible scope for objections to be heard, but the Select Committee also expressed other worries. For instance, it said that there should be a proper study of the effect on offshore islands, sand movements and variable current patterns in the Channel. I am not sure how that can be done while the link is being built. All these other serious considerations make the case for a public inquiry even stronger. Indeed, in the light of those comments, the Select Committee's recommendation that there should not be a public inquiry seems to be at odds with its own evidence.

There are advantages and disadvantages with a fixed link. A faster, more reliable link is certainly attractive in terms of tourism and trade, and it is argued that the impact on our economic and social life could be beneficial, but many people within and outside the House are not persuaded that these matters have been properly assessed. I believe that it is better to reach the right decision with the widest public participation and knowledge than to reach the wrong decision in haste and have to repent at leisure. When we debated proposals for the Okehampton bypass recently, several hon. Members, some of whom are here today, insisted that the route could not possibly be shifted from the south to the north of Okehampton without a full public inquiry because—and I was chastised by the Secretary of State—that would be attempting to ride roughshod over the rights of individuals. How then can we take a decision of such magnitude as the fixed link, which will affect the whole country, without a full public inquiry? I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby today to make it clear that we must have a public inquiry so as to arrive at a reasoned decision.

5.19 pm

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): I find myself on tenuous common ground with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) in welcoming this debate. I cannot pretend that the subject has not been keenly debated in east Kent. I am, however, old-fashioned enough to believe that this is the place to develop a complex case and deliver a considered view. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North has had a difficult job to reconcile the various interests in his party and I admire the dexterity with which he has endeavoured to reconcile the views of the National Union of Seamen and the National Union of Railwaymen. However, I found his speech curiously unsatisfactory and I was left a little uncertain as to the exact official position of the Labour party on this issue.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Speak for Dover.

Mr. Prescott: Speak for Dover.

Mr. Rees: Yes, I intend to speak for Dover. I hope I will evoke an echo from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) who has a keen interest in maritime matters. I do not know how these questions affect the hon. Gentleman, but he may catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the debate, and show his deep understanding of maritime matters.

I also find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North in offering my respectful congratulations to the Select Committee. Although I do not agree with all its conclusions, it has in a short time done a remarkably thorough job.

This subject has exercised a compelling fascination for over two centuries, and in the careers of many hon. Members it has once before become a matter of debate and legislation. Relics of earlier endeavours are to be found almost exclusively in my constituency. I recall vividly the winter of 1974-75, when I stood in the mouth of the tunnel and watched the large boring machine which was about to start work. I have personal and constituency interests in this question.

I also claim, I hope without arrogance, that my constituency is the one most directly affected by this project. This may be a matter of friendly rivalry between myself and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) who I am glad to see assiduously seated in his place. We know he is a stout champion of his constituency interests. We regret that the conventions of public life will deny him the opportunity of giving us his views tonight.

I am aware that this is a national issue. I am not insensitive to the case for having competing and alternative methods of crossing the Channel. As my right hon. Friend the Minister has pointed out, the continental countries of the Community are our biggest and fastest developing export market. It must be right to equip our exporters with the most effective and cheapest means of getting their exports into that market. A large proportion of our Armed Forces are stationed on the Rhine and it is right that, in any foreseeable circumstances, there must be the best means of supporting and reinforcing them. However, I shall leave the national issues to other right hon. and hon. Members, as I wish to concentrate on the effects upon east Kent, on the questions on which I and so many of my constituents will need reassurance.

The first issue is the future of the ferries, which the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North dealt with in a remarkably

[Mr. Rees]

cursory fashion despite the powerful assistance at his right hand from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. This issue has to be considered against the background of the contraction of the merchant marine. I would be out of order if I were to develop that interesting and important theme.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): It is a national issue.

Mr. Rees: The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) will return to that in his closing remarks and perhaps go beyond the question of a public inquiry.

I believe that the crossing of the Channel should not become the monopoly right of one means of transport. I hope that that will find a sympathetic echo from right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Front Bench. I recall the position in which the Government considered the European Ferries bid some years ago for one of the rival operators. It is crucial for the good of the country that there should not be a tendency to a monopoly, that there should be ample scope for the ferries and that there should be fair competition. Whichever form of fixed link crossing is chosen by the French and British Governments, if, indeed, one is, they should not be permitted or encouraged to embark on a policy of predatory pricing which might drive the ferries away from Dover. It is important that the high standards of safety which are rightly expected of the ferries should also be expected of the operators of any form of fixed link.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is sensitive to the issue of the environment and I look forward to welcoming him to my constituency in a few days time. My constituency contains the fairest coastline of any part of Britain. That may be the most controversial contribution I shall make to this debate. It is important that, when my hon. Friend the Minister chooses the form of fixed link, it will not devastate the white cliffs, or make a hideous inroad into Shakespeare cliff, and that the downlands behind are protected.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister assures me of the improvement of the A2, the M20 and the A20. I remind the House that Dover is one of the few major ports —it is the major roll-on/roll-off port—which does not have a direct connection from a motorway right to the gates of the port. If this great project goes ahead, will my right hon. Friend the Minister be able to assure me that the A2-M2 will be improved to serve Dover harbour? Can he assure me that, as soon as the decision has been taken on the fixed link, the M20-A20 extension will be approved and its routeing and connection determined?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am exceedingly grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. Is he aware that the *Folkestone, Hythe and District Herald* has been running a questionnaire of its readers as the paper is concerned that the public's views should be known? The public were asked what would be the effect of the fixed link on the towns. Two thousand three hundred and thirty five returned the questionnaire. Two per cent. said it would have a good effect and 98 per cent. thought it would have a bad effect in Dover.

Mr. Rees: I am sure that the hon. Lady will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in due course.

Mr. Prescott: She is speaking for Dover.

Mr. Rees: I was aware that the hon. Lady had had an opportunity to visit my constituency, but she was then as equivocal as the hon. Member for Aberdeen North on the central issue. It is all very well to scratch about in the local press, but we would like her direct view. The *Folkestone, Hythe and District Herald* may have a modest sale in Dover but it does not have quite the same salt as the *Dover Express* or the *East Kent Mercury*. If the hon. Lady revisits my constituency, she will learn where to put her trust and where to form her views.

We are anxious about lateral communications, which are more the responsibility of Kent county council. Its initial costing of the likely improvements necessary is about £75 million. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider with tenderness, sympathy and generosity any case that it might advance.

Rail links are essentially a national issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) played a notable role in the last project and will no doubt voice his fears on this aspect of the project. There is a fear, which I hope is not well justified, that when there is a fixed link and a fast rail connection between the metropolitan cities of France and Britain, the concerns of people living on each side will be overlooked. It is important that the same level of services to Dover, Thanet and Canterbury is maintained or even improved.

It will not have escaped the attention of those hon. Members who have considered the issue that our French neighbours are pouring considerable resources into the Pas de Calais. That is partly explained because, I believe, it is a depressed area, and because, legitimately, there is friendly rivalry between the Pas de Calais and east Kent. They hope, properly, to take advantage of any fixed link that is built to draw industrial and economic activity there rather than to leave it to develop in east Kent, where I believe it should be. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends and others concerned with these matters will devote considerable attention to our anxiety on that score. Perhaps on some other occasion I may develop the case for turning Dover into an enterprise zone or a freeport. There will of course be rivalry from both sides of the House for similar attentions, but as Dover will bear the brunt of any fixed link, its prospects for development and growth should be safeguarded. It should not be merely a site for construction and construction workers during any building phase.

The need for a public inquiry has exercised the minds of many. Justice demands that all those with a legitimate interest which might be affected by the project should be permitted to give their evidence and have it weighed and evaluated by a body independent of the Executive. A hybrid Bill might meet that test, as there would be a Select Committee of this House and another Select Committee of the other place. There is some anxiety on this score; I remember pressing the point on a Labour Transport Minister in the 1974 Government. The restrictions and limitations on those who might give evidence to such a Select Committee should be drawn generously. The rules of relevance should not be drawn so tightly that those with a genuine point to make are shut out. I hope that my right hon. Friend will insist upon any successful consortium entering into consultation and negotiation with local authorities and other interested parties about the likely course of its operations. On that basis, justice could be done on that score as well. It is a matter of considerable concern in east Kent and, I believe, elsewhere.

Mr. Ridley: The Court of Referees decides status in conjunction with any Select Committee, so it is beyond the Government's hand to decide who will appear before a hybrid Bill Select Committee. I give the undertaking that the Government will not try in any way to restrict or reduce those who have status, in so far as it is within our power to do so. It will be a matter for the House.

Mr. Rees: I am grateful for that assurance. I am a little unclear about whether the Government would be regarded as the promoter or whether the promoter will be the successful consortium. I believe that the promoter has a certain standing in this matter. If it is the Government, I hope that they will be generous and allow a wide range of interests to present their case. If the promoter is the successful consortium, I hope that my right hon. Friend will impose a condition on it not to take a too restrictive view.

The previous hybrid Bill on this topic was introduced by the 1974 Labour Government. I have turned up the relevant records and find that I pressed Ministers on the point that I have just made. I also found that, on 26 November 1974, the late Anthony Crosland, for whom all of us had a great regard and respect, was pressed about a public inquiry. He said:

"In my view this is not a subject which ought to be farmed out to a conventional public inquiry. This is a subject on which the final decision can be taken in only one place, and that is in Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1974; Vol. 882, c. *248*.]

He rejected a public inquiry.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the right hon. and learned Member concede that the late Anthony Crosland initiated many public inquiries and that the hybrid Bill of 1974 was on a much smaller scale and had limited application, whereas this one embraces four schemes?

Mr. Rees: We do not know. The hon. Gentleman is anticipating which scheme will find favour with the French and British Governments.

Mr. Hughes: No, I am not.

Mr. Rees: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue.

The general principle is as stated by Anthony Crosland. My basic principle is that the evidence should be given freely to and evaluated by a body independent of the Executive. No body is more independent of the Executive than a Select Committee of this House or a Select Committee of the other place. If, by his slightly tawdry request for a public inquiry, the hon. Gentlman means an inquiry undertaken by an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, he will remember that such an inspector reports to the Secretary of State, who takes the final decision. I do not believe that that is what the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's difficulties on this great issue. The distinguished great grandfather of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said that it was the duty of an Opposition to oppose. However, the Opposition have to be a little more fastidious about their grounds for opposing the Government. If anything were to put me into the same Lobby as the Government, it is the Opposition's rather shabby behaviour.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Try harder.

Mr. Rees: Allow me to state my position. Many issues will remain unresolved tonight. That is inevitable, as no decision as to the form of fixed link has been taken yet. However, to emphasise the legitimate concern of many of my constituents and myself and to emphasise the importance that I attach to the issues that I have outlined, I cannot do other than vote against the Government's position tonight.

5.40 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): I think that we all had a great deal of sympathy with the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) in the dilemma in which he found himself. I congratulate him on the eloquence which he deployed in his struggle to get off its horns. I can only tell him that his difficulties were very apparent to my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have no doubt that they were to Conservative Members.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) opened the debate on behalf of the Opposition, he referred, rightly, to the short time that the existence of the debate has been known to the House and the country. We are all well aware that the Department of Transport's press office was telling us a short time ago that there would be no such debate as there was no need for one. Suddenly, the Leader of the House, whose judgment can be extremely wise, decided that the issue should be aired. Nevertheless, notice has been short. I am not making a point against the Secretary of State for Transport necessarily——

Mr. Anderson: Why not?

Mr. Silkin: I shall make my observations in due course. My hon. Friend need not worry about that. A two-day debate would have been rather better, and the fact that 28 right hon. and hon. Members wish to contribute to this debate rather reinforces that view.

Short notice was a problem that the Select Committee on Transport had also to face. I cannot take up the praise that the right hon. and learned Member for Dover lavished on the Transport Committee. The Committee was given 16 days in which to produce a report and its report shows every mark of having been produced in ill haste and without proper consideration having been given. Paragraph 16 of the report reads:

"The Committee has not been able, nor indeed has it attempted, to subject either the technical, economic or financial aspects of the proposals to the kind of detailed scrutiny which is appropriate for a project of such magnitude and significance".

However, 16 days later it thought that it was capable of giving its decision.

At paragraph 28.6 the Select Committee sets out in detail the organisations which have complained about lack of consultation. The list includes quite powerful and prestigious groups such as the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation, Friends of the Earth, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and Transport 2000. All these organisations have stressed the need for a public inquiry. The Select Committee gives no reasons for not being in favour of a public inquiry beyond the fact that

"the idea of a fixed Channel link is not new".

On that basis, one would want no discussion at all. Apparently the Secretary of State is entirely unaware—he had to be informed of the fact by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross)—that any ensuing jobs might not come to our people. The jobs in question might go to

[Mr. Silkin]

those abroad. I asked the right hon. Gentleman about the number of jobs that would be available—I thought that he must have made some assessment of the number, even in global terms—or that would be lost as a result of the project, and he was unable to answer my question. He said that that information would come out later as investigations took place. Where is the best place to investigate such matters? There is no question that the best place to air such considerations would be at a public inquiry.

When the right hon. and learned Member for Dover quoted my friend Tony Crosland—he was a friend of many of us—he deliberately slurred over one important word. Tony Crosland said that he was against the idea of a conventional public inquiry. The idea of an inspector treating the construction of a Channel link as a small planning matter that should go ultimately to the Minister for his decision is obviously inappropriate. I am well aware of that because at one time I had ministerial responsibilities for planning. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, would not have considered allowing such a project to go ahead without a public inquiry. Indeed, my right hon. Friend instituted the Windscale inquiry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: And there was Sizewell.

Mr. Silkin: Indeed, but my right hon. Friend was not responsible for that. The Select Committee on Transport was guilty of unseemly haste. It galloped through the exercise in 16 days. That was asking for trouble and I suspect that trouble is what it will get.

If the process of consultation has been zero, which it has, should not full information have been made available to the whole country? The Secretary of State has tried to tell us that it was, but many of us think otherwise. National newspapers, *Folkestone Expresses* and *Dover Expresses* have been quoted, and I shall quote from a journal which perhaps the right hon. Gentleman does not know about but of which he should be aware when he goes on his travels next week. *News in Focus* covers the Tonbridge area, and Tonbridge will be a vital rail link if we have a Channel tunnel, or anything that provides a rail link that leads to the capital.

On 26 November, *News in Focus* undertook, somewhat unusually, a little investigative journalism. It decided to investigate what information was available for the Tonbridge area and found that the only place at which information could be obtained was the legal and administrative department at Tonbridge town hall in Tonbridge. Information could be obtained from that source on request. *News in Focus* made the request and it was supplied with four incomplete brochures, and that was all. That was public consultation.

The journalist who was engaged on this project read through the incomplete brochures. I shall quote from "Euroroute" because it illustrates the point that *News in Focus* was trying to make. The document reads:

"Euroroute devotes some attention to public consultation. Anyone wishing to test that premise would find it difficult. There is no address to which comments can be sent. Neither is there a comments book on hand in which to register approval or disapproval".

The Department of Transport can be acquitted on that score. At the place to which one goes to be consulted, there is a book in which comments can be written. It seems that not very many members of the public have been "consulted". When I asked the messengers to take me to the consultation area, they burst into laughter. They told me that a few members of the public had made a similar request and that most of them had written in the comments book. I do not suppose that the Secretary of State has visited the Department's consultation area, so I shall inform him and the House of the comments that have been made.

The first comment takes the form of a question and asks, "Is this a joke?". The second comment is, "An insult to intelligence". The third quote is "Sham" and the fourth is "Very poor". The fifth comment reads "Dear Minister, this is a farce", and the sixth states "As a means of providing information to the general public on a matter of obvious public concern, this is pathetic".

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): I have never heard of the newspaper from which the right hon. Gentleman has quoted. Secondly, is he aware that Maidstone is the county town of Kent, and that all information that could possibly be required by him or anyone in the Tonbridge area could be readily obtained in Maidstone, both from the county hall and the town hall? If people go to the wrong place, it is not surprising that they get the wrong information.

Mr. Silkin: I think that the hon. Gentleman is quite right. The journalist of *News in Focus* telephoned the Department of Transport to ask where he could find the information that had been made available. He was told that it was available in Maidstone, Dover and Folkestone. The Department's spokesman added that he could find the information everywhere in Kent, including Tonbridge. The hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) has told us that he has never heard of *News in Focus*, and it may be that he has not heard of the Department of Transport either.

The room in which the Department has its public consultation material — this was the cause of much ribald laughter on the part of the Department's messengers —is 11 ft. by 8 ft. There were three summaries of the scheme. Apparently the one on the bridge has been stolen. I asked when it would be replaced and the answer was never. To compensate for this lack of information on the schemes, there are over 50 copies of *Mobile and Holiday Homes*. I regret to tell hon. Members who wish to see the exhibition that they are in for a disappointment. It closed on Friday. They cannot see it today.

I have no doubt that hon. Members will refer to defence, economics, employment and health. We are limited in time so I shall restrict myself to the environmental factors that arise. We cannot limit this matter by saying that it is a national matter, and that we should therefore forget environmental factors because they only affect people locally. They are the heritage of us all. The coast that the right hon. and learned Member for Dover and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry have the honour to represent is known as the heritage coast, because it is the heritage of each one of us.

The Select Committee on Transport when it was dealing with the environment correctly analysed the matter not as between one group and another, but as between one site and another. However, it missed the most important point of conservation. First, it dealt with the Shakespeare

cliff. The four schemes deal with that area. I do not know whether there are bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover, but if any of the schemes gets going there will be a hell of a mess underneath the cliffs and it will not be the bluebirds' fault; it will be the fault of all the work that will have been done there. That is clear from every report. There is no doubt that it is our heritage that is being destroyed and broken into.

There are a number of sites involved. One of them is Dungeness. It is one of the best known bird sanctuaries. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds regards it as an extremely important site for that reason.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Dungeness is best known as a reserve for nuclear power stations.

Mr. Silkin: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen to me because there is an important point here of which I do not think he is aware. It is important that the site be considered environmentally and that Euroroute considers it. It says that the RSPB does not object to Euroroute's plan for spoil disposal, which could, of course, destroy bird life altogether. That has been denied by the RSPB. It says that it objects to the scheme and has told Euroroute so. The RSPB says that the Channel Tunnel Group approached it and asked whether it had any objection and it said that it had. The Channel Tunnel Group does not refer to that point in its report. At least it does not tell the untruth that Euroroute tells. If Euroroute is prepared to tell that untruth, how many other untruths are included in the schemes? That is something with which a public inquiry might have the chance to deal.

Another environmental point is one that the Secretary of State never mentioned. He has perhaps never heard of it. It is marine pollution. The tunnel spoil—the figures are quoted in the reports—amounts to 4 million cu m. If we study what the Channel Tunnel Group says, we can see that it does not have the faintest idea of what to do with 1 million cu m of spoil. One of the options that it rejects is to put it into the sea. The effect of that would be appalling. It says that it will not do that. When the economic pressures begin to be a little strong, when it is trying to cut corners and save money—it has been done before—it might do so.

In addition, the seepage results in the loss of 33 million litres of brackish water a day. That is about 7·25 million gallons. There is no suggestion of how that is to be coped with. It is seeping out the whole time and destroying marine life.

The Channel Tunnel Group mentions one other matter in paragraph 5.3.2:

"The possibility of hazardous freight spillage means that chemicals potentially harmful to the marine environment could also be discharged from the work area."

All those points are mentioned. The problems are known. Nowhere does it say what the solutions are, because they are not known. Those matters may all be taken care of in due course. They are all strong arguments for holding a public inquiry.

The final point relates to fish. There does not appear to be an input from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and it is rather important that there should be. The most important fisheries laboratory is at Burnham-on-Crouch. It has experience only of the small amount of sand displacement that comes with dredging. It has experimented on that but not on anything of the scale that we are discussing.

There are redeeming features. At paragraph 7.63 Euroroute tells us:

"Because currents in the centre of the Straits of Dover are strong and the bottom is smooth and scoured, sedentary organisms"—

that means cockles, mussels, whelks and so on—

"living along one coast may be unable to reach the opposite one even if their mobile larval stages have a long enough free-swimming life. Piers of the bridge section crossing inshore waters may not only provide additional solid surfaces for the attachment of marine organisms already present, but also stepping stones towards the opposite coast."

Think of it, all the cockles and whelks from Britain will be able to go on package holidays to France and vice versa. Is that serious or does it come from Alice in Wonderland? I think that it is Alice in Wonderland and that the Secretary of State has probably forgotten the "lobster quadrille":

> "'What matters it how far we go',
> His scaly friend replied.
> 'There is another shore you know
> Upon the other side.
> The further off from England,
> The nearer is to France'."

It is astonishing. When a serious study of fish is done, what about this:

"Further study will be required to establish the importance of this stretch."—

that relates to the heritage coast—

"as a spawning area for plaice and sole."

No one knows what damage will be done. Euroroute continues:

"Figure 7.5 shows the distribution of the major spawning grounds (of herring) in the region of the Straits of Dover as they were in the period of the 1950s and 1960s."

There is no more recent information.

In 1976, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) well recalls, he and I had to take unilateral, national action to stop the complete destruction of herring. The subsequent Tory Government gave up the unilateral right. We no longer have it. After an absolute ban of some years the herring is beginning to recover and return. What will be done with it now if we go ahead with the scheme? No one knows. There is a complete lack of information.

I said that I would avoid matters apart from the environment and I intend to do so, with the exception of one small but rather vital point. A number of us have had some dealings with the French. They contribute much to civilisation and culture, and we love them dearly. However, Silkin's 11th and 12th law of politics tells us this: first, if something is of economic advantage to the French, it is most unlikely that it is of the slightest economic advantage to this country. Secondly, if the French ever find that something turns out not to be of economic advantage to them, they will ruthlessly cut it out, whereas we will go to the end.

I recommend to the Secretary of State for Transport —I am sure that he would enjoy it—a trip to Avignon. There, along the river Rhone stands the bridge of St. Bénézet, abandoned half-way across the river because of its appalling cost—a reminder of a vainglorious project which ran out of money long before it reached the other side of the water.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The House will be aware that a large number of hon. Members wish to speak. I repeat Mr. Speaker's appeal for brevity.

5.59 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I shall do my best to follow your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall come straight to the point and declare myself to be a total agnostic on the Channel fixed link question. I make no ideological stand. I do not regard a Channel fixed link as a necessary symbol of Britain's commitment to the European Community—indeed, it would be a highly expensive symbol—nor, conversely, does our continuing failure to build such a Channel fixed link guarantee our national independence. I take a simple and down-to-earth approach. I shall ask a number of questions.

Will a Channel fixed link improve significantly the efficiency and comfort, and reduce the cost, of the transportation of people and freight between the myriad of places in the United Kingdom and the myriad of places on the mainland of Europe to which one might be minded to go or to move freight? How reliable would such a fixed link be? What are the security risks? What are the dangers of monopoly pricing? That last question is one that the Select Committee did not consider in any detail. Will the fixed link create undesirable side effects? What will be the effect on the environment? The right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) dealt with a few of those aspects. Above all, who will pay?

I need not remind the House that one does not get a Channel bridge or tunnel for free. Even if the Treasury refuses to back the proposal, the nation will still pay. I therefore ask an obvious question which is often ignored because it is so obvious: what is wrong with the current cross-Channel services by air and, above all, by sea? I look forward to an improvement in sea passage due to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in getting free cabotage rights for British coastal vessels along the EEC coast. The right hon. Member for Deptford was right about the French in this regard. If they wish to improve communications, they should immediately give us cabotage rights along the French coast.

What is the matter with our present arrangements? The ferry companies have a good record. They have continued to offer a wide range of services geared to the changing needs of their different customers 364 days a year through 11 ports in Britain and 16 in continental Europe. In their document "Flexilink", which we have all received in recent days, the ferry companies have stated the opportunities that are open to them for further development, provided we do not go ahead with a major fixed link. Obviously, it would be rash of the ferry companies to put capital into improving ferry services if there is to be a major new competitor.

I remind the House of what our former colleague Keith Wickenden told the Select Committee on Transport in 1981. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Deptford would not be more censorious about that much more thorough inquiry than he has been about the current one. The report states that Mr. Wickenden

"showed considerable confidence in the ability of existing modes to cope with increased traffic and drew attention to the greatly improved efficiency of the latest generation of cross-Channel ferries which would lead both to greater profitability and a greater ability to compete with other services, including a fixed link."

Mr. Adley: Surprise, surprise.

Sir David Price: The current Select Committee on Transport has discovered that that is exactly what has been happening. What Keith Wickenden said four years ago is happening now. We do not have a static situation. Improvement is not dependent on the establishment of a fixed link. It is important for the House to recognise that, if a fixed link is operated successfully, most of our ferry services would cease to be commercially viable. Of course, if it is not operated successfully, a fixed link would be an unmitigated disaster.

Lest there be any doubt about what I am saying, I invite the House to look at the handout from Mr. Sherwood who is the promoter not only of ferries but of one of the four options offered to us. He states:

"British Ferries believes that no multi-purpose ferries will survive the competition of the Channel Expressway on the routes between south-east England and the Ostend-Boulogne range of ports, although small day tripper boats offering duty free goods might find a limited market."

Let us be under no illusions—if we go ahead with any of the current fixed link proposals, we shall on the whole be saying goodbye to our ferry services, with all that that entails not only for our merchant marine but for back-up for our defence forces.

Who wants to go from Dover to Calais? Unlike our late lamented Queen Mary Tudor, I suspect that few of us when we go for our post mortems will be found to have the word "Calais" engraved on our hearts. Surely we want something very different. We want to improve the efficiency and convenience of a multitude of journeys, actual and potential, at lower real cost and greater convenience between a great range of starting points in Britain and an even greater range of destinations on the mainland of Europe. For many such journeys currently undertaken, Dover and Calais are irrelevant, so why create unnecessarily a Dover-Calais funnel through which most of the freight and people crossing the Channel will have to be squeezed? I sympathise with the good people of Kent in their apprehensions about the consequences on them of this geographical corset. I have yet to be convinced that my constituents in Eastleigh will travel cheaper, quicker or more comfortably through the corset of Dover and Calais than by the existing air and ferry services.

Although I clearly remain unconvinced — being unpersuaded — of the overwhelming merits of any particular scheme for a fixed link connection, I shall not deny to the proponents of individual fixed link schemes the right to make their case. If their case is overwhelming, it would be wrong for us not to afford them the necessary legislation. That is why I was able to agree with the views of my colleagues on the Select Committee on Transport in 1981 when the report stated:

"If it can be demonstrated that a fixed link could be profitable and would lead to increased competition and improved services to passengers and freight operators, we see no reason why Parliament or the Government should stand in its way. Although it should not be the function of Parliament to give subsidised support to a new form of Channel crossing which would undermine the profitability of existing modes, it is equally not the role of Parliament to prevent the development of new modes which would fairly compete with existing operators, even if some existing operators were to suffer in consequence."

Nothing has happened in the past four years to change my judgment of that evaluation of the way in which we should all look at these schemes.

I think that we could all agree that there is no overwhelming case—at least I have not read one yet—in favour of any of the proposals. Bridges are clearly not on. The idea of bridges across the Channel push the current state of the bridge building art beyond reasonable risk. The

Eurobridge would be three times the length of the longest suspension bridge at present open anywhere in the world, crossing one of the most heavily used and liveliest seaways in the world. As far as I am concerned, the Eurobridge proposal is strictly for the birds.

The same applies to the splendidly eccentric idea of the Euroroute. The kindest thing that I can do for that proposal is to invite the promoters to study the Goodwin sands, learn what happens to islands and sand banks in the English Channel and learn about the ability of mariners —recorded since the days of Julius Caesar—to pile on them.

This leaves only the Channel tunnel project and the Channel Expressway as starters, but I believe that they should remain just that—starters.

I realise that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will have to meet President Mitterrand and settle which project, if any, both Governments would support. I suggest that she might find the following lines from one of Voltaire's discourses helpful:

"First character: "Il faut que je vive'"—

I must live—

"Second character: 'Je n'en vois la necessité'"—

I do not see the necessity. That is my view on all four proposals. Je n'en vois la necessité—I do not see the necessity.

6.10 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I have found today's speeches bitterly disappointing. Where is the spirit of Brunel? I support the fixed Channel link, although I should prefer it to be a rail-only link, as I said in 1974. The late Tony Crosland said then that that was not realistic and that we must have a car element. That is one of the schemes which is still before us.

I recognise that, since the project is to be built with private money, it is not acceptable to promote a rail-only scheme. I accept the conditions set by the Government and I support the creation of a fixed link to France. A permanent thoroughfare between our islands and Europe is in the best economic interests of our country. That applies not only to the south-east but to every part of our country — the north-east, Scotland, the north-west, Northern Ireland, Wales and even the Isle of Wight.

I should like the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) to stand with me on a miserable Sunday afternoon at the bottom of Highgate hill and Archway so that we can watch the lorries merging from all parts of the country. They pour down the route to Dover. We are presented with an opportunity to put that traffic on rail.

As a member of the Select Committee on Transport, I had the advantage of having attended explanatory presentations of the four schemes which meet the two Governments' guidelines. I was unable to be present at the final meeting, which was rushed. Two of us were missing. I confirm that I support the majority recommendation, as did the other missing Member, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris). There was thus a seven to four split in favour of the Channel Tunnel Company's scheme.

That does not mean that I did not find much to attract me in the Channel Expressway proposal. A drive-through tunnel has much to recommend it if it is technically feasible, particularly in relation to the damage to the Kent countryside — although, even with that proposal, a substantial holding area will be necessary in the event of accident, bad weather or breakdown and for customs and duty-free facilities.

The Sunday papers give the Sherwood scheme a substantial boost but the Committee did not make that its first choice, on expert advice. We were told:

"Even for the most optimistic expectations for control of traffic, fluctuations will cause variations in air flow at the intermediate ventilation shaft and the proposals are right to the limit of capacity without allowance for that effect. Detailed examination of the scheme would almost certainly expose other deficiencies, including effects of links between the two tunnels (stated to be at 500 metres intervals) unless these are totally closed."

The Secretary of State's experts will have to examine that. No 31-mile long road-only tunnel exists. The proposed tunnel is at least double the length of any similar existing tunnel. The proposition must be thoroughly investigated.

The estimated cost relative to other suggested schemes is questionable. The original concept has changed from a pair of joint-based tunnels for rail and road to separate tunnels for each, including a twin rail tunnel, which is certainly a great improvement. That proposition was not put to the Select Committee.

The fixed Channel link should offer a great opportunity to our much-maligned railway industry. I hope that we receive firm assurances today that no scheme will be approved unless it provides at the outset for a through rail connection to be built and to be in operation by not later than the opening of the roadway. Euroroute did not originally make such a promise, although it has changed its ground since October.

There appears to be a £100 million gap between the BR/SNCF proposal and the requirements of Euroroute. That must be filled somehow.

I see a real chance for the revitalisation of our rail network through a direct link into Europe, both for passengers and freight. However, we must ensure that British Rail has adequate capital resources to compete on equal terms with the French who have invested so much more in their rail network in recent years.

A recent *Guardian* article was headed:

"Anger as British Rail puts Chunnel into siding."

It stated:

"Whichever option is chosen British Rail will have to invest a further £350 million in new rolling stock and station facilities at Ashford in Kent, and Waterloo."

The article points out some of the charges which promoters will expect to receive from British Rail. We need to know whether the Government intend to provide adequate resources for British Rail above those which have already been provided under the present limitation on capital expenditure which reduces year by year. We hope that British Rail will be able to regard this as separate business on which it can rely for further Government assistance.

British Rail designers must be able to match the French all the way, or we might face another takeover bid. That might involve looking to private builders and British Rail leasing back. We must get our fair share of what is on offer and not hand it on a plate to the French.

As the Secretay of State admitted, contracts involving about 1 million ecus will have to go out to tender under EEC rules. British firms should be in the best position to obtain those contracts, but they will face competition. I expect our contractors to win because they are on the spot, but the contracts have to be offered and that proviso must be made.

[Mr. Stephen Ross]

Local consultation is a difficult question. I agree with the Select Committee that a public inquiry on the lines of Sizewell is a non-starter. That was the view of the late Tony Crosland who, none the less, announced in 1974 that all relevant objectors to the proposal should be heard by the Committee. The Select Committee on Transport strongly recommends the same procedure this time, and I support that view. Paragraph 27 of our report set that out.

We have heard speeches on the issue from the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and others. The citizens of Kent are extremely worried, rightly, as are politicians and prospective candidates in that part of the country. Their anxiety is understandable. When the Secretary of State visits Folkestone and Dover next week, he will see for himself the scale of the concern. Many questions will be put to him, particularly about environmental matters.

I appreciate that the Secretary of State went a long way in his speech today to try to reassure us and to explain exactly how the rights of petitioners will be protected under the hybrid Bill procedure.

I wish to put to the right hon. Gentleman the proposal made by John Macdonald, QC, a prospective candidate for Folkestone. He suggested to the Select Committee that a limited local inquiry be set up. He recommended that a person such as the chairman of the Bar Council or a lawyer of comparable experience should be appointed to conduct the inquiry. He said that 20 days should be set aside for the evidence. He thought that that would be sufficient time to test the proposals submitted.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The hon. Gentleman has, rightly, expressed the concern of people living in the coastal area of Kent and others who will be directly affected. What reassurance can he give to those who have worries about what will happen to the economy of the north-east of England and of Scotland as a result of these developments?

Mr. Ross: I thought I had dealt with that. The building of this link will improve the economy of Great Britain Limited. It is time that we got on with schemes of this sort. One need only think of some of the great schemes of the last century that were good for our economy. The Prime Minister claims to want a return to Victorian ideals. There were some great engineers in the last century, and I am willing to back their modern counterparts to the hilt. I began my remarks by urging the nation to return to the spirit of Brunel. The benefits from this link will wash off into Scotland and the north-east, from where the greatest engineers come. There will be work for all.

We could conduct a short sharp inquiry which would at least give local people the chance to express their views. That would be preferable to asking people to come to this building and sit in a corridor in the House of Lords waiting to be called. That is a frightening experience, as I know from the remarks of constituents of mine who have done just that. We are suggesting that a barrister or other senior lawyer should be appointed to conduct an inquiry, with legal aid available to those who wish to make representations. Such an inquiry, if it started in January, could be over by 31 March.

As a leading article in *The Observer* rightly pointed out yesterday:

"Having decided to fix the link, let's give ourselves time to pick the best way."

I would add to that: and to give what assurance we can, not only to local people but to people throughout Britain who fear that, once again, all the investment will go to what they claim to be the wealthy south-east. In fact, it is not all that wealthy. For example, unemployment in my constituency is near 18 per cent. and places such as Margate are suffering greatly from unemployment.

In the long run, a fixed rail and road link will help this country's economy. I do not take the view that the ferry services from the north-east, the east coast and Portsmouth and Plymouth will close. They will remain, although what will happen in Dover, Folkestone and Margate is in the lap of the gods. It is understandable that the people in those areas should worry about whether they will lose their jobs. I hope that, when the Secretary of State visits those constituencies next week, he will listen to their fears and try to allay them. If a short, sharp local inquiry is needed, let us give ourselves time to conduct one.

6.22 pm

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I agree with the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) that there are fears about the local consultation process, although I do not accept that the sort of local inquiry he has in mind would be the answer. I cannot imagine such an inquiry being completed in 20 days; 200 days would be nearer the time required. I have a few suggestions to make about the way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport might solve some of the problems.

I hope that we are not wasting our time by debating the issue now. I have been worried by some press reports and even by some of the Prime Minister's bullish remarks that seem to give the impression that it is all over bar the shouting and that a decision in principle has been made.

If we are to have assessors of the competence and calibre of Freeman Fox and Schroders, to name but two, it is clear that the Department of Transport and the House will wish to take fully into account their findings on the environmental impact, the financial and technical consequences and the other criteria that the Government have laid down for the differing schemes. It would be inconceivable that, if they found that all the schemes did not match up to those criteria, the Government would bulldoze the House into accepting a scheme that did not meet their criteria.

When the assessments have been concluded with the Department of Transport, I hope that the findings will be available for public scrutiny in a digested form — I accept that there will be a great mass of paper—perhaps as appendices to the White Paper that will be issued. The country has a right to see what the independent experts say about the four schemes. We are entitled to that information, not least because, as taxpayers, we are paying for the assessments.

I have a strong complaint to make. Other hon. Members have referred to the issue, but not in as strong a way as I propose to cavil about it. My complaint is that the promoters are moving the goal posts, although the game has already started. I received, dated 31 October, a great deal of information from the various promoters. It was also, of course, sent to the Secretary of State. The information on the Sealink Channel Expressway—what I say applies to other schemes, too—stated on the first page of the submission to my right hon. Friend:

"British Ferries Limited, the promoters of the scheme, considered carefully the options of constructing independent single or double-track tunnels to accommodate rail traffic, but at the end of the day the economic case for combining rail and road in the same tunnels was too compelling to choose one of the separate rail tunnel options."

We all know what has happened since then. Indeed, on the evening of 13 November, several of my hon. Friends and I had dinner with Mr. Sherwood, the chairman of that company, at which he gave assurances — we have received similar assurances from other people—that the various submissions had been sent in. But there have now been changes.

The important point is not that hon. Members have been misled. My remarks apply equally to the Euroroute proposals which originally provided for a submerged rail tunnel some years after the building of a bridge, whereas now apparently it is to be a bored tunnel at the same time as the building of a bridge. Both Channel Expressway's and Euroroute's schemes may be better than the schemes originally envisaged, but Kent county council and my constituents have been assessing the schemes on the basis of what they were told in the 31 October submissions. The Kent county surveyor, reporting on the not unimportant business of the disposal of spoil, said:

"Channel Expressway have a far greater spoil disposal problem, some 6·5 million cubic metres. No firm proposals are made, and the cursory attention to this enormous problem in logistics as to train transportation (10 trains a day for four years?), let alone disposal locations, is unsatisfactory. Expectations of possible chalk quarry filling or to former aggregate workings at Dungeness are inadequately examined and could result in very significant adverse environmental impact from the activity."

That was said before it was proposed to bore a separate rail tunnel, which means that that company has doubled its spoil problem.

I trust that the environmental impact assessments that are being carried out by the Department are taking into account the latest proposals that have come in after 31 October for Euroroute, Expressway and for any changes in other routes that other promoters may have made. It is difficult for our constituents, who are trying to grapple with these major problems in a short time, particularly the local authorities, to get to grips with the issues involved when such significant changes are being proposed.

I make these remarks not to knock a particular scheme but to show that some hon. Members and our constituents feel that we are being bulldozed into agreeing to something simply to meet an international date that has been fixed irrespective of the merits of the scheme. As the Minister who moved the original tunnel measure 11 years ago and who believes basically in the concept of a fixed link, subject to some strong and important reservations, I claim that what is happening in connection with those changes is fundamentally wrong.

What questions should we be asking in considering the various schemes? The first question is whether a scheme is needed, when in the first eight months of this year 520,000 heavy lorries went through Dover. Those of us who live in Kent know only too well that that number is increasing all the time. There has been an enormous growth in car and lorry traffic.

Secondly, we must ask whether, if we are to have a scheme, it should result in a monopoly or whether there should be competition. Any scheme that drives surface routes away from, say, Newhaven to Harwich would result in a monopoly situation, and that would not be in anybody's interest, least of all that of the consumer and British industry.

Thirdly, are we sure that no public money is involved? Extra investment will be needed outside the particular links. My figure for the rail investment for British Rail is £390 million. I want a 100 per cent. secure financial guarantee from the promoters that if, for whatever reason, they have to abandon the scheme there will be enough money to abandon it safely and properly. This must be looked at, and no doubt is being looked at, by the Department of Transport.

We hope that the links can provide a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week service unaffected by weather and the problems in the Channel to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and others have referred. There would be a substantial advantage in maintaining the continuity of service. We sometimes forget that transport is an extension of the production lines of our industries, and that we must export to live.

I say to my hon. Friend the Minister, as I did when he came to Ashford, that whether or not we like it, and whether or not a link comes, the existing road system in Kent needs massive improvement. I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said about the M20 and the A20. The east-west communications, particularly the A259 and the A2070, are inadequate. I draw the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the answer that I had from another Department of Transport Minister on 20 November showing that there will be no improvement to all major roads from the east to the west of Kent, and that any plans are in suspension. The Brighton bypass, the Hastings bypass and the Eastbourne bypass are planned as far as the Kent border, and then nothing.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) can amply testify to the need for improvements in the road system from his experience of dealing with the problems in his constituency, just as I have to deal with such problems in my constituency. The improvement of the A28 — the Hastings, Tenterden, Ashford, Canterbury route—is not the answer, as my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) will know, unless we wish to smash many charming Wealden towns and villages.

Any link to get my support must have a substantial rail element. British Rail reckons that it can operate daily through the Channel tunnel or the Expressway route 16 rail freight trains each way. That will be equivalent to transferring from road to rail some 365,000 heavy lorries a year. That is a tremendous prize, with a substantial environmental gain to be won. It is equivalent to about half the annual number of heavy lorries moving through the port of Dover now. I have heard very little about these positive points from the promoters, from British Rail, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or anybody else.

If I have the figures wrong, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will correct me when he makes his winding-up speech. If I have not, these points should be underlined. The employment and development prospects for east Kent could be substantial, particularly in my constituency, if there were to be an international passenger station there. Government help for areas such as Dover—Ashford is the growth point for Kent in the strategy plan—would be an advantage.

[Mr. Keith Speed]

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe, as the House will understand, is unable to speak in this debate because he is a Minister in another Department. However, he has been assiduous on behalf of his constituents. He recognises that any decision will have to be taken in the national interest. We will have to ensure that full weight is given to the impact of the schemes on east Kent, and particularly on Folkestone and Hythe. Environmentally, my hon. and learned Friend believes that the Channel Tunnel Group proposal would inflict considerable damage on the amenities of the affected area, particularly the villages of Newington, Peene and Frogholt. He feels that the Euroroute scheme would have far-reaching consequences for Dungeness and its effect on the fishermen of Dungeness, who are the heirs to an ancient tradition, will be damaging. He believes that the Channel Expressway would do less immediate damage, but there are still many queries about this route. In other words, my hon. and learned Friend, who is my constituency next door neighbour, is saying that there are considerable problems with every one of the links.

My hon. and learned Friend has already negotiated a compensation arrangement with the Channel Tunnel Group to cover the most drastically affected area. If any scheme goes ahead, he will ensure that a careful watch is kept on it, and he will be working hard on the details. As a Minister, he can sometimes be much more effective than Back Benchers, so the rights and safeguards of his constituents can be properly looked after. Those of us who know my hon. and learned Friend and how active he has been so far on behalf of his constituents appreciate that he will discharge his responsibilities well. He is in close touch with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees).

We have talked about this project for a long time. As I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), it is all very well talking about a public inquiry. That would take a long time, and for many individuals the problems of blight would be substantial. Nevertheless, I feel that this rush over the past few weeks and to come over the next few weeks, the substantial changes that have taken place in the schemes and the real fears expressed by the people of Kent show that there is a substantial responsibility on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, his Department and the Government generally. They must ensure that when and if a decision to go ahead is made the fullest possible information, including information from the independent assessors, is provided for the whole country, so that an informed and meaningful debate can take place.

I shall be supporting the Government tonight, but they must not take my further votes for granted, because I shall want to know what the assessors say and what the scheme is. For example, from what I have said it is unlikely that I could support a bridge scheme. We shall have to take both a national and a local view. We must reach a decision. If it is negative, let us forget about it until we are dead and gone, and, if it is positive, let us go ahead and make a success of it.

6.37 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) has given us two speeches for the price of one—he also told us what the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) felt. However, he did not tell us which way the hon. and learned Member would be voting. I suppose that it will be with the Government, at least for tonight.

I agree with the hon. Member for Ashford to this extent. It is highly unsatisfactory that the promoters have been making significant changes in their schemes after the closing date of 31 October and while the Select Committee was taking evidence from them. It is relevant to mention that point in connection with the criticism that has been expressed from both sides of the House about the Government's timetable and the way that they are rushing to take a decision in January. They argue that as we have been thinking about the Channel tunnel for 100 years, we must make up our minds. The retort to that is that, if we have been thinking about it for 100 years, a few months will not make any difference, and if that is so it is extraordinary that, in the past few weeks, the promoters have been making significant changes to their proposals.

I am not persuaded by any of these schemes and will not vote for any of them, whether or not we have a public inquiry. We should have a public inquiry. The arguments from the Secretary of State against one are extraordinary and bite into the whole concept of a public inquiry for planning purposes. He said that developers would not like a public inquiry because it would cause a delay. Speaking as a former planning Minister, I can say that that argument is used by every developer about every public inquiry. They say that if we have a public inquiry it will cause delay and the development will go away.

It was disingenuous of the Secretary of State to suggest that the Government have not made up their mind. Obviously, they have decided that there will be one scheme, even if they have not decided which it will be. The whole tenor of his speech was that there will be a scheme of one sort or another. If this is such an exciting concept, a little delay should not discourage the promoters. Equally, a public inquiry would allow us fully to expose and deal with the many worries felt not only by Labour Members but also by Conservative Members. I do not believe that the hybrid Bill procedure will be a satisfactory alternative to a full public inquiry.

I agreed with virtually everything said by the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price). He declared himself a Channel tunnel agnostic, and that makes me an atheist. He asked whether we needed a Channel tunnel and whether the existing services were inadequate and unable to cope with developments in the next 20 to 30 years. There can be only one answer—we do not need a fixed link. There is no suggestion that the existing services are unable to cope at present, nor is there any suggestion that they will be unable to cope in the foreseeable future.

That does not mean that under certain circumstances a Channel fixed link would not have certain marginal advantages for some users. I do not dispute that, but there are many things on which we could spend money whose advantages would be far more than marginal. I could list many of them in my own constituency and for Scotland generally. We are not proceeding with such schemes at present, even though, like many of my hon. Friends, I believe that they have a greater priority than any marginal advantage that may arise from a Channel fixed link.

Some of the brochures give the impression that a private car will be able to be driven on to the fixed link within two

minutes without customs or any other difficulties. That seems too good to be true and will be far removed from reality if a fixed link is actually built.

Mr. Adley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Millan: I know the hon. Gentleman's views. He is in favour of railways here, there and everywhere, and I have much sympathy with him.

Although I am not in favour of any of the schemes, if I had to choose I would say that the Channel Tunnel Group scheme would have the fewest disadvantages.

Mr. David Marshall Does not my right hon. Friend agree that there will have to be tight and strict controls to eliminate the possibility of rats or other animals using the fixed link to bring rabies and other endemic continental diseases into this country?

Mr. Millan: That is only one of the problems that spring to mind. There would also be considerable security problems.

It has been argued that, as private capital is involved, we need not worry because the market will take the risks. That is utterly absurd, but it is part of the absurdity of the Government's economic policy: it is fine if the Channel tunnel is built by private capital, whereas if it were built by public capital it would be a tremendous strain on the country's resources. In fact, the impact on the country's resources would be exactly the same whether the link was financed by public or private capital. If spending money on this kind of infrastructure project is good for the country, as the Government suggest, similar amounts of money spent on other infrastructure projects would be equally good and would be far better for the regions.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): As a former Cabinet Minister, my right hon. Friend will recall meeting deputations. I recall meeting a high-powered deputation of councillors from Essex and Kent who demanded the right to spend their own money to dual the Dartford tunnel. We did not allow that and told them, "It may be your own money, but it is coming from national resources." The same sort of arguments are obviously being put by the present Government because that tunnel has still not been dualled.

Mr. Millan: My hon. Friend has made an important point. The impact on resources is exactly the same whether it is private or public money. In any case, all this will not be decided by private enterprise, because the basic decision will be made by Government, and we trust that they will take account of the wider national interest. They should not take their decision solely on the basis of which project is economically the most desirable and attractive.

The Select Committee's 1981 report and its most recent report, together with the Anglo-French study group report, made it very clear that in that national interest a Channel fixed link must not destroy the existing ferry structure. There are many sound national reasons for taking that view —for example, security and defence, and what happens if there is a breakdown in the fixed link and it has to be closed for major repairs. If that is an important consideration—I believe that it is vital—that in itself excludes some of the schemes that the Government are presently considering. On that consideration alone, the only scheme with merit, albeit marginal, is the Channel Tunnel Group project.

This also has important implications for pricing policy. In practice, it will not be possible to allow the ferries to determine one pricing policy and the fixed link another. If that happened, one or other could go out of business. Therefore, the Government will have to be involved in important matters of pricing policy, which in turn will affect economic viability. Private enterprise alone will simply be unable to determine these matters for itself, especially if we have a Government who are looking at the wider national interest.

What happens if the fixed link is half built, costs have overrun and the promoters want to stop building? It is politically absurd to think that the Government will say, "Stop. There is no more money to come." This British Government may be mad enough to abandon the project, but no French Government will allow that to happen. To my mind, it is financially and politically absurd to imagine that at the end of the day there will be no public money guarantee.

Similarly, once the tunnel has been built, it is idle to believe that if it gets into financial trouble the Government will simply stand aside and say, "You can just go bankrupt. It is of no importance to us. It is a normal commercial bankruptcy."

We are dealing with matters in which the Government are essentially involved and will continue to be involved. It obscures the issue to pretend that Government money is not involved one way or the other and that this is exclusively a matter for private enterprise.

I now turn to the wider environmental and economic considerations. Obviously, the impact of the fixed link will depend considerably on which project is chosen. I shall leave aside the jobs during the construction phase, not because they are unimportant, but because they will have short-term benefits. Some of the claims, such as those of Euroroute that all the work will be carried out in Scotland and the north of England, are absurd, and do not stand up to serious examination. It is not the immediate effect of the construction phase that is important, but the long-term effect on different areas.

The environmental effects will undoubtedly be bad in the south-east. There is no way in which any of the schemes can be tailored to prevent environmental damage in the south-east. If a scheme went ahead, there would immediately be a net loss of jobs and in the long term a fixed link would act as a magnet, and attract further industrial development to the south-east, which is already the most overcrowded and economically prosperous part of the United Kingdom. The facts of geography are such that that will inevitably happen. Indeed, if that does not occur, it will mean that the fixed link has not been a success. The fixed link will attract either more business as a whole, or more of the business from cross-Channel crossings to the south-east. The real benefit in terms of economic and industrial development will ultimately go to the south-east.

That may be all right for the French because the Pas de Calais region is economically backward, but for us it is entirely different. We need development, not in the south-east, but in other areas, which, contrariwise, will be adversely affected by the development. That will indeed be the case even if the scheme is geared to the railways. The idea that the north of England and Scotland would gain more benefit than the south if we had a better railway

[Mr. Millan]

system is absurd. If the railway system is improved, all parts will gain, and Scotland will not gain more than other parts.

The Scottish Confederation of British Industry foolishly said that it had no view about the Channel fixed link provided that the A74 was improved. That is absurd. When my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the A74 would be improved if the fixed link went ahead, the Secretary of State said that he did not see the relevance of the question. That is what is wrong with him and the other members of the Government. They do not see the relevance of the project to Scotland, the north of England and other depressed regions, but we do. If the project goes ahead, it will widen the north-south divide, it will not be welcomed in Scotland or the north, and it will increase the economic disparities between the different parts.

The project is not needed. The Government are pushing it through on a timetable which is outrageous. It will do a great deal of economic damage to the most vulnerable areas, and it is being introduced by a Government who have abandoned many of the tenets of regional policy which successive Governments have followed since the end of the war. That is why I shall not only vote against the motion tonight, but shall continue to do so, whatever the Government's decision is.

6.54 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Much as I respect the views of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) as a spokesman for Scotland, I do not see why he should tell the House that an advantage to Britain which gives greater advantage to the south-east than to the north is wrong. He has every right to speak for Scotland's interest, but we are talking about an overall advantage which could arise for Britain, not whether it is more beneficial for one part than another. I hope that my speech will be short. I want only to talk about the south-east.

I am in a difficult position. It was illustrated this morning when I went to a BBC studio which was about 70 miles away from my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who was in a BBC studio in London. We had a conversation together with a charming lady. She was in London, and I had not met her. She said, "Mr. Crouch, you must be in a difficult position. I understand that you are in favour of the tunnel, but your constituents are almost wholly opposed to it." That is, indeed, the case. That is my problem, and I have sought to explain to the House and the whole nation, particularly my constituents in Canterbury and east Kent, why I shall not follow their advice. About 80 per cent. of my constituents are wholly opposed to a fixed link.

I have sought advice from the greatest of all advisers—a parliamentarian who lived 200 hundred years ago called Edmund Burke. In 1774 he said:

"parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole".

What good advice! I rest my position on it. Although I represent Canterbury and east Kent, I am concerned about the good of the whole, while we deliberate this question.

I recognise the two views about a Channel link—for and against. I wholly appreciate the strong arguments advanced by those who oppose the link, and I have listened to them with interest today. However, I have always believed that there is an advantage in having a fixed link. It is simply stated: as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, with 64 per cent. of our overseas trade with the continent of Europe, we must have a much better line of communication than we have by relying on an uncertain sea passage. I see no other arguments.

Has any hon. Member not experienced what it is like to travel to Dover? One ends up at Dover Priory, alights at that wretched station, boards a wretched bus for the western docks and boards a boat as a foot passenger. It is a thoroughly uncomfortable way of travelling. Moreover, one must hump one's luggage. Even if one is unable to carry it all, one receives no help—there are never any porters—and one is never sure whether one is on the right platform or quayside. Only last week a friend of mine returning to the United Kingdom was delayed one hour and the ferry paraded up and down in front of Dover harbour entrance unable to pass through because of the rough weather.

Only last September after a splendid trip to Geneva, and having stopped off for an extra lunch in Paris, I arrived at Boulogne on a beautiful summer's evening, expecting to get the hovercraft, only to be told that there had been a storm in the Channel and that the hovercraft was cancelled. I then had to take a slow train to Calais—it was rather a devious trip—to join a great, empty ferry boat. Again I had to hump my luggage, and many people older than me, believe it or not, had to do the same. I could not even help them because I was laden with luggage having been abroad. Has any hon. Member ever tried to climb the stairways on those ships to reach the top deck where the bars are? They are extremely steep, and it is hard to do so.

We thought that the French ferry boat would be empty and that we would have a pleasant, quiet voyage on what was now a calm sea. Then 40 motor coaches arrived from a Belgian beer festival, loaded with my fellow countrymen who had been enjoying the festival for two days, so it was not such a calm and comfortable journey back to Dover Priory. At Dover one faced the awful difficulty of finding a bus, with the added possibility of missing one's train. Clearly, I like the fixed link and I do not need to go further.

On a serious note, there is a price that has to be paid in this country, and in east Kent in particular. East Kent is used to that experience. We had to pay a price in the last war. Dover and Folkestone were in the front line. They were shelled every day from the other side of the Channel, and in return we were shelling the French coast. The area was then known as Hell Fire Corner. We did not complain in east Kent. We took it on the chin. People in the rest of the country praised us. There was a price to pay: we suffered casualties, as the whole nation knows.

Today, in peace-time, we shall also suffer some casualties from a major industrial and economic project, the Channel fixed link. There will be a loss of jobs in Folkestone and Dover and probably in some other ports around the coast. There will also be backwater areas left in Kent. They will be bypassed by the magnet of the fixed link and the roads that lead to it. I am thinking of the constituency of Thanet, North, and possibly Deal and the area going right round through Herne Bay to Whitstable on the north Kent coast. That last town is in my constituency. Those places are already backwaters and are not part of the industrial achievement, progress and riches

that epitomise much of the south-east of England, because unemployment in those areas is touching 22 per cent. today.

With the magnet of the fixed link, and the main motorways that will lead to it, I can visualise those areas becoming sad backwaters, with people not even bothering to go to them as they drive to London at about 70 mph. Therefore, attention must be paid to planning. It is not the task of my right hon. Friend. The Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry will have to be concerned with the planning aspects of the fixed link. Indeed, the whole Government will have to be involved in ensuring that the problem arising from loss of jobs in east Kent, in the backwater areas, is alleviated by good planning and good communications. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) has already made that point. Another problem which is already on the horizon in Kent is the possible decline of the coalfields.

Kent will pay a high price for what is coming, but we know that we shall also have some gains. New jobs will be created within the next 25 years if the fixed link goes ahead. In the construction period, thousands of jobs will be created across the country, perhaps 50,000, but not all in Kent. Much of the fabrication will be done in the north-east and north-west of England, and in Scotland, in the major industrial constructing areas, but, of course, there will be great activity in and around the bridge or tunnel entrance and on the roads that lead to it.

The Secretary of State mentioned what the road development would be, but I ask him not to underestimate the effect of the magnet of the tunnel when planning the size of the motorway. Last week a friend of mine was held up on the M25 near Reigate for two hours, missing every engagement. That was because of one lorry jack-knifing on a three-lane motorway and causing a tailback which took two hours to clear. I hope that my right hon. Friend and his experts will study the problem very seriously and will plan for the future. The M20 that feeds the tunnel entrance should be at least a four-lane motorway of the sort that is found in the United States.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Crouch: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, as many other hon. Members wish to speak.

A big motorway will be a better safeguard for Kent than a small one. A small motorway will drive people on to the side roads to find other ways to the tunnel. A big motorway will enable the traffic to be properly contained. I want to see proper planning and controls to ensure that the development to which the project will give rise will not run riot or ride roughshod over Kent.

I am particularly thinking of the industrial and commercial development that will of necessity, in the next 25 years, grow up around the road to the tunnel portal. I can remember what happened on the Great West road in the 1930s. It is the most interesting example of rather haphazard modern industrial growth. We do not want haphazard planning now. We do not want the haphazard approach of saying that it will create a great number of jobs or of saying, "Come down to Kent", to the dismay of hon. Members in the rest of the country. We must create only the right amount of industrial development. A great sprawl of industrial development on the road to the tunnel would wipe out the Garden of England. That would be a tragedy. It would mean losing part of our precious heritage. It is not necessary for that to happen. We want some industrial development, but let it be properly controlled and constrained.

A nation such as ours, which can produce industrial growth, with modern communications such as we are contemplating, should also be planning to avoid any destruction of our heritage and our countryside. In Kent, we do not want to lose the Garden of England, neither would the rest of Britain like to see that despoliation of the countryside. I believe that the whole House—not just the Kent Members—will want us to embark on this great project in a 21st century and not a 19th century manner.

7.7 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Nothing symbolises the debate better than the contributions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). Their speeches illustrate the great gulf that has been emerging between the two Britains over the past decade or so.

The hon. Gentleman rightly talked of the need to preserve the Garden of England and everything that is fine about Kent. Those from our end of the nation would support him in that endeavour, but for the north of England and Scotland the test tonight is whether the House believes in the concept of one nation, and whether it believes that it will be making a decision in the interests of that one nation or in the interests of one narrow region that is already the richest part of the country. My constituents want to know whether they are considered to be relevant to the decision-making of the Government.

The Prime Minister has already said that she had the political will to carry through the fixed link. Obviously, she has made up her mind that it will go through, but no arguments have been put forward by the Government in support of the project. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) in his comments about the quality of the report of the Select Committee on Transport. Nevertheless, the question which hung persistently over the Committee's recent inquiry was whether there is any need for a fixed link. The Committee has not received any very satisfactory answer. It is scandalous that, prior to what should be an important debate, we have no answers to that fundamental question.

Many areas to the north of the south-east of England are being despoiled by the recession and have a genuine fear about the future. Inevitably, they feel that the decision to invest billions of pounds in one region, the south-east, is to their detriment. Let us make it clear that the resources that go into the fixed link are the resources of the nation. They are part of the finite resources that will not be invested in Scotland, the north of England, Wales or any other part of the United Kingdom. Since 1977 the north of England has seen the loss of nearly 750,000 jobs, which represents nearly two thirds of job losses in Britain, so we are inevitably concerned, not about whether the project will be of benefit to that one region, but about whether it continues the now almost automatic tendency of the economy to marginalise the north of England. We are not prepared to accept that marginalisation in the north. My right hon. Friend the Member for Govan was right in saying that the pull and the attraction of the south-east of England and the north of France is stronger than that which we in the north of England or Scotland can exercise.

Mr. Churchill: Does the hon. Gentleman not have the vision to see that when industrialists in Trafford Park, which rests in both of our constituencies just outside Manchester, can put their products on freightliner trains leaving at 8 o'clock in the evening and arriving with their products in the heart of Europe in Frankfurt or Milan 24 or 36 hours later we shall be able to compete on a level footing in our principal markets?

Mr. Lloyd: I do see that, and I would welcome it if it were one-way traffic, but it is not. I can also see the day when the distance between the north of France and London becomes less than the distance between Manchester and London. I can see the day when the decision taken in the City of London, where unfortunately most of the decisions that affect Trafford Park take place—whether it be Lord Weinstock in Stanhope Gate or the decision-makers from any other company in Trafford Park—will not be about whether to locate in Trafford Park but about whether to locate in France. It will be easier to serve the dominant region of Britain from continental Europe than from parts of the United Kingdom.

Whether hon. Members want to accept it not, the problem of the north-west of England is not one of trying to attract mobile investment because that has all ceased to exist under the present Government. The real problem is to hang on to the companies that we have. I quote from Les Boardman, the managing director of the Greater Manchester Economic Development Council, who said in a recent *Financial Times* article concerning Greater Manchester that

"unemployment could be 'reduced appreciably' if more was done to encourage established companies to expand locally rather than further afield.'

The decision to build a fixed link will make that not easier, but more difficult. In the same article the *Financial Times* journalist talked of the infrastructure needs of Greater Manchester and the advantages of the area. He said:

"These positive advantages, however, cannot conceal infrastructure deficiencies."

He went on to say:

"As with so many of the county's problems, more cash would make their impact much less severe."

The reality is that if we are investing in infrastructure in the fixed Channel link, we will not be investing in the infrastructure in the north-west of England or other parts of the United Kingdom.

It is ironic that the south-east has almost the converse of those problems. Conservative Members have already made that point. There is unemployment but there is also the matter of the M25, which has been described as a virtual traffic jam. House prices in the area are already twice what they are in the north of England. It is expected that over the next 30 years around 1 million more people will move into that region. The condition of life for many people in the south-east is beginning to be considered unacceptable. However, the fixed Channel link will exacerbate all those tendencies and the regional differences between the north and the south.

We are entitled to say to the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) that we do not believe their well-meaning comments that everything will be all right for the north of England and Scotland. That does not figure in the experience that we have of the way in which the economy has worked and it does not account for the way in which the economy is currently working. It is extremely unlikely, with a Government who have no regional policy and do not attempt to implement any form of regional thinking, that the recovery will begin to work in that way.

I share the atheistic views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan about the Channel tunnel. In all circumstances it is extremely bad news for many parts of Britain. I shall do what I can to see that any fixed link is frustrated because it does not serve the needs of the area that I represent. The ultimate test is that it does not serve the need to keep the nation together. It would be foolish for any hon. Member to believe that the north of England or anywhere else in the country will put its head willingly into the noose. The worst feature of colonialism in days gone by was that it allowed no obligation to those who lived in the colonies. Unfortunately, the Government increasingly treat the north of England as their colony. They do not consult the area, have no obligation to it and take it for granted. They do not believe that the north has any role in the future of the country.

We do not see industry coming to the north under the Government because we do not have the regional policy that we need. The minimum that we want is reassurance on the fixed Channel link. What are the precise job implications for the north of England and Scotland? Unless the Secretary of State is prepared to tell us, we do not accept that the link is good for the nation because we are not considered to be part of the nation. What hidden costs are there? What are the £350 million that was quoted as being needed by British Rail? What are the £30 million that Kent county council says that it will need if a fixed Channel link goes ahead?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I have nearly finished.

Will those hidden costs be paid for by the taxpayers throughout Britain as a hidden subsidy, as already happens in other areas? The north of England will not accept its colonial role.

The Channel tunnel is a matter of great concern. It is fundamental to the way in which the nation is governed. In the north of England, or so-called peripheral region, we do not believe that the Government are the Government of one nation. They are a divisive Government of one region. The fixed tunnel link is one part of the process of separating the nation down the divide between the south-east and the rest.

7.18 pm

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): I wish to remind the House that the volume of traffic that is already going to the narrow Dover ports — what my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) described as the corset of Dover—is vast. Our real problem in Kent is to make life tolerable for the people who live there with the influx of modern traffic. It is my belief that if we have a good fixed link we will have better infrastructure, which will be paid for substantially from the proceeds of the hybrid Bill, not by the ratepayers of Kent. It will benefit us in many ways.

I think that the fears that have been expressed about the lack of a public inquiry are ill-founded. There can be no doubt in my mind that two Select Committees under the

hybrid Bill procedure, one in the House and one in the other place, are the highest possible form of public inquiry.

I apologise for seeming cavalier in what I am about to say to hon. Members who have served on the present Select Committee on Transport, but I believe that what one might loosely call the Crossman Select Committees do a shallow, inadequate, publicity-seeking and generally pretty useless job.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Not all.

Sir John Wells: Not all, but in general.

The problem is that the British public have seen some of the publicity-seeking shallowness of the Crossman Select Committees, and they do not appreciate the proper in-depth work that can be done by an old-fashioned hybrid Bill Select Committee appointed for that purpose, with the good will of the Government and, perhaps more important, the Court of Referees, who are, after all, the people who decide what will be competent to be considered.

If we are to have that great procedure, it should set people's minds at rest, but I believe that it is up to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to sell that idea in Kent. It is up to my right hon. Friend also to sell the idea in Kent that the infrastructure will be improved at Treasury expense.

I do not want to bore on too much about our county. Various hon. Members have spoken with a tear jerk about the Garden of England. Let us face it—the Garden of England will be destroyed by the incompetence of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food far more than by the competence or incompetence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He can only do us good.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) was at pains to point out that all the projects will be bad for his part of the country, and that there will be a magnet for jobs. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) said—and I suspect that in a few minutes my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) will say—that they will be bad for jobs in their part of the country. They all talk about the magnet. Which area will get these wonderful jobs that are to be created? The magnet that we hear about so much displeases Govan and seems to displease Canterbury and Thanet. Let us be realistic. If there are to be real new jobs and advantages for the unemployed, the lines of force—if I remember my physics right—are what we need to look at. We need to see the flow of electricity and consider where it wishes to go.

The problem that we shall be up against is in niggardly planning regulations and small-minded planning attitudes. Therefore, my right hon. Friend has not only the duties of educating and helping with the infrastructure but of continuing to liaise, as he has already begun to do very well, with Kent county council to make sure that planning is firm so that we do not deprive Govan or Stretford of their jobs, and that suitable jobs in limited situations are fairly near the portals, but not so that they make the immediate environs of the tunnel unacceptable.

Great play has been made about the 6·5 million cu m of spoil that will be generated. How much depends on which project is accepted. For many years I knew intimately one of the great gardens of England situated near the portal of the old Great Western Railway from Somerset to Devon. That garden was constructed in and around the spoil that had come out of the Whiteball tunnel. It is only 1 mile long, and is only a single bore. If we are to have four-bore tunnels 22 miles long, there will be 100 times more spoil. If the spoil from 1 mile created a great garden—no more than that, but not a suburban back patch—the spoil from 6·5 million cu m can be seen in a better perspective. It can be considered as potential landscaping for only 100 great gardens. That may satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury, who wishes to assist the Garden of England, but I had to make that point to get the spoil into perspective.

Similarly, the environmentalists who are so passionate about what will or will not be lost must try to get their anxieties into perspective. My right hon. Friend has a fourth duty—to meet and talk to the environmentalists and get experts from his Department to be more sympathetic to them. The environmentalists are genuinely anxious. They express themselves pretty badly, very vociferously and fairly unpleasantly, but a man of my right hon. Friend's charm and sweet nature should woo them to a bit of reasonableness.

7.23 pm

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): I do not want to enter into an argument with the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) on Select Committees, but he was a little off beam when he labelled most of the Select Committees as inappropriate and a complete waste of time. That was a little too much. Nevertheless, he made his profit, and I appreciate that.

The only person who so far in the debate has come down on one side is the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). To be fair to him, in his introduction he explained his position as a Kent Member. I appreciate the problems that Kent Members have with their constituents and the project, but he is the only one who has come down in favour of one of the schemes. I want to be the second to do so.

First, I should declare my interest. Right up to the moment when I came to the House, I was employed by British Rail. For many years, right up to the present day, that has entailed my being a fully paid-up member of the National Union of Railwaymen. Over the years, the NUR has always supported a Channel tunnel link between here and the French coast. We favour the Channel tunnel route. Despite what has been said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), the union, having considered the matter over the years, feels that a link such as the one that is envisaged will be beneficial not only to railwaymen in all parts of the country but to the country as a whole. We argue the Channel Tunnel Group's case.

The railway unions, which have met their counterparts in France, believe that there is a case for a fixed link. It will be beneficial for Britain's economy and its construction will stimulate employment and industry. A fixed link will ensure that Britain obtains maximum benefit from the already growing trade with the rest of Europe. It will enable the increasing tourist trade to be handled with more speed and convenience than it is at present. Such a link will be unaffected by adverse weather conditions.

Dr. Godman: The local economy in my constituency would be stimulated only if the Euroroute were

[Dr. Godman]

introduced, because Scott Lithgow would play an active part in the construction. Otherwise—and I declare an interest—there would be little or nothing to stimulate the Scottish economy.

Mr. Lewis: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. The Channel Tunnel Group estimates that for the north of England and Scotland the link will mean 6,470 jobs; for the east and the west Midlands 16,250 jobs; for Kent 1,750 jobs; and elsewhere 530 jobs. It will be beneficial for steel in my hon. Friend's constituency because of the boost to the economy. The NUR believes that such a link will help to stimulate the economy.

The link will benefit the railways. A rail link will reduce journey times to continental destinations for passenger and freight traffic and will enable more frequent services to be made available. Whether we like it or not, a vast proportion of British people would never attempt to board an aeroplane because they have a dread of flying. Many people dislike crossing the sea, especially the Channel, because of currents and other hazards. If we had a rail link, people from Manchester or Scotland could board a train and go direct to the continent without the hullabaloo that they experience now. Those people would benefit considerably from the rail link.

British Rail will begin with 16 freight trains a day in each direction compared with the present three or four freight connections with ferry services. That alone would benefit industry. The hon. Member for Canterbury, who has just left the Chamber, said that container traffic could be put on a wagon, for example, in Scotland and travel direct to its destination. Over a long distance, such as 250 miles, it is much cheaper to use the railway network than the road network.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm something that has always intrigued me—that the British Rail loading gauge is smaller than the continental one? British rolling stock will be able to amble over the entire European railway system, but European rolling stock will be restricted to only a few routes in Britain. Therefore, there are greater opportunities for our manufacturers of rolling stock.

Mr. Lewis: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that will be beneficial for us, but that is a matter for the Europeans.

Assuming that the link goes ahead, it will benefit the railways which have been run down. It is estimated that from the first year of operation, which some people believe could be in 1993, container traffic will increase by about 7 million tonnes by the year 2003.

The NUR supports the construction of the tunnel because it believes that it will be beneficial to the country as a whole. We can only hope that the Prime Minister, who will be meeting the President of France, will not show the hostility towards the railways that she has shown in the past.

7.36 pm

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): To debate the Channel fixed link implies arguing not only the case for a fixed link but considering the merits and demerits of each proposed scheme.

I declare three specific interests. During the past 18 months I have been chairman of the all-party Channel Tunnel Group, a task previously carried out by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells). I joined the group in 1960, 25 years ago, following presentation of a scheme by Leo d'Erlanger similar to that which was pursued in 1974 and similar to that put forward by the Channel Tunnel Group, a concept which was so ably defended by the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis).

The all-party Channel Tunnel Group has decided to keep its name. We support the fixed link, but assert that it must have provision for rail as well as for heavy goods vehicles and passenger cars. I believe that the need for such a fixed link is greater today than it was in 1974. However, the British people are more indifferent to that greater need than they were 12 years ago.

My second declared interest is that I am an active member of the Council of Europe committee dealing with transport, and 10 years ago I was a member of the committee in the European Parliament which dealt with similar issues. I have spoken to Commissioners of the EC and I have become aware of the views of the European Council of Transport Ministers, which has tried to accelerate, through co-ordination, the removal of barriers to trade caused by poor transport links. Examples of such barriers are the chasm across the Baltic to the north, between Sweden and Denmark and the Alps to the south, which have been opened up by the Brenner pass and the Mont Blanc and Gothard tunnels. Since Britain joined the EC 13 years ago there has been a dynamic expansion of trade. Sixty per cent. of our exports go to the EC. However, the inadequate access caused by the 20-mile water barrier puts this country at a disadvantage.

Thirdly, as a northern Member of Parliament, I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). I am worried about jobs and about the prosperity of Britain as a whole, and I support the bold view of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). As a northern industrialist involved with special steels and engineering, I was aware of the need for customers to have ready access to suppliers, in my case in Sheffield. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be aware of my failed campaign to develop an airport for Sheffield. I also believe that the cities of the north could gain a distinct advantage from railway freight links, perhaps using containers, travelling regularly and speedily from the midlands to Milan, Madrid and elsewhere. I hope that British Rail is alive to that challenge and opportunity. I am certain that rail has a distinct advantage over lorries. The hon. Member for Carlisle mentioned the advantage up to 250 miles, but I believe that it has a great advantage over the freight lorry over distances of 500 to 1,000 miles.

Although I should have liked a gas pipeline to have been built alongside the Channel tunnel, I welcome the fact that there will be an electricity link. However, time prevents me from describing its ready advantages. I see huge benefits to the nation from a fixed link across the Channel.

It should be remembered that aviation fuel and even petrol for cars will be more expensive, if not scarcer, in the early part of the next century. Therefore, the use of electric trains will have increasing advantages over the use of other forms of transport.

For business, but above all for tourism and pleasure, passenger trains and long-distance buses will compete with air travel up to distances of 600 to 1,000 miles—certainly an average of 800 miles. A fixed link could capture much of the market and enable British Rail to

compete with air on speed, if not on price, and enable long-distance bus companies to compete on price using the fixed link as has been found on motorway routes in Britain and Europe.

A fixed link would make Britain part of a changing and accelerating pattern in the EC and western Europe. The barrier of the sea denies us an advantage that other EC countries have.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would comment on the fact that the European Council of Transport Ministers is discussing with the French an extension of the TGV—the train à grande vitesse—to Brussels. It already covers the 400 km between Paris and Lyons in less than two hours, and the service could be extended to other European capitals. Train journeys between London and Paris and London and Brussels would be greatly improved if they took only four hours, let alone the forecast three and a quarter hours, with appropriate improvements to the tracks. However, at this time of year, as a delegate to the Council of Europe, I would welcome an evening train that would get me to Paris as quickly as I can get from Strasbourg to Paris. The present system puts British representatives of commerce, trade and Parliament at a disadvantage.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) argued for a full inquiry. But there was a full investigation in 1930. I was actively involved in the proposals put forward in the 1970s by Lord Peyton who then represented Yeovil and was Secretary of State for Transport. In the early 1970s, I attended a debate at the Institute of Civil Engineers addressed by General Sverdrop on the merits of a tunnel against those of a bridge. During a visit to Transpo '72 in Washington, he arranged for me to drive across the 22 miles of Chesapeake bay, which took me 17 minutes. He said to me, "When are you Europeans going to do the same?" I forecast 1985, but how wrong I was.

I have listened to the anxieties expressed by hon. Members on behalf of the citizens of Kent, but I ask, as the Americans did, "Why are we dithering over this matter, which has been on the agenda for more than 150 years?" The problem of Dover, Calais and the other ports was a hot issue 15 years ago, but whatever the solution then, I am convinced that we must arrange for Yarmouth, Hull, Felixstowe, Margate, Portsmouth, Southampton and Plymouth to obtain just under half of any traffic. The major feature of competition is flexibility, and the purpose of monopolies legislation is to ensure that a monopoly does not eliminate competition. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider the matter.

I have had meetings in France with the equivalent of the Channel Tunnel Group. We must gain its confidence that Britain means business this time. The fact that Britain reneged in 1975 caused distrust that the Government and Members of Parliament must try to overcome. The courtesy of the French to us at that time must not be forgotten.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked whether the hot favourite in the Sunday press — the Expressway — is worth considering. I have driven through the Gothard pass, which is about 17 km long. As a member of the House of Commons Motor Club and the Institute of Advanced Motorists, I would have no trouble driving through a 50-km tunnel, but not everyone would find it so convenient. Therefore, my right hon. Friend must discuss with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the police, the Institute of Advanced Motoring and perhaps the Freight Transport Association whether a 50-km tunnel is feasible. Similarly, the spiral of the Euroroute project would be a hazard to tired heavy vehicle drivers plying between Paris and London.

I support a fixed road-rail link. With the hon. Member for Carlisle, I hope that the Channel Tunnel Group will succeed, although that goes against the assessment of the Sunday newspapers — *[Interruption.]* Perhaps some advance notice was given. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) cavilled at the promoters' moving the goal posts. The Channel Tunnel Group has not done that. It has the same posts as it had 25 years ago. I look forward to the outcome of the assessment. However, it is important that it should be an Anglo-French assessment, bearing in mind some of the problems that will be caused to those who live in Calais as against the advantages to those who live in the north of France generally.

7.48 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Hon. Members laughed at the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn) when he said in effect that he was worried about the Sunday newspapers. However, the Secretary of State must tell us what we are discussing today. Are we being asked to debate and to give an opinion on the need for a fixed link, or are we going through an elaborate dance of death because the decisions have already been taken? I ask the Secretary of State that because I believe that there is no greater cynicism or insult to Members of Parliament than to say suddenly, "Of course you may have a debate on such a major matter as a fixed link between Britain and the continent," but to imply that that will be done within a foreshortened timetable because the important decisions have already been made in 10 Downing street.

I am happy to join my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis), who is a most respected member of the Select Committee on Transport, in discussing the various types of fixed link and the advantages, which we both feel strongly, favour a rail tunnel. I am not prepared to go through a totally empty exercise if the Prime Minister is not concerned about the transport, economic or political implications of the fixed link and the Secretary of State is not prepared to talk about planning implications, job losses or investment.

The Government have decided to make a vast gesture, to be timed for a general election, so that they can say to the electorate, "Look what we have done. We have instigated a great white elephant to prove that we have at least done something during the time of our parliamentary control." That is a real and agitating problem. What possible objection can there be to a public inquiry if this scheme is so important? We have been told that there was a full inquiry before, but that was years ago. The Government have said that consultation has taken place, but that was only in the county of Kent and it has not assuaged the fears of the people in that area. There has been no consultation with the regions. Hon. Members who represent areas outside the south-east are very concerned about the implications of whatever link is to be foisted on us by the Secretary of State.

In the area affected, which is represented mainly by Conservative Members of Parliament, the *Folkestone, Hythe and District Herald* was so anxious about the lack of consultation that it devised a questionnaire. A junior Minister from the Department of Transport has visited the

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

area and his visits are not only welcome but informative —I can hardly imagine anything more devoutly to be wished than a visit from a junior Minister at the Department of Transport — but one or two niggling doubts remained, so the *Folkestone, Hythe and District Herald* produced its questionnaire three weeks ago. Readers were asked to fill in and return the questionnaires to the editorial offices. The editor intends to make the results public at the end of the week, but he has been kind enough to allow me to use them today as they are extremely interesting.

A total of 2,335 questionnaires were returned and more are coming in with every post. One of the main questions was: "Are you in favour of a fixed link?" The figure in favour was 5·6 per cent. and those against 94 per cent. Another question asked whether readers would be in favour of some sort of public inquiry, which is the question that the House is discussing today. There were 86 per cent. in favour of a public inquiry and 14 per cent. against.

The questionnaire also asked what effect the fixed link would have on the environment. Of those who replied, 90 per cent. said that it would worsen the environment, 2·2 per cent. said that it would improve it and 7·8 per cent. said that it would make no difference.

The questionnaire also asked what effects the fixed link would have on the local towns. In Dover, 2 per cent. said that it would have a good effect and 98 per cent. said that it would have a bad effect. In Folkestone 4 per cent. said that it would have a good effect and 96 per cent. a bad one. As for whether there had been enough information about the fixed link proposals, the answer was yes from 18 per cent. of respondents and no from 75 per cent. of the respondents; the "don't knows" were 7 per cent.

I am very worried about the results of that questionnaire. The Select Committee has been castigated today for the speed of its response. It should be borne in mind that not only was the Committee told that it would have a short time to make its considerations, but the House does not have the benefit of the evidence which the Committee examined in relation to the various schemes. There may be something to be said for the different schemes and for evaluating the economic impacts of a fixed link as a whole, but the House does not have access to proper independent assessments.

If the Secretary of State is so confident of the outcome, why has he had to set such a tight timetable? Why does he now intend to allow the Prime Minister to sign what in effect will be a treaty with a foreign Government, before the House has had time to evaluate any responses? The Secretary of State said today that the White Paper will be published after the evaluation has been made not by the House but by the Department of Transport. The House must consider that information before decisions are taken and the House needs access to the information to know exactly what we are committing ourselves to.

The sad, hard lesson that I have learnt from the Secretary of State is that he has one undying and reliable trait — when the rest of the House are discussing transport, he is talking about money. He did that in the Transport Act 1985, he did it in relation to other basic and important services and he is doing it now in connection with the fixed link.

The fixed link cannot conceivably go ahead without any cost to the state or to other basic services that must be connected to the link. If there is to be an efficient rail service, it is inconceivable not to talk about the amounts of money required for British Rail to link in and provide the infrastructure and necessary services. It is also inconceivable that a major change of this nature could be made without examining the implications for the south-east and all the coastal regions that would be affected.

It is not beyond the wit of man or even woman to work out that, if there is an effective motorway system running from Scandinavia through northern Germany, down through the Benelux countries as far as the shortest Channel crossing, that will distort traffic movement and, particularly if it is a road pattern used only with road links, undermine other forms of transport, including many of our ports.

Mr. David Marshall: My hon. Friend asks the reason for the undue haste and she has mentioned the finances that would be involved. One of the reasons for the undue haste is to encourage and speed up the profits that the winner of the contract can make. Paragraph 61 of the Select Committee report states:

"When, however, it was suggested to Sir Nigel Broackes that if the EuroRoute scheme were built, the Channel would remain the most expensive stretch of water in the world to cross, he replied 'I do not disagree with you. I hope you are right!'"

That is the real reason for the speed—to make vast profits for whatever scheme gets the go-ahead.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Whatever the reasons—I do not disagree with the assessments of the Select Committee or of my hon. Friend—the House ought to have better information available so that hon. Members can make up their own minds on the issue.

The whole system of EEC tendering will make it impossible, even if the promoters were prepared to give undertakings, for a specific percentage of employment arising from the construction of the fixed link to be retained in this country. The history of EEC contracts has shown that the British have played according to the rules and that almost every other EEC country has gained a higher proportion of the contracts involved. We may talk about generating more employment in the south of Spain or in certain Portuguese mills, but we are not talking about generating employment in the United Kingdom. It is important to be honest and straightforward about that.

I have an objection that is stronger and more important than that. There may be a case for a fixed link, which may be a rail tunnel. It would be remarkable if the House of Commons announced that it approved of a system that arbitrarily rode over the interests of all the people involved, refusing public inquiries, refusing consultation, replacing a correct assessment of the basic needs of the people of this island with an arbitrary public relations effort in which glossy pamphlets are preferred to correct economic assessment. If that is the situation, the Secretary of State is carrying out a cynical, unacceptable, anti-democratic exercise, and his contempt for the House of Commons will be noted by people outside.

7.59 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I share, although not in the same language, some of the reservations expressed by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) about the decision-making process at the heart of government in relation to the

Channel fixed link. Nevertheless, I begin by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his restraint, which was apparent not only in his low key speech but in his decision to come to the Dispatch Box without a Santa Claus costume. He began by asking the House to enter with him into a world of pure Yuletide fantasy when he suggested that the Government had not yet made up their mind whether they wanted a fixed link, and he ended by giving us a tantalising glimpse of the pork barrel bran tub of glittering prizes on offer for those who win the competition.

Even the most dedicated opponent of the link would be foolish not to admit that there are glittering short-term prizes for the winners. There will be a short-term boom in contracts for construction companies and temporary jobs for workers, although it is not clear how many of them will be on this side of the Channel. In the short term, there will be some luscious front-end fees and financial rewards for the promoters and their friends in the City. In the short term, too, the project may even create enough political excitement to deliver some election-winning votes on both sides of the Channel—and all from a decision reached in fewer than 100 days.

At the risk of sounding like a Cassandra at the Christmas party, I wish to express some sombre warnings about the long-term implications of the fixed link and, above all, to urge the Government to slow down their headlong rush to pick a winner by mid-January through their present secretive and unsatisfactory procedures.

I begin on a historical note. We British are an island people living in an island kingdom. Our heritage, our culture, our history, our way of life and our traditions are what they are partly, perhaps largely, because we have always been geographically separated from continental Europe by the English Channel. If we believe that our distinctive island sense of nationhood is still important, we should be under no illusion that today we are merely debating a large construction contract mainly for the benefit of cross-Channel travellers—far from it.

The fixed link is not only the biggest civil engineerig project that this country has ever seen, but it is capable of being a massive social engineering project with enormous and unforeseen consequences for our future destiny and way of life. I believe, for example, that the decision that the Government intend to take behind closed doors next month could have as much impact on the lives of our children and grandchildren as the decision taken behind closed doors 20 years ago by another Government to permit widespread Commonwealth immigration. Even if that prediction is not correct, one does not need to be clairvoyant to see that free and unrestricted movement of goods, services and people on the scale envisaged by the promoters is likely to have incalculable consequences for the economy, security, health and status quo of these islands.

An early warning of the ability of a fixed link to change established patterns and procedures in this country is clear from the effect so far on the Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport. Those two Departments are or should be the embodiment of our national planning procedures and their inspectors the respected arbiters of fair play. The two Secretaries of State should be the keepers of the ark of the covenant which lays down an agreed law on all public inquiries and consultative procedures leading up to major planning decisions which are so important in a small country. Since the fixed link was announced, the accusations about goal posts being moved halfway through the match have applied to the Secretary of State for Transport. Instead of a public inquiry, even in the shortened and unconventional form which I believe Anthony Crosland envisaged, we are to have 100 days of secret political decision-making by a Minister and his civil servants followed by an equally unsatisfactory hybrid Bill procedure. It is an Alice-in-Wonderland world, reminiscent especially of the passage in which the Queen of Hearts calls for "Sentence first—verdict afterwards."

There are only two reasons for the overthrow of all established rules on planning inquiries. My hon. Friend the Minister of State gave one at Ashford on 28 November, when he said:

> "A public inquiry would mean a delay of about 3 years. There is no way in the world that the investment institutions will keep their money standing for that long. If there was to be that delay the whole project would be dead."

That is a somewhat naive view. Like many hon. Members, I worked in the City long enough to know that if the figures are enticing enough, this year, next year, some time, whenever, the punters will still be willing.

The second reason for throwing all the procedures overboard is pressure from the French. President Mitterrand is an old man in a hurry. He faces difficult elections next year and he wants to remain at the Elysée palace rather than to retire to Angoulême les Deux Eglises. There is pressure on the British to fall into the quicker and more centralised French decision-making procedures to produce a quick result in time for a glamorous announcement at the summit meeting at the end of January. Bowing to French pressure is no good reason for the secretive rush job on which the Department of Transport has embarked. In fewer than 40 working days, teams of civil servants and their Ministers have to try to evaluate more than 20,000 pages of rival bids following a feeble and half-hearted consultation exercise. It is a recipe for a half-baked result in which the more profound technical, financial, environmental and social problems will be inadequately investigated, glossed over in haste and served up to the public as a fait accompli.

Who will be held accountable if the assessors and evaluators make mistakes under pressure of the frantic timetable? It will not be the British or the French Government. Paragraph 58 of the invitation to promoters states:

> "The evaluation carried out by the two Governments will not imply any responsibility for the assumptions, forecasts or analyses contained in the proposals submitted by promoters."

That is one of the most discreditable small-print exclusion clauses ever relied on by any public authority. The 100 days of total power will be followed by 100 years of total abdication of responsibility. If we condone that by our votes today, let us not kid ourselves that Parliament will be able to put things right later through the hybrid Bill procedure. The shape, size and very nature of the fixed link project will be determined and set in stone on the day the name of the winning consortium is announced, and only peripheral adjustments will be possible thereafter.

Paragraph 12.42 of the invitation to promoters conveys the flavour of the cursory nature of the hybrid Bill as the Government first envisaged it. The document states:

> "During the Bill's passage a Committee is convened to hear over a period of weeks the views of those who have locus standi —being directly affected by the proposals more particularly than the general public—and to consider possible amendments to the Bill."

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

Many important questions arise from that. Why should the general public be excluded and evidence taken only from a handful of insiders considered to have locus standi? Why should expert witnesses from respected organisations without a direct interest, such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England or Friends of the Earth, be excluded? Why will the hearings last only for a period of weeks? It all adds up to inadequate, unfair, rushed and partisan procedures for evaluating the project.

Against that background, Parliament and the public must take a suspicious and sceptical view of the promoters' claims. Disraeli had a good line about

"lies, damned lies and statistics."

In the past few weeks, some of the figures released by the promoters' PR men about jobs and traffic forecasts seem to have been plucked out of thin air and multiplied by two or three for good measure. Until the promoters have had their figures subjected to open, detailed, independent scrutiny, all their important forecasts remain nothing more than unreliable guesswork.

The Government, who should be defending the public interest, have no right to accept the consortium's figures for the purpose of taking a decision and then abdicating responsibility for those figures afterwards.

The House should be alerted to the fact that there has been at least one serious and genuinely independent assessment of the promoters' figures. It was published last week by the well known stockbrokers Phillips and Drew. It revealed one cental and uncomfortable truth about the Channel fixed link—the project is almost certain to be a monopoly. I know how embarrassing it must be for the Secretary of State, whose political life has been spent championing the free market and the forces of competition, to find himself at the controls of an engine of state patronage handing out a powerful monopoly. I am sure he will do all that he can to avoid that embarrassment. But he should mark the sinister words of the Phillips and Drew report, especially the third paragraph of its conclusions which were based on careful statistical analysis:

"We expect most of the longer regional ferry routes to become uneconomic and close, resulting in a large diversion of traffic to the fixed link."

That is the view of Phillips and Drew and it is my view. What it means is that most of the ferries which now operate to the continent from towns like Hull, Immingham, Yarmouth, Felixstowe, Harwich, Sheerness, Ramsgate, Folkestone, Newhaven, Portsmouth, Poole, Weymouth and Plymouth are likely to be put out of business. That may be disputed by the Secretary of State. But where will it be disputed? In secret with his own civil servants and before the decision is made. Unless the Secretary of State is prepared to contradict the Phillips and Drew conclusions with his own effective new traffic and financial forecasts, hon. Members who, like myself, represent ferry port towns must recognise that by our votes we will soon be signing the death warrant of the ferry industry. The industry will either die quickly in a cut-price war or it will die by a slow haemorrhage of traffic towards the fixed link. Either way, the killing off of an industry which has great strategic importance in times of war, as the Falklands conflict demonstrated, which employs between 30,000 and 40,000 people and which is part of our maritime way of life, is not a decision to be taken lightly in 100 days' superficial haste by a Minister and his civil servants.

Mr. Roger Stott: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's devastating analysis, with which I absolutely agree. I take up his last interesting point. Ten years ago the British merchant fleet had 1,600 ships registered under the British flag. Today, 10 years later, that figure is 640. Any further losses, especially to our ferry services, will do exactly what the hon. Gentleman predicts.

Mr. Aitken: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The further erosion of the ferry fleet is a matter not just of commercial regret, but of great strategic concern. Parliament should take that point into account carefully.

I wish to say a brief word about the special problems of my constituency in east Kent which contains the second biggest, fastest growing Channel port—Ramsgate. The east Kent coastal towns resent being categorised as part of the prosperous south-east. They are, in effect, much more like north-east towns, with high unemployment, low wages, closing factories and coal mines and a crumbling down-at-heel infrastructure. This sad and seedy side is often masked by the courageous cheerfulness of the people who somehow manage to cope, all too often uncomfortably close to the poverty line.

Those who live in east Kent need some political and economic reality to back up the famous quotation of St. Francis of Assisi, delivered at the door of 10 Downing street—

"Where there is despair, hope."

There has been too much despair for too long in east Kent. But recently there has been some hope. For example, in the town of Ramsgate we are starting to see spirits lift as the economic vitality of the ferry port starts to bring good business into the town. Ramsgate is a new ferry port. Within four years it has built up its cross-Channel traffic from nothing, and it is now Britain's second biggest Channel port. It is a real success story in spite of the inevitable teething troubles. One thousand new jobs have been created and traffic figures are growing at 30 per cent. a year.

Most of the shops, small businesses and hotels owe their survival and modestly growing prosperity to that ferry industry. When I return to metropolitan London from Ramsgate and see the promoters' glossy PR men in their biscuit sun-coloured suits, driving their BMWs to and from the Ritz taking Members of Parliament out to expense account lunches twice the average weekly wage of a Ramsgate worker, I get angry. Those sort of people do not understand what the destruction of a small community's principal employer and central industry will mean in terms of economic and human misery and despair. Promises of temporary construction jobs and new roads are no substitutes for destroying the going concern of a good industry. On this issue Ramsgate will fight and Ramsgate will be right.

The problems of Ramsgate suggest, as is now well known, that Kent does have special problems, and there is a growing feeling in Whitehall that Kent will have to be bought off. There is much talk of shopping lists, of new roads, of special assisted area status, enterprise zones, sympathy from Ministers and many fine words. But as the Kent farmers say, "Fine words butter no parsnips." The Government have to reconcile their announcement that no public money will be spent on the fixed link with hard cash

to meet the demands that will soon be piling in from Kent. British Rail wants £350 million for investment on the Dover line and Kent county council wants £75 million to £100 million for new roads. The east Kent local authority wants special assisted area status and it wants grants for industrial and tourist projects which will probably amount to another £50 million. With £50 million here, £100 million there, £350 million there, pretty soon we will be talking about real money! The midlands and the north may well have something to say about the price of buying Kent off. In any event, it would be an unacceptable and unworkable manoeuvre.

The Channel fixed link is a national, not just a Kent, issue. There should be national concern that the ferry industry in 14 or 15 ports around the country will face closure. There should be national concern that the Government's reputation of fair and open planning procedures has been stained by the refusal to have a public inquiry. In its place there is the frantic 100-day rush of secret political assessment and decision-making. There should be national anxiety, which perhaps is only starting to grow, that the Channel fixed link may have profound and unforeseen consequences for our whole way of life. People are only beginning to ask the question: do we really need or want a Channel fixed link? On that question the great British jury, not having heard the evidence, is still undecided. Alas, the Government do not want to hear any verdict other than the one they have already decided upon. That is the tragedy of this debate, and that is why I shall be in the Opposition Lobby tonight.

8.18 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I wish to follow a different line from the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). I am firmly committed to the fixed link and to the construction of a Channel link. The hon. Gentleman put forward an argument with which I have a great deal of sympathy. I agree that changing the infrastructure radically and paying no attention to its effects on the surrounding countryside and other parts of the country is a recipe for disaster.

That is certainly not the Opposition's view or philosophy—we believe in planning. The Government take the view that, if the fixed link is built, no public money need be put into it and everything can be left to market forces. If that happened, I would share the views of hon. Members who have expressed grave disquiet about what would happen in Kent, Scotland, the north, the north-west, the north-east and Wales if the fixed link is built. That argument cannot be sustained. We cannot shy away from progress simply because we are not prepared to plan for the consequences.

Crossing the Channel by ship is not as convenient or quick—and certainly not as good for the country—as a fixed link. There is a political will on both sides of the Channel to build a fixed link. The capital is available and the people demand it. The project has been on and off for well over 100 years and there is a good possibility that it will be built now. I hope that the House will seize the opportunity with both hands and say that we should commit ourselves in principle to it and worry later about what else we might have to consider to ensure that the disasters of which we have heard do not occur. That is quite possible.

I am not a supporter of the Common Market and I abhor the common agricultural policy, but I support our being in Europe on a geographic basis. We have to accept that much of our trade is done with Europe. It will be better for all parts of the United Kingdom if such trade is made easier. The advantages of a fixed link might well accrue more to Kent and the south-east than elsewhere, but it is within the bounds of possibility for the House to arrange matters so that the advantages are more or less evenly distributed.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis), I am sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen, but I do not share the honour of having been a working railwayman. Nevertheless, I have a long and continuing interest in the railways and rail transport. Both have a vital part to play in the United Kingdom. Contrary to some opinion, the tunnel would benefit the environment and the railways would gain an immense advantage. Manufacturers could load their goods in Manchester or Glasgow knowing that they would arrive in Dusseldorf in three days' time rather than in nine days' time, as at present. We fail to appreciate that, although we trade with Europe, we are put at an enormous disadvantage because of a 20-mile stretch of water.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a tunnel or even a rolling motorway-type tunnel would facilitate lorry traffic and increase the opportunities for transfer from rail to road?

Dr. Marek: Yes. The tunnel would also attract more traffic to the railways. The quantity of transport will increase but, with the tunnel, there would be less traffic on the roads than there would otherwise be. Railways and barges play a much more important part on the continent. A tunnel can do only good for us.

It is said that the fixed link would destroy the Kent countryside and environment. I disagree. Roads in Kent and the south-east are not particularly good, but if money is spent correctly and traffic is kept from the middle of towns and villages by an adequate motorway, the quality of life and the environment will be protected. The M2 is not complete. Indeed, the last bit to Dover is dreadful. Nor is the A20-M20 finished. I am not arguing for development in the south at the expense of development in the north, but there is room for extra infrastructure in the south-east. That would help our manufacturing base —which I fear the Government do not value highly enough—which is to be found mainly in the north.

I have considered all of the schemes. With the exception of that proposed by the Channel Tunnel Group, the goalposts have been moved every two or three weeks. I am not convinced that Channel Expressway has solved the ventilation problem. I hope that the Minister's experts will publish their detailed findings as an annexe to the White Paper. The country should have access to detailed technical information to decide whether such problems have been solved. The idea of a drive-through tunnel appeals to me. Like the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn), I have driven through the Gothard tunnel. I did not find it so unpleasant after about 10 km. I agree, however, that 50 km is a lot longer.

Mr. Dalyell: Is my hon. Friend aware that the electrostatic precipitators which are advocated in the Channel Expressway brief will stick up into the Channel? Does that not represent a hazard to shipping and support my hon. Friend's case?

Dr. Marek: Yes. However, the problem is not the electrostatic precipitators that will stick up but to get rid of carbon monoxide, which involves an island in the middle of the Channel. There is no alternative. I have read many representations about the island or islands. I am not sure that they would be safe. If the Government opt for one of the schemes involving an island or islands, I hope that they will lean over backwards to explain why, and guarantee that it will be safe.

Dr. Godman: There are numerous navigational aids as a result of which such obstacles could be avoided. I seem to remember that the captain of the Torrey Canyon was unable to avoid a natural obstacle, but navigational aids are now much improved. They would protect seafarers and the islands.

Dr. Marek: That might be so, but do the captains of ships invariably use such aids? Will those aids work all the time? I am not an engineer and I might be wrong, but I doubt whether a scheme involving islands in the middle of the Channel is safe.

Mr. David Marshall: I share my hon. Friend's concern about safety but, unlike him, I am not in favour of any fixed link. Does he share my concern about the Channel Tunnel Group's scheme, which involves train loads of double-decker type vehicles packed to the gunwales with cars and lorries? The drivers and passengers of the vehicles that are being carried will be free to roam in compartments. What does he think the effect of a derailment, possibly at high speed, would be in such a tunnel, or even the action of severe braking by the train? Is he not concerned about the safety of the scheme?

Dr. Marek: Of course I am concerned about safety. However, we have experience with the present inter-city network. We know that safety can be ensured, barring acts of God or other such matters. In talking about trains being packed to the gunwales, my hon. Friend is giving away his position slightly. I accept that we must be extremely careful and that safety must be paramount, but it may be that no scheme is completely safe. That can be said of any scheme, and at the end of the day it is a matter of percentages. None the less, I believe that the CTG scheme is much safer than any of the others at present. It is certainly the least environmentally damaging option. Environmental damage in the south-east could be limited by adopting the CTG proposals.

The CTG scheme could coexist with ferries. The short sea ferry routes would have to go but I imagine that routes from Harwich, Folkestone and Hull would remain. The construction of whatever scheme is adopted will span more than one Government or two or three Parliaments. That means that we must arrive at a bipartisan policy. If the Government of the day are prepared to control the operation of the fixed link, one of the conditions should be that sea ferries, except those operating on the short routes, must remain.

I wish to see all the details of the various proposals in a White Paper. I recognise, of course, the problems of concentrating development in the south-east. I am aware of the problems that will flow from the loss of jobs in shipping. Perhaps it is inevitable that more and more infrastructural development would be channelled into the south-east. However, there would be a spin-off to the advantage of all the other regions. We should not be thinking of picking up crumbs that fall from the table, and it is unfortunate that that is the effect of the present industrial policy. There are a few crumbs here and there and everybody wants them.

If the Government looked after Britain's prosperity and well-being properly and ensured that there were jobs at John o'Groat's, Land's End and Kent, arguments over jobs would not arise. If such an enlightened policy prevailed, it would be obvious to everyone that a fixed link would be to the benefit of the entire country. There are worries only because we are in a difficult industrial and economic period. I do not want 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 workers to be made redundant in Dover. If the scheme goes ahead, it is the job of the Government of the day to ensure that there is diversification, relocation or retraining.

I see that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) shakes his head. I have no doubt that he is one of the greatest exponents of the free market economy, and in that respect I disagree with him fundamentally. I believe in Government planning. If the Government decide that we must move with the times, as I believe we must, we must ensure that the decision is followed by relocation or retraining so that we do not inflict any unnecessary hardship. The hon. Gentleman and I will have to agree to disagree.

If it is decided to go ahead with the project, ferries must remain in the interim. There will be a role for ferries after the construction of the fixed link. Other employment will have to be made available. It is interesting that the CTG proposals do not automatically involve job losses. The Government must accommodate the Opposition and the minor parties. The scheme will span two or three Parliaments and some account must be taken of Opposition Members' legitimate fears.

I hope that the White Paper will explain how the Government will ensure that the majority of the development will not take place on the French side of the tunnel. If there are to be interchange facilities, there must be a 50-50 allocation. The French must get their share of these facilities but they must not be allowed to get any more than that.

I commend the Select Committee on its investigation and report. It has been said by some that the report is not especially good but I do not accept that. The members of the Committee had much expertise and I support the Committee's general recommendations. I support especially its recommendation that the Government must ensure that there is no predatory pricing policy that is followed by exploitation of a monopoly.

I associate myself with the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). I want to see a public inquiry, but that should not be used as a means of delaying the project. I do not want a long inquiry but it is necessary that we address ourselves to some of the matters subsequent to the decision to go ahead. It must be a quick public inquiry.

If we do not build a tunnel and if there is no enterprise in Britain—as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight said, if there is no spirit of Brunel or of others who built up Britain 150 or 200 years ago during the industrial revolution—we have no business talking about these matters or anything else, and we might as well pack up the shop and go back home. Let us get on with a scheme this time and build the link.

8.37 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): As the founder and first chairman of the Brunel Society, I share some of the views expressed by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). In a nutshell, I do not think that there is a case for a public inquiry. The issue has always needed a political decision. The speeches of those who have contributed to the debate so far have left us in no doubt that the issue remains a political decision that must be taken by Parliament.

We are faced with a slightly eerie re-run of the debates that took place some years ago on a Channel link. I have always remembered the sad and wistful expression on the face of the late Anthony Crosland when he was forced to cancel the previous project. I have always felt that that announcement went against his own personal views and wishes.

We are considering a transport issue that involves environmental and social considerations, especially for those of my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies. It would be arrogant and foolish of any of us to do anything other than pay the closest attention to what they have to say. They and others are right when they argue that there is an environmental price to pay for the project, whichever scheme, if any, is chosen. Much of that price will have to be borne by the taxpayer.

We should be discussing which of the projects best serves the travelling public and public interests generally and least damages the environment. I began by saying that we are discussing a political question, and I was not surprised to hear one or two Members contributing to the debate who were among the strongest opponents of Britain's entry into the European Economic Community. The few letters that I have received from my constituents on this issue tell me that we are faced with yet another attempt to denigrate our membership of the EC. I have received letters from a few flat earthers as well. I remain of the view that, whilst we are faced with transport, environmental and social considerations, we must understand that primarily we are taking a political decision. The most tragic irony of all is to hear those on the Opposition Front Bench and some Opposition Back Benchers say that we must try to limit regional damage.

The last tunnel project that we cancelled was a rail-only tunnel. It would undoubtedly have brought the greatest regional benefits to this country and would have done the least possible damage to regional policy. It was the Labour party that cancelled it. That makes me sad, because many hon. Members will be aware of my commitment to this country's railway system.

I wish to make a simple point about the road versus rail argument. The relationship between the percentage of traffic on the road to that on the rail in the proposed schemes will determine the amount of environmental damage that will be done. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) graphically illustrated the problem that heavy lorries pose to Kent. The simple proposition is that the more traffic that goes on the railway and the further away from Kent it is loaded, the less will be the environmental damage done. That is one of the main factors that I hope the Government will consider when they come to take their decision.

I am sure that Kent does not want to be turned into a car park like the M25 which has already been turned into a car park. The idea of unfettered road-only access by heavy vehicles to a fixed link appals me because it would be an environmental disaster.

We were all impressed by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). Everyone understands the points that he put forward. I do not share his gloomy prognostications about the ferries' inability to exist with a fixed link. I am sure that I shall be put right if I am wrong, but, studying the four proposals, it seems that the higher the cost of the project, the greater will be the traffic generation necessary to make it pay and the greater will be the impact on the ferries. That is a simple issue that must be faced.

I regret that we have heard hardly anything tonight about air traffic. One of the advantages of the previous scheme—the rail only scheme—was that it would have taken traffic away from the airlines — Heathrow and Gatwick—on to the rail tunnel. With the advent of the TGV in France and our improved electrification, a fixed link will be a great attraction to the business traveller, and that is good.

At the end of last week I received from the Department of Transport figures which showed that 27·9 per cent. of all international scheduled flights from Heathrow and 16·7 per cent. of scheduled flights from Gatwick are to destinations 400 miles or less from London. A fixed link would do a great deal to reduce the pressure on our airports. Had we gone ahead with the previous project we might not have had to waste our time discussing Stansted and all the problems that has entailed.

Everyone talks about rail traffic without fully appreciating what can be done. In the last century the South Eastern Railway built a line from Tonbridge to Reading to carry traffic from the north of England, Scotland, and the midlands and the west country to a Channel tunnel. That was built about 100 years ago. The line is still open. Furthermore, the Government have sanctioned — the construction is under way — the reopening of the Snow Hill link through London.

The 250-mile barrier which makes British Rail's freight prospects currently so dismal would be smashed to smithereens by the prospect of a rail tunnel. The further freight has to travel, the more competitive is rail travel. That is one of the most important factors that my colleagues who represent constituencies at a distance from London should bear in mind. That is why I urge them to recognise the importance to their constituencies and the regions of putting as much freight traffic as possible on to the railways.

I should like to comment on the subject of funding guarantees. The funding guarantees given by the promoters are the taxpayers' protection that there will not need to be major public funding of the project. A fixed scheme with guaranteed finance provides the best safeguard against overrun and bankruptcy. I share the anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford and others about the extraordinary moving target that we have had from some of the promoters — in particular, from Mr. Sherwood, who reminds me of the chap who answered the telephone at Accrington Stanley football ground. When asked what time the game began, he answered, "What time can you get here?" The trouble for us is that every time we speak to some of the promoters we gain the impression that they are giving the answers

[Mr. Robert Adley]

that we want to hear. It is essential that the Government stick to guidelines and to a project which has the merit of consistency.

I share the distaste of some of my colleagues for some of the lobbying activities as well as the changing plans from which we have suffered during the past few weeks.

I ask the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) the same question as I posed to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) when he was speaking. I did not receive an answer. The hon. Member for Wigan appeared angry with me for asking it. I believe that we are all entitled to know where the Labour party stands. We fully understand that there are strains and that there are Members of all parties who have doubts and reservations about the project. We understand the parliamentary reasons that cause the Opposition to pursue the argument for a public inquiry. However, we must all decide where we stand on this project—whether we are or are not in favour, in principle, of a Channel fixed link.

There are problems, and we have heard all about them. We know all about the environmental difficulties. None is insuperable. We need a decision to be taken clearly and, I hope, supported by the majority of Members of the House. There will always be those who, for political, anti-EEC, constituency, transport or other reasons, will never support this project. When the debate is over tonight, I hope that Labour Members will at least feel able to say "We have had our debate. We must recognise that this major project is in our national interest and, despite our reservations, we shall support it." I hope that the House will agree to do that.

8.42 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) advanced a powerful case that the greater the rail component of the option adopted, the fewer will be the adverse consequences on the regions and the periphery of the country because of the points about rail freight that he made so well.

I understand and adopt much of the criticism made by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) about the hasty and undemocratic procedure adopted by the Government. I shall answer the point made by the hon. Member for Christchurch. I am in favour of a fixed link for reasons of trade and tourism and because it is the answer to those on the continent to show that we are no longer an island. In his more lyrical moments, I thought that the hon. Member for Thanet, South was going to talk about "this sceptre'd isle". The quicker that we can be seen symbolically and actually to link ourselves to the continent the better. We shall then disabuse and divest ourselves of the island complex which I believe has damaged our national prospects and consciousness over the years.

In principle, I am in favour of a link with the continent. That might be considered a lofty view unless one studies in detail the gains and losses of a fixed link. We have had nothing like the great debate that we need to enable us to make up our minds about those gains and losses. I shall not rehearse the points about the likely effect on our ports and ferries, because they have already been made by hon. Members from both sides of the House. Some options will have a greater impact on the future viability of ferries than others.

What about the regional impact? Kent Members argue that Kent should enjoy some protection. How much more should this be argued for those regions on the periphery? As France is building up the Pas de Calais region industrially, will the Government be tempted to follow that road and build up Kent as a pole of attraction to compete with the Pas de Calais? What will then be the repercussions on the regions which are already suffering grievously? The Government must take this north-south argument properly on board and view the project through national spectacles.

This is a major project of national resource allocation. It will affect other investments. It is not enough for the Government to say, "We are not using taxpayers' money. The market will bear the risk." Clearly, because of our limited resources, we cannot do everything. The project will therefore affect major infrastructure investments, whether it is the Morecambe barrage, the Severn barrage or the second Severn crossing. What assurances can the Government give?

Will the additional road investments in Kent occur at the expense of road investments elsewhere in Britain? Up to £400 million may be invested in new rail programmes. What will be the effect on rail investments elsewhere in Britain? As the project must be seen not only in national terms but in EC terms, to what extent has the EC been consulted about the additional resources that it will give Britain for additional road and rail investment? Has the Commission any particular view on the options that are available?

These are major questions. We do not have a basis on which to make an informed decision. If the Government had carried out this exercise democratically and well, we would have had that basis.

I share the Select Committee's views that there are two front runners—the Euroroute and the Channel Tunnel Group proposals. The other options have too many technical and financial uncertainties. The Euroroute proposal is the more imaginative. It seems to accord with what we are told are the wishes of the great British public. However, it is pushing beyond the frontiers of existing technological knowledge. I was in the Foreign Office at the time of the hard sell on Concorde and have noted the cost overruns that have occurred since.

I am sceptical about the salesmen's puffs, especially those from the Euroroute proponents. Their rail component has altered twice since October, when we were told that they intended to construct the rail link as an immersed tube on the sea bed. After French objections from the SNCF, the Euroroute proponents said that they would complete both links simultaneously, both with immersed tubes. It was only on Tuesday last week that they said that they had abandoned their proposal for an immersed tube rail tunnel in favour of a conventional bored tunnel. That change has significant job implications. Euroroute's revised standard version clearly has less job creation potential than its initial proposal. The sums must be worked out again.

I favour the Channel Tunnel Group's proposal because it would give a 24-hour all-weather link. July, August and September are the worst months for fog in the Channel and the period of maximum traffic. This proposal would be the least environmentally damaging and the least costly and would rely on the most proven technology. It would be the project most likely not to affect ferry services adversely. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis)

said, that proposal would be likely to have the least adverse effects on the regions because it would boost rail freight traffic. The Channel tunnel would join us to the high-speed European rail network via the TGU to Brussels and Paris. It would be an enormous boost to the rail network which is one of our most under-utilised assets. The Channel Tunnel Group's proposal is the least costly of the options and the one least likely to collapse financially halfway across the Channel.

8.56 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): We have heard a great deal about the Brunels. I regret that the United Kingdom is no longer in the position of world dominance that it held when the Brunels were contemplating the Channel. Technical problems gave their contemporaries reason to pause. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that Britain could take advantage of an easier crossing in Europe to sell British goods to the rest of the continent and beyond. After a century during which British Governments have wrestled with the problems of relative international decline, no such confidence exists. The problems that give us reason to pause as we contemplate the possibility of a fixed link between Britain and the rest of Europe have comparatively little to do with technology and everything to do with cost-benefit analysis.

As one who travels to France three or four times a year by ferry and who counts himself lucky if he leaves or arrives on time, I am attracted by the prospect of a form of crossing which will not mean that today's or yesterday's weather or the state of the ferries are reasons for not meeting passengers' expectations. On the other hand, extensive experience of British Rail's southern region and roadworks on the M2 and M20 motorways certainly limit any feeling of euphoria that might otherwise be engendered by a fixed link. At least under the present arrangements some opportunities exist for substituting one carrier for another.

I therefore approach the debate with pessimism on the practical side of the proposals, tempered with optimism on the theoretical side. In theory, I see the faster, easier, more predictable crossing. I see also a further affirmation that in the late 20th century Britain's future lies primarily with the countries of free Europe with which we do 60 per cent. of our trade and with which we are most closely linked in terms of culture and tradition.

It is not surprising that the impetus for this latest affirmation of European solidarity should come from a Prime Minister who has been one of the more trenchant critics of present forms of European unity as well as one who has worked increasingly effectively to improve them.

In theory I see an unparalleled opportunity for British firms to rush their goods cheaply, with predictable delivery times, into the heart of Europe and beyond. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) tried to say, I can imagine Kent filled with new and expanding enterprises which have deserted the M4, the M11 and even the M8 to set themselves up in a county where industrial land can still be rented at £1·50 per square foot and commercial property at £2 or £2·50 per square foot.

If the rail-only option were chosen, the Kent road would shed hundreds, if not thousands, of vehicles per hour on to the railways, as several of my hon. Friends have said. I can even see new enterprises springing up like mushrooms to mop up not only the 6,000 places that would be lost on the ferries, but to make a sizeable dent in the 19·8 per cent. unmployment rate in parts of east Kent. When I stretch my mind, I can even imagine a sizeable proportion of the predicted 10 million or 12 million cross-Channel passengers stopping in Kent long enough to benefit the Kentish economy.

In practice, why should I not be optimistic? I do not believe that in practice an easier crossing to mainland Europe will result in the United Kingdom capturing a larger share of European trade. It should, as Opposition Members have declared, but it will not on present performance. Let us compare the numbers of English people who cross each day to France to raid the French hypermarkets with the number of French people who make the trip in reverse. Cox's apples, British cider, English cheese and British beer are better than their French equivalents, yet not even food from Britain has reversed the popular belief that the opposite is true. That will not happen until we realise that being in Europe means speaking a European language other than ours.

Thanks to the Kent economic development board, I have seen details of the assistance available to the Pas de Calais to ensure that that depressed area of France will derive the principal benefits from the fixed link, if it is built. The average unemployment in that area is only 1·3 per cent. higher than it is in Kent. Its highest unemployment is 1·8 per cent. lower than it is in Kent. The Pas de Calais has already lost most of its obsolete industrial base. Kent has still to lose about 6,000 jobs in its dying coalfields, yet the French Government and the EEC are prepared to pump money into the region on a scale which conjures up the visions of what Rotterdam and the Dutch Government did to British ports.

I understand that any British Government, conscious of Cleveland, Middlesbrough and Govan, will have difficulty in giving preference to Kent, but I also understand that in connection with the fixed link we are talking about competition with the full power of France.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) that in some respects the French will take us for a ride. If the United Kingdom as a whole is to reap the benefit of a fixed link, Kent will have to be helped in the short and medium term to become a centre of excellence which will be a magnet to investment rather than the sump of England through which the national wealth drains away to Paris and the Pas de Calais.

I have enormous respect for the Minister, but he is not the right person to sum up the debate. I shall give some examples of what we want. We welcome the commitment to upgrade the M20 to six lanes, but we wonder whether even that will be enough. We welcome the commitment to continue the investment in Chatham dockyard. My hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Mrs. Fenner) is prevented from speaking in the debate because she is a Minister, but she has been present for most of the debate and I know that she shares my view. My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) is abroad and unable to express his opinion, although Chatham dockyard is in his constituency. The dockyard borders my constituency and many of my constituents work there. The dockyard is potentially one of the most important development sites in Kent. We must be sure that investment continues without hiccup and that it will have enterprise zone status.

If Kent is to compete with France we need a road system in and out of Chatham that will enable the area to realise its full potential. Lille in France is regarded as one

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

of the "research poles" for the whole of France. That means that even under the present regime it can attract grant aid of up to £4,350 per job created. What plans have the British Government to assist the university of Canterbury to match that largesse?

If industrial and commercial land in pockets of Kent is cheap, the same is not true of house prices. We in Kent do not want our areas of outstanding natural beauty to be overwhelmed with new houses, although we need now, and shall need more in the future, to attract skilled labour from other parts of the United Kingdom. Will the Government examine policies on rent controls and other restrictions so as to recreate the possibility of allowing people to move into Kent as tenants, a status which they might be able to afford, rather than keeping them out because they cannot afford to buy?

The fixed link will probably come, more because it can now be built than because anybody in Britain really wants it. I sometimes think that the Prime Minister believes that if she sets a sufficiently steep challenge to British business, it will sharpen itself up to meet it. The evidence for believing that that is how she operates is incontrovertible. The evidence that others are not so resilient is everywhere apparent, although some important strides forward have been made under this Administration. It will be for British industry large and small, and in particular for Kent business large and small, to respond to the challenge. Coming from a constituency which includes part of the county town in which the only sizeable hotel has just closed down, I am not sanguine of success.

Unless the Government plan and execute in partnership with Kent—with a massive investment in roads, depots, manufacturing and commercial sites and in tourism—and unless they work out policies which allow a free market in labour to operate, the fixed link will be a disaster for Kent and a bonanza for France.

9.7 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As a Scot in favour of rail, I will use my three minutes to ask questions.

What thinking do the Government have about accidents, should there be one of the motorway options? What will happen if a lorry jack-knifes? We have seen on the M6 how pile-ups, albeit on slippery roads, delay traffic for hours. What contingency plans do the Government have should that happen in mid-Channel? Without being absurd, would there have to be a great reversal of traffic should such an accident occur?

In relation to the psychology of drivers, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn) said that, as an advanced driver, he had not had any difficulty in the big tunnels of the Alps. What will be the situation with less advanced drivers? After all, only a few drivers need suddenly lose their nerve or suffer claustrophobia to cause an accident. My hon. Friends may laugh, but have they ever been stuck in the Dartford tunnel? I have.

Such matters may have been thought through, but there is no mention of them in the literature that I have seen. In other words, are there contingency plans to cope with the situation of a driver suddenly losing his nerve, say, mid-way through the tunnel? How do the rescue services get through?

The proposals for the expressway suggest that the ventilation problems have been overcome by using the most modern Japanese methods of electrostatic precipitators. Do the Government have a view on their reliability? Many people believe that it is not easy to get exhaust fumes out of a tunnel 25 miles long. If there are to be shafts, as Maureen Tomison suggests, will they, in the view of the Department, be dangerous to shipping?

If the railway tunnel is accepted, are the same problems of exhaust, accident and pile-up serious in the Department's view? I am completely in favour of a rail link, but I am against a road link until I have answers to the questions asked about it tonight, and many others. If I could have the Secretary of State's attention for a moment, I might get an answer. Does there exist, in the Department of Transport, any assessment of the psychological effects on drivers? When the Under-Secretary of State makes his wind-up speech, will he answer that? Has any thought been given to it? If so, what is it?

9.10 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I am obliged to you for having called me, Mr. Speaker, because so far the only member of the Select Committee to have spoken is the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). I am obliged also because I am the chairman of the Tory Back-Bench tourism committee. The effect of the tunnel will be to spread tourism countrywide. That is a point of great interest to me, and a matter that has not been dealt with. I declare an interest as adviser to Best Western Hotels and as governor of the Old Course golf hotel at St. Andrews. I am old enough to remember headlines in the newspapers in the 1930s saying, "Fog over Channel, continent cut off." It was a method of disguising our offshore position. I am naive enough to believe that at long last a decision will be taken and the fog will clear and a tunnel will be built. Unusually in transport matters, I find myself congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on having taken an excellent stance on this matter and got these things afoot.

I am certain that we need the tunnel link, not just for the reasons that have been spelt out tonight, but for many others. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) described themselves alternately as an atheist and an agnostic—I almost heard them say, "Thank God." They are doubting Thomases. I am not. I am a believer that not only should there be a Channel link—a proposal that has been talked about since the time of Napoleon, and on which there have recently been inquiries and debates ad nauseam—but that there should be an alternative to having merely a rail tunnel, which would be nothing more than a shuttle.

The St. Gothard tunnel showed that, once a through-tunnel system was created through the mountain, the service shuttling cars never ran again. We should be in danger of making a decision in favour of obsolescence if we put in a rail-only tunnel, although I feel that a rail connection, without vast marshalling yards, is essential.

On resolution No. 130 in the Select Committee I voted for the Euroroute proposals. It will create 30,000 jobs, 8,000 of which will be in Scotland, 8,000 in the north-east and many in the midlands. The work will be spread, and the proposal follows the widely expressed public view that there should be a link with a road structure through which people can freely drive and through which our freight can

be expedited in its delivery to the continent. In a public opinion poll, over 70 per cent. said that they were in favour of such a route.

For those reasons, the Select Committee got to the stage on resolution No. 130 that we had to vote either for the Channel Tunnel Group or for the Euroroute proposals. Having been advised by technical advisers of great eminence that the proposal for the Expressway was not proven and that the fume extraction problems were too great, we moved a vote. It was carried in favour of the Channel Tunnel Group proposals by one vote — the Chairman's casting vote. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier), the Chairman, is an excellent man. He cannot be with us tonight as he is in the Falklands. He is, quite properly, a member of the National Union of Railwaymen. His casting vote made the decision.

In taking this great and exciting decision in favour of a Channel tunnel, not only is a rail link necessary but in the opinion of the vast majority—not reflected in this debate but elsewhere—a road connection is additionally necessary.

9.15 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): At the outset I should perhaps explain that I did not find the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) amusing. His remarks were extremely interesting, and that is another reason why the Opposition are taking such a stance on this issue.

The debate has clearly demonstrated that the building of a fixed link across the English Channel will have an enormous impact on the entire United Kingdom mainland. That has been fully appreciated and understood by every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate, yet we are about to embark on the biggest civil engineering project this century with only the merest pretence at an intellectually objective assessment of the consequences that are bound to impact on a host of strategic issues throughout the United Kingdom.

During his visit to Kent the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said a lot about a thorough analysis, and, according to him, it has taken place. The schemes have been submitted to his Department, and the analysis must be finished by 17 December—next week. That will be only 31 days since it began.

Ministers in the Department of Transport will have a month at most to try to master the immensely complicated analysis that has been provided by expert opinion, and they will have to do so before they reach a decision. They will have to do so between eating their Christmas pudding and having a glass of whisky when they usher in the new year. I do not envy them that task, but that is the time scale about which we are talking.

The view of the Opposition and of many people outside the House—certainly it is the view of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)—is that the Government are embarking on a procedure that is totally unacceptable. Even the Secretary of State's apparent conversion to the virtues of public consultation has failed to reassure the people that the project will be subjected to the widest possible scrutiny. That is not surprising. I do not know how any consultations can be meaningful when the Secretary of State merely announces in the national press that public comment will be welcome, and invites those who are interested to go to their local government offices to obtain details of the proposals, only to find that all that is available are four flimsy publicity brochures that contain almost no information at all. The Secretary of State then asks for comments on this important issue to be prepared and submitted to him within a few working weeks. That is no way in which to treat the nation. It deserves a much more objective and long-term look at the problems associated with the fixed link.

The *Financial Times*, in its editorial of 29 November, was right when it said:

"Essex residents, it will be recalled, enjoyed the luxury of three lengthy public inquiries spread over several decades before they were finally obliged to accept that an expansion of Stansted airport would take place. A fixed Channel link is a project on a quite different scale with a host of environmental and social implications, few of which have been properly aired. Yet all the people of Kent are being offered are a few glossy brochures from the promoters themselves, a series of short meetings with Mr. David Mitchell, a junior Transport Minister, and an as yet unspecified right to petition"

in respect of a hybrid Bill. The editorial continues:

"The issue of consultation has nothing to do with arguments about the desirability of a fixed Channel link. It would be quite consistent to believe fervently that a fixed link was in the national interest but simultaneously to hold that in a mature democracy a public inquiry was an essential precursor to any form of legislation, hybrid or otherwise."

I could not have put it better myself.

Mr. Peter Rees: If the hon. Gentleman could not have put it better himself, will he state clearly whether or not the Labour party believes the fixed Channel link to be in the national interest?

Mr. Stott: I heard the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech. Representing the port of Dover, which employs 11,000 people, for him to say what he said was a disgrace to his constituents. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Many hon. Members have paid tribute——

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) asked the hon. Gentleman a perfectly proper and correct question. Instead of attacking my right hon. and learned Friend, who is doing a magnificent job for his constituents, unlike the hon. Gentleman, will the the hon. Gentleman tell us whether the Labour party is in favour of the jobs and prosperity which go with the link or whether it is against them?

Mr. Stott: If the Secretary of State would cease to interrupt me, I might find time to answer that question. I did not start my speech until a quarter past nine to enable his hon. Friends to speak. If the Secretary of State keeps interrupting me, I might not get round to answering the question.

Many hon. Members paid tribute to the Chairman and members of the Transport Select Committee, who produced their report in a short space of time. I echo those tributes to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier), but I profoundly disagree with his conclusions in respect of a public inquiry. As hon. Members will know, because they will have read the report, the Committee stated:

"However, it should be recognised that the idea of a fixed Channel link is not new and that various proposals have been widely discussed over many years. The Committee does not therefore recommend that a public inquiry be held."

Even the consultative arrangements that are laid down in the Government's Blue Book have not been adhered to.

The British Ports Association, which recently wrote to the Department of Transport about the issue, said:

"In Section 5, the outline draft of duties to be undertaken by consultants and government experts in the assessment about to

[Mr. Stott]

be undertaken of various schemes, paragraph 5.11.2 requires an assessment of the adequacy of consultation. This specific reference deals with the question of whether the promoters have, prior to finalising their proposals, carried out appropriate consultation with all relevant local authorities, expert bodies and other interested parties.

None of the promoters have sought formal meetings with the BPA nor indeed with any of their members on a sufficiently general basis to, in our view, be capable of being said to be representative. Had they consulted us we would have raised a number of issues, particularly in relation to their freight traffic forecasts. That opportunity has been denied us and since there are now very sharp differences between the BPA's members and the . . . promoters"

on a whole range of issues, we demand more time to examine those proposals.

There have been many concerns expressed tonight over a wide range of issues related to the viability of the projects. Hon. Members who raised those questions—I see the hon. Member for Thanet, South in his place—will recognise, as I do, that there are several examples of large civil engineering projects over the past decade or so, although not quite as large as those that we are discussing tonight. I will refer to several of them.

The Thames barrier was originally estimated to cost £23 million. The actual cost was £461 million. The NatWest tower was supposed to cost £15 million. It ultimately cost £115 million. The Humber bridge—*[Interruption.]* I am being fair. I am not choosing my statistics on a partisan basis. The Humber bridge was originally intended to cost £19 million and it ended up costing £120 million. Those are examples of cost over-runs on very large civil engineering contracts.

The civil engineering contracts that we are talking about this evening, whether they be for Euroroute, Eurobridge, or the Channel Tunnel Group's twin-bore railway tunnel, are for massive programmes of construction. If inflation rises over the next two or three years by even 2 per cent., the interest on the capital employed, particularly for the bigger construction projects, will be enormous.

The Minister will know that the port of Dover, in volume and value terms, handles more cargo than the port of Felixstowe. When I was in Dover in September—I wrote to the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) to say that I would be there—I was told that the earning capacity of the port in freight, passengers, duty-free sales, and so on, was about £500 million a year. That is what Dover earns as a port. More freight goes through Dover than through Felixstowe. Under the Euroroute scheme, the interest on the money borrowed in one year would be £5 billion.

It is difficult, in present circumstances, to arrive at an authoritative estimate of the job losses in Britain's ports that would result from a fixed link. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide some reference points for the efficiency of a fixed link, based on the figures of the current British ports industry. In 1984, the last year for which figures are available, the total container and roll-on/roll-off traffic in the ports of the Thames, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire going to or coming from foreign locations represented 1·702 million units. If a fixed link were to attract just 30 per cent. of the total cargo that goes through the ports which is 0·5106 million units, it would be almost equal to the traffic passing through the ports of Medway, Ramsgate, Folkestone, Newhaven, Portsmouth and Southampton.

According to a manpower survey in 1983, that group of ports employed 5,300 workers in direct port and stevedoring jobs. We all know that there are many ancillary jobs attached to each port that I have mentioned. There is a strong possibility—I put it no higher than that because I have grave doubts — that the actual market share of a fixed link, particularly if it is Euroroute or Channel Expressway, is 100 per cent. I put it to the Minister that when spending such vast sums of money, one has to generate that volume to make a return on the capital. If those companies were out to get 80, 90 or 100 per cent. of the market across the Channel, it would have devastating effects on the ports of Colchester, London, Medway, Whitstable, Ramsgate, Dover, which employs 11,000 people, Folkestone, Newhaven, Shoreham, Portsmouth, Cowes and Southampton.

In addition to the loss of jobs that might follow the introduction of a fixed link, there would be considerable wasting of investment in port infrastructure, such as quays, terminal buildings, railheads, and so on. I cannot understand why the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was so blasé in giving way to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company's attempt to force through a Bill in the House to extend the facilities on its quays. The Minister must be aware of the damage to the ports that could follow if a fixed link were agreed to, particularly the port that was under debate a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East) *rose*——

Mr. Stott: I do not have time to give way.

Most of the debate concerning a fixed link has concentrated on the ports situated close to the Channel crossings, and the effect that such a fixed link will have on a wider range of our port facilities in the United Kingdom. That has not yet been touched upon, except in a sedentary intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

I draw the attention of the House to the recent report by Phillips and Drew, which says:

"We believe that a more important source of new traffic will be the diversity from smaller ferry ports to the fixed link. At present most of the long haul ferry routes from Newhaven, Portsmouth, Felixstowe, and Harwich etc are only marginally profitable and are effectively subsidised by the ferry companies' profitable short sea routes."

It goes on to say more about that, but ends by saying:

"The effects of the closure of many of the regional routes does not seem to be taken into account in some of the fixed link assessments."

That is right. If the ferry companies are forced off the Channel route, some of their marginal enterprises in other ports in the United Kingdom will suffer.

As the hon. Member for Thanet, South said, we are an island nation. I agree that we have a long and proud maritime history. On many occasions from this Dispatch Box I have said that I am profoundly worried about the decline of our ports industry and our merchant fleet. I do not think that there can be anybody, whether he agrees or disagrees with a fixed link of whatever nature, who can doubt that if the fixed link were to go ahead it would have a devastating effect on our ports and merchant shipping fleet.

I have already said to the hon. Member for Thanet, South that 1,600 ships were registered under the British

flag in 1975. Today that figure is down to 640. This great island nation has only 640 ships registered under the British flag. Any further losses, particularly in ferry capacity, would have a profound effect upon our defence capabilities. The House must recognise that. We would have serious difficulties in mustering a maritime operation on the same scale as we did during the Falklands conflict.

Some of my hon. Friends mentioned the problems of the regions. My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) spoke of his worries. Throughout the debate, and during the weeks preceding it, all of us have had several submissions. One is worthy of further scrutiny. Presumably it has been given to all of us. It comes from the northern regional consortium, a group of local authorities representing the north of England — somewhere that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), who keeps barracking me from a sedentary position, represents. Therefore, she should take more notice of what the consortium said. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, the consortium is profoundly worried that the creation of a fixed link would act like a magnet to draw and suck in industry in and around that area. I, too, am very worried about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North and other hon. Members discussed the employment implications of a fixed link. It is undeniable that in the short term a fixed link could generate thousands of jobs, but I suspect more on the French side.

The Pas de Calais, which has been mentioned, is in a special development area, and will attract millions of pounds of European finance. Even if some of the employment projections are true, there is serious doubt whether all the contracts will come to the United Kingdom. The Phillips and Drew report says:

> "However, the employment created during the construction phase will be of little interest to the directors of the winning scheme whose primary concern, as a commercially financed company, will be to maximise the returns to their shareholders. Obviously, this will involve buying materials outside the EEC should they be priced more competitively."

That is absolutely right. Therefore, there can be no guarantee that the so-called jobs that will come from the construction of a fixed link will come to the United Kingdom. The other day someone said to me that a German company, employing Portuguese labour, using Japanese steel, might be involved in one of these projects. That is not as fanciful as it may seem. It is a real problem. I am not convinced that all the figures that have been bandied about by Euroroute, Eurobridge and others regarding the employment potential will stand the test of scrutiny.

We are asking the House of Commons to make a judgment. Do we seriously believe that there is sufficient information or that the projects that have been submitted to the Government for evaluation are right? Do we seriously believe that long-term employment and the ports industry will be adequately protected by what the Government decide to do in a couple of weeks' time? I do not. That is my personal view.

I fully understand that many of my hon. Friends have said that they prefer a fixed link. Whether they have that preference or another, the House of Commons and the nation should be given the benefit of a public inquiry before we do anything else. That is what we are demanding tonight.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The debate has served three useful purposes. First, it has enabled hon. Members to present their views to the Government on whether there should be a Channel fixed link. Secondly, hon. Members have been able to discuss what characteristics the link should have and which of the four proposals is individually preferred. Thirdly, hon. Members have highlighted areas of special concern that need safeguards or investigation. Throughout the debate, Ministers have listened carefully and they will ensure that the wide range of matters that has been drawn to our attention is passed to the assessment teams.

The Government value the advice in the report of the Select Committee. I thank the Committee for completing its report so soon, at considerable inconvenience to its members.

In opening the debate for the Opposition, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asked whether the Government would carry out a proper assessment of the important matters arising from the Channel fixed link proposals. Britain has 20 assessment teams and the French Government have similar assessment teams at work, which are considering in depth the individual areas, such as civil engineering and road safety. I can tell the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that, in the case of accidents, there will be television surveillance and arrangements for cross-over from one lane to another. There will also be buffer parks at the entrances to any drive-through system, so the hon. Gentleman's point has been met by the promoters. However, we shall be studying the assessment to discover whether it has been met adequately.

Assessment teams deal with programme, capital and operating costs, project management and third party insurance. I was asked earlier what would happen if the scheme had to be aborted. I can add that promoters are required to put up a bond or insurance to cover the cost of removing any structure that has been erected by them. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but I have been asked for this information.

Traffic, revenue, cash flow, tax and revenue implications and financing will be assessed not only by the Treasury but by Schroder Wagg, the merchant bankers. It is essential that the project is viable and that no public money is needed. That is a sine qua non. The scheme must be viable, and that is why we have such a strong team to assess whether it is.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said that the interest costs were high, and asked whether inflation would be taken into account. I can assure him that it will be. The hon. Gentleman said that the costs were £5 billion. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman employs a turf accountant to do his accountancy, because he has exaggerated the figure 10 times. Having sat on the Transport Bill Committee with the hon. Gentleman, I am not surprised by a 10 times exaggeration in his figures.

Mr. Stott: I realise now that what I said was incorrect. It was an easy mistake to make. I meant to say £500 million.

Mr. Mitchell: I could not resist pulling the hon. Gentleman's leg on that faux pas.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North asked about shifting sands in the Channel. The hydrology team will

[Mr. Mitchell]

assess that. We also have a frontier control team, which will assess the risks of rabies. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) was anxious about that. We have assessment teams for maritime and environmental requirements. I can tell the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) that tunnel spoil is one matter that they will consider. In this case, we have also brought in Land Use Consultants, Roger Tym and Partners, and others to help us with that assessment. We have assessment teams considering the adequacy of the consultation process, the protection of the marine environment, economic and employment implications, legal matters, railways technology, inland rail and inland road infrastructure and security. I assure the hon. Member for Linlithgow that the psychological effects of driving through a long tunnel will be considered by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, which is advising us in that area.

Our assessment team will consider those important matters in depth.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Member for Wigan took some of my time and I have many points to cover.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that the decision has been taken. I must tell her that no decision has been taken, and cannot be taken until we have received the reports of the assessment teams. The hon. Lady also said that a poll had been conducted in Folkestone, and she made much play with a newspaper questionnaire. The House will recognise that someone who fills in a questionnaire and returns it must have strong feelings about the matter. Understandably, those who have strong feelings in Folkestone are the people whose properties will be affected. Had the hon. Lady wished to give the House a fair assessment, she would have added that the chamber of commerce and the hoteliers association in Folkestone voted in favour of a fixed link.

Many Kent Members, including my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and my hon. Friends the Members for Ashford (Mr. Speed) and for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), asked about roads. Whether there is a fixed link or not, there will be a substantial increase in traffic through Kent in the future. We estimate that by 2003, the peak average flow will have increased from 7,000 cars a day to 13,000 cars a day. Lorries will have increased from 500 to 1,100 a day, and coaches from 400 to 700 a day. Of course, the promoters have produced higher figures taking into account the traffic that they expect to attract. Although we have not yet agreed those figures, we are considering them critically.

As my hon. Friends have said, that means that we need road improvements. Not only will the M25 be completed by 1986, but the missing link of the M20 will be completed in 1989 — subject, of course, to delays caused by a public inquiry. But provided that we are not delayed, we shall make rapid progress. The Maidstone bypass will be improved and the A20 between Folkestone and Dover will go ahead when we know the form of the link. There will be a dual three-lane carriageway from the M25 to the mouth of whatever project is chosen.

Several hon. Members asked about the future of rail. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover asked whether a fixed link would remove normal British Rail services to his constituency. British Rail tells me that it will not. The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) and my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury mentioned the substantial potential gains for railways, railway passengers and freight. For example, the journey from London to Paris would take about three and a quarter hours, which compares favourably with flying from Heathrow and with going by ferry. It also compares favourably in terms of passenger frustration and the fact that passengers must often carry their baggage. The hon. Member for Carlisle, who is sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen and understands such matters, was right to say that if British Rail can obtain a link with the European rail network, the long distances will give an enormous advantage to rail compared with road transport and should succeed in shifting much freight traffic from the roads on to the railways. Many of my hon. Friends have covered that point.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North and the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) asked about investment and in particular whether British Rail would be able to carry out the investment required. British Rail will be able to invest, subject to its proposals being financially viable when presented to the Government. If the promoters require more from British Rail than it can economically and viably justify, the promoters will have to pay the additional costs.

Many hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Deptford, have referred to the environmental effects of the link. The right hon. Gentleman remarked that the heritage of the Kent coast is everybody's heritage. He is absolutely correct and during the debate many hon. Members have taken the same view.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover referred to Shakespeare cliff and the downs behind the cliffs. I have been to see the cliffs and the downs and I understand the impact that the link will have in that locality. The assessment team working jointly with the Department of the Environment and with Land Use Consultants recognise that, wherever the link is situated, it will cause environmental damage. The Government do not seek to hide that. It is an essential part of our assessment and the House will have to consider in due course, whether the link is worth the environmental damage that we report.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover and my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford raised the question of monopoly. That is a very important aspect and the Government will include it in their assessment of the possible effects on the ferries. While the promoters are free to decide tariffs and commercial policy, they will be subject to United Kingdom and EC competition legislation. That means that there is the potential for reference to the Office of Fair Trading, investigation, report, persuasion and, if that fails, reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. After investigation, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has power to invite the Secretary of State to make an order requiring changes, so there are substantial safeguards in relation to monopoly.

Mr. Aitken: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I have many points to cover, and I have no time to give way now.

There has also been substantial consultation by the promoters. For example, they have produced a substantial parcel of material on environmental assessment work. That parcel of material is available from responsible organisations, direct from the promoters or through local authorities in the affected area. In addition, there have been field visits by the promoters and an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall of the Palace of Westminister. I must refer rather apologetically to the room at the Department of the Environment which was mentioned during the debate. I agree with hon. Members who visited it that it was inadequate, and it has now been changed. If hon Members visit the DOE again they will find a larger room with a quarter of the space devoted to each of the proposers, with videos, models, and things of that nature.

Mr. Silkin: The hon. Gentleman may have given instructions for the room to be changed, but as it was closed today it seems that the hon. Gentleman's action was not taken early enough to assist in this debate.

Mr. Mitchell: The room is kept locked unless people wish to see it, as we do not wish to risk its being vandalised. There are expensive models provided by the promoters and we have a responsibility to ensure that they are properly looked after.

There has also been consultation by the Government. We have inserted advertisements in a number of newspapers and the large number of replies received are all being assessed. Officials have visited every council in Kent and have reported the results of their assessment. As has been mentioned, I have been on listening visits to Kent. Ministers have also listened to today's debate. We have had the advice of the Select Committee and there will also be the hybrid Bill procedure.

The essence of the Opposition attack has been to ask why there is to be no public inquiry. The real question is why the Opposition have fastened on to that. It is a cynical attempt to obtain support from opponents by pretending that it will not kill the project, thus reconciling the differences between Members sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen and those sponsored by the National Union of Seamen and the Transport and General Workers Union. A public inquiry would take three years. There is no way in which investors and investment institutions will keep money standing idle and earmarked for the project if it does not go forward at this stage.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight asked for a short, sharp local public inquiry. The Select Committee dealing with the hybrid Bill has the right, with the leave of the House, to sit in Dover or Folkestone to hear local opinions. I think that it is better for people in the area to be able to present their views direct to the Select Committee rather than to a Queen's counsel.

If there is a public inquiry, the Secretary of State appoints the inspector, who reports back to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State then takes the decision. In this case, rather than a local public inquiry, it is right that the matter should be decided by the highest tribunal in the land—this House and the House of Lords—as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) pointed out so clearly. Had we had a public inquiry and a hybrid Bill—statutorily, we must have a hybrid Bill—objectors would have incurred the cost of going through their objections twice. Moreover, a hybrid Bill Committee, rather than a public inquiry, has already been approved by the Select Committee.

Many Members have questioned the point of having a fixed link at all. In 1980-81, the Select Committee on Transport had plenty of time to consider the matter in depth. Its report refers to the benefits of speed, convenience, comfort and a clear passage free of adverse weather conditions and the like. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury described his recent trip across the Channel, the difficulty of humping luggage around, and so on. With the fixed link, one could board a train in London and be in Paris three and a quarter hours later, without any of the problems associated with lugging baggage and being at the mercy of bad weather.

Hon. Members have referred to the spirit of Brunel and Victorian achievement, but that is not the point. There are perceived advantages to passengers, to exporters and to much of our economy. A rail link to all the major EEC markets would be a major change. It is the assessment of users and the advantage to so many of our fellow men and women in this country that attract investors and promoters alike. Let us see whether our assessments prove that the link is a worthwhile project from their point of view. If it is, let it go ahead. If it is not, let it fall.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 277.

Division No. 19] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*

Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moate, Roger
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*

Shersby, Michael
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Hormonal Growth Promoters

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered explanatory memorandum dated 19th November 1985 concerning a proposal for a Council Regulation amending European Community Document No. 7948/84, draft Directive amending Directive 81/602 on the prohibition of certain substances having a hormonal action and any substances having a thyrostatic action; and supports the Government's view that, while the provisions of this proposal should take into full account the interests of consumers, livestock producers, the meat trade and the pharmaceutical industry, they should be firmly based on a rigorous scientific assessment of the available information as to the safety in use of hormone growth promoters.

This proposal would ban the marketing and use for fattening of five hormonal substances widely used as growth promoters for cattle. As the House will recall, they are administered to animals in the form of implants placed at the base of the ear. The active ingredient is slowly released and improves the weight gain and feed efficiency of the treated animal. The ears are, of course, discarded at slaughter. The therapeutic uses of testosterone, progesterone and oestradiol 17 beta would be allowable.

It is worthwhile reminding the House about the means we have used for some time to control these substances in the United Kingdom. Any product containing one or more of them must be licensed under the Medicines Act 1968 before it can be legally sold or supplied. Any company that seeks a licence has to submit to my Department detailed evidence, firstly about the safety of the product. That includes the safety of the consumer who eats the meat from a treated animal, the safety of an operative who handles it, as well as the safety of the animal itself. Of course, we need evidence of efficacy — that it will do the job claimed for it — and evidence of the quality of the product as it will be marketed.

That evidence is scrutinised rigorously and, if necessary, we seek more evidence from the company on any point that is not clear. We are meticulous on the subject of the residues that may be left in the meat or other produce from a treated animal. The instructions for use which we approve state precisely what withdrawal period or equivalent should be observed after treatment so that residues at undesirable levels do not get into the food chain.

In that scientific scrutiny the licensing authority — Agriculture and Health Ministers — are assisted by the advice of the Veterinary Products Committee, a statute-based committee of independent veterinary and medical experts in the various disciplines, including medical toxicology. If necessary, it can draw on advice from further committees that report to Health Ministers. Medical experts from DHSS and food science experts from my own Department attend its meetings. I can assure the House that the scientific evidence is scrutinised most carefully before those products are licensed. The United Kingdom is not alone in subjecting those products to scrutiny. Other countries such as the United States do the same and we have their experience, as well as that of other regulatory authorities, to build on.

There is now wide experience to suggest that those hormone growth promoters, when properly used, are safe for consumers, those who implant them and the treated animals themselves.

I can understand the consternation in the European Community when it was discovered that some baby food made from veal was contaminated with di-ethyl stilboestrol, DES. The debate that followed gave rise to the directive 81/602 which banned the use of substances having a thyrostatic action and stilbenes and allowed for scientific assessment of the five hormone growth promotion substances at Community level. That assessment was undertaken by a committee of European scientists headed by Professor Lamming of Nottingham university. Three years ago it cleared the three natural substances, progesterone, testosterone and oestradiol 17 beta, for safety. Its work on the two synthetic substances, trenbolone and zeranol, was within an ace of completion recently and I am confident that they, too, were on the point of being cleared. It is a pity that Professor Lamming and his group were not given the facility to finalise their work.

I hope that the House feels reassured as to the safety of those compounds.

The Government find it extraordinary that, in the face of the weighty scientific evidence that has been meticulously scrutinised by more than one authority, including its own scientific working group, the Commission is now proposing that the use of those compounds in the way approved by the licensing authority should be banned.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): I apologise in advance for the fact that the early hour of the last train may prevent my being present later. Will the hon. Lady assure the House that no discussions in the all-Ireland conference will inhibit her Department's ability to stand up for what we believe to be right? We know that the Irish Ministry of Agriculture has already accepted this ban. The hon. Lady is arguing against it. Will she assure the House that no discussions on that arrangement will inhibit her ability to continue to stand up in favour of the type of scientific evidence that she is giving against this flat ban?

Mrs. Fenner: I can only assure the hon. Gentleman that we strongly believe that the scientific evidence should weigh in the balance. I hope that we shall be supported by the House.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Some of us were told in the briefing that scientific investigation into zeranol and trenbolone has not yet been completed. That was the case at the end of November. Are we to believe that it has now been completed? This is an important matter.

Mrs. Fenner: I understand that it has been completed. However, there will not be another meeting of the working group——

Mr. Mark Hughes: They have suspended it.

Mrs. Fenner: I believe that the working group has been suspended and that it is not working. The investigation certainly is within an ace of completion. Short of another working group, that is the best answer that I can give.

Mr. Dalyell: Has it come to a definitive conclusion?

Mrs. Fenner: I am confident that the inquiry is within an ace of completion and that these items will have been cleared. I can add no more.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my hon. Friend answer a more basic question? What is the point of giving these poor animals these nasty drugs and chemicals to make them bigger and fatter when we have an all-time record surplus of beef, are running out of storage space for beef and have to export it at 15p a pound to Russia?

Mrs. Fenner: There are those who argue that the use of these growth promoters adds to the beef mountain. The way to deal with surpluses is to have a proper pricing policy, not to put up a bar to improvements in efficiency. These products allow for a more efficient conversion of animal feeding stuff to protein and produce a leaner carcase. That is a benefit to the livestock producer and to the consumer. I do not believe that a tool of management which helps efficiency so plainly and is proved to be safe should be denied to producers.

How well would a ban work in practice? The origin of the current controversy and proposals for legislation was the discovery of di-ethyl stilboestrol in baby food from veal which came from animals reared in France. There was a ban on the use of di-ethyl stilboestrol in operation in France at that time, but it did not stop its illegal use. That illustrates the difficulties of enforcement that we would face if the proposed ban came into operation. Black market supplies of licensed drugs might increase and more use might be made of the cheaper and more dangerous substances, such as DES. There is no veterinary involvement to advise on the right dose in those circumstances. By contrast, if the products known to be safe in use are authorised, the veterinary profession can discharge its responsibilities. I believe that the consumer's interest would be better safeguarded than under an absolute ban of this nature.

I turn now to the question of imports from outside the Community. Every year about £500 million worth of beef and offals are imported from third countries, nearly all of them authorising the use of growth promoters, especially zeranol. Under this document imports would not be possible from treated animals in those countries, but it is not clear how this provision could operate. It is difficult to foresee third countries operating a ban like this in their own territories. On the other hand, if they do not, they will have to be allowed to certify that their meat and offals come from untreated animals. If that is the case, why could we not operate a similar system in the Community for the purpose of intra-Community trade and so allow the use of these growth promoters where member states wish to do so?

I might make another point about import certification. If imports are allowed from a country that uses zeranol —provided such imports are certified as coming from untreated animals—producers generally in that country will still enjoy the benefits available from these growth promoters. That would perhaps enable the price of supplies to the EC to be shaded down, thus disadvantaging EC producers. I am sure that the House will agree that that is not satisfactory.

But there is a deeper question than just hormone growth promoters. It is whether we are prepared to trust scientific assessment. I know that the Commission, in making this proposal, has reacted to consumer pressure from one or two member states and from a surprising vote in the European Parliament. But is doing so it has flown in the face of scientific evidence. That has its dangers. There are quite a number of areas of concern where consumer or other public anxiety is similarly at odds with scientific assessments af safety. But, surely the way forward is not to disregard the science but to try and reassure the public.

The proposal now before the House, though one understands how it came about, is ill-founded and it marks a precedent that the member states of the Community may come to regret if they adopt it. I should, perhaps, note in passing that some tentative alternative thoughts emerged last week in the course of Council discussions at official level. The idea of a prohibition was still featured, although after an interim period. For all the reasons that I have set out, the Government remain opposed to this kind of scientifically unjustified ban. I reaffirm that we have to trust the assessments that are made on these compounds and continue to base our policies on stringent and meticulous scientific judgement.

10.28 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I stand for the first time at the Dispatch Box to discuss proposals which, by their nature, are extremely complicated. I am sure that the Parliamentary Secretary will agree with me not only that the proposals complicated but that the argument changes day by day.

The question of hormones is important. Hormones occur naturally in the body and are produced by various glands. Natural hormones are produced in plants. The properties of sexual hormones make them useful in reproduction. Such hormones not only influence sexual behaviour and development but enhance growth. The extra growth-promoting hormones can be implanted in the animal — usually in the base of the ear. Such implantation is used extensively by British farmers and other farmers throughout the world. This method is attractive to British farmers, because they tend to raise steers and feed them on grass, whereas many EEC farmers raise bulls but enclose them and feed them on cereals.

It could be argued that our method is more acceptable from an animal welfare point of view, but the issue is more complicated than that. Steers, as a result of castration, are unable to produce growth hormones, so British farmers feel that they need to implant growth hormones to ensure that bulls and steers can be equated in terms of beef production.

Growth-promoting hormones promise farmers good financial returns, and for small outlays they can enhance the weight gain of an animal by between 10 and 20 per cent. claim the manufacturers of the products. In addition, as the Minister said, the meat produced is healthier, because it contains less fat. The Opposition believe that it is desirable that consumers should have the choice of being able to buy healthier meat in that respect.

Farmers are supposed to observe strict rules when using hormones. If the rules are ignored, it is possible for high concentrations of chemicals to remain in meat for human consumption. To put this in perspective, the British Veterinary Association claims that it knows of no instance when man has suffered from the toxic effects of residue in treated animals.

The dangers of hormone residues were first publicised in 1980, as the Minister said, when traces of a particular synthetic hormone were found in some Italian baby foods

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

and certain veal products. That led to the frightening development of adult sexual characteristics in babies. As a result, the EEC banned the use of those synthetic hormones, known as DES, and related synthetic hormones. That was in 1981. The ban did not affect other growth-promoting hormones so long as they were already in use in member states.

Subsequent to the ban on DES and related synthetic hormones, the EEC considered what further steps it should take to control the use of growth-promoting hormones. It commissioned a programme of investigation, under Professor Lamming of Nottingham university into a range of products. It was envisaged at the time that if the substances were cleared on the basis of rigorous scientific assessment, that would provide a reasonable basis for considering the continuation of their use.

It is important to put dosage levels and their consequences into perspective. Representations from the British Veterinary Association suggest that while enormously raised levels of hormones in meat could be harmful to humans, a normal bull or cow, for example, or even many plant products, have higher levels of testosterone or oestrogen-like substances than the regulations permit for a hormone implant.

Support for a total EEC ban on the use of hormones is growing, and the British Government now appear to be out on a limb on this issue. According to *Farmers Weekly* of 6 December, farmers seem to be in favour of a ban. Indeed, an article in that publication is entitled:

"Jopling is out of touch with beef producers."

It is interesting that farmers seem to be supporting the ban. It is difficult to say from this sample of farmers whether it is representative. One questions whether farmers are happy to do without the £30 or £40 — whatever the figure is—per animal that they can get by using growth promoters.

There are more problems than the possible side-effects on health of hormone-based growth promoters. For example, there is the massive beef surplus in Europe, and the falling demand for meat and beef products. Clearly, concern for the full protection of the consumer must be one of Parliament's key priorities. We support the notion of making decisions about the use of hormones based on scientific evidence rather than responding emotionally on the matter. However, if a scintilla of doubt arises from the scientific assessment of these products, showing that they could be dangerous to the consumer, the Government can expect our total opposition to the use of these products. On those grounds, we shall not be dividing the House on this measure.

The Opposition feel disappointed at the way in which the Commission is now moving towards a total ban on growth promoters before all the scientific work has been completed. This is illogicial, irrational and wasteful. The Government have made clear their position, and the Minister did so again. Essentially, they are saying that the EEC legislation should be based on the vigorous use of scientific assessment. It is encouraging to see that the tests carried out by Professor Lamming have already cleared oestradiol, 17 beta, progesterone and testostrone. Work on the other substances is either complete, or near completion, and the Parliamentary Secretary referred to some of the additional hormone products that were cleared before the Lamming committee was wound up.

However, there are conditions surrounding the use of these substances — one being that they should be administered properly. The Minister is aware that enormously raised levels of hormones in meat may be harmful to the consumer. Will she confirm that she is satisfied with the current methods of administration of these substances, which might affect human health? The organisation, Consumers in the European Community Group, has expressed its concern about the monitoring of the use of hormones.

The conditions are that implantation must take place in a part of the animal's body that will be discarded at the slaughterhouse, so that a high concentration of chemicals cannot get into the food processing chain. Secondly, the farmer must observe the withholding period — this applies to synthetic hormones—and end the treatment a specific number of days before the animal is slaughtered. The CECG feels that these conditions are difficult to monitor and enforce, as farmers, vets, and the meat trade acknowledge. The CECG has expressed its concern that tests, recommendations for use and safety margins have not so far been strict enough to ensure full consumer protection. I should welcome the Minister's comments on those points.

That brings me to the unnumbered explanatory memorandum issued by the MAFF on 19 November and signed by the Minister. I understand that document Com(84)295 of 12 June has been superseded by document Com(85)607. Why do we seem to be discussing an out-of-date document? Surely it is possible for the Department to ensure that the House has up-to-date documents. The same thing happened last week when we discussed sugar. It does present difficulties.

Paragraph 3 of the MAFF memorandum refers to provisions for imposing close controls on the administration of permitted substances. That would include identification of treated animals. How much will such a system cost? Presumably it will be done by computer, but there will have to be field staff to collect the data, the data will have to be vetted for accuracy, and the information will have to be analysed. It could be a long and costly exercise. What use will be made of this information?

Paragraph 2 indicated that EEC legislation could permit the use of hormones for therapeutic purposes. If so, how will it be possible to establish, for example, that hormones used in imported beef from a third country were for therapeutic reasons rather than for growth promotion?

Reference is made in paragraph 3 to the labelling of products indicating whether or not growth enhancers have been used in their production. How will this system be enforced? Will it not be open to all sorts of abuse? However, the Opposition do not object to the principle of labelling, as it gives the consumer freedom of choice to decide what kind of products he wants. It is in the interests of farming to win and maintain the confidence of the consumer in relation to the safety of products.

Although drugs licensed under the Medicines Act 1968 may be used legally, the results of the tests evaluating those drugs are not made public. Consumers are concerned that adequate tests on hormonal products should be carried out effectively. What steps does the Minister intend to take to help build up the confidence of the consumer through the provision of such information to the public?

According to the MAFF, where there has been illegal and uncontrolled use, the use of these hormones has flourished. It would be interesting to know the countries

in which this has taken place. If that is the case, a ban could clearly have the opposite effect to the one intended. The Opposition do not want to see illegal use of these products. If a ban is imposed by the EC, what steps will the Minister be taking to prevent such illegal use?

Since the explanatory memorandum was prepared on 19 November, the EC Agriculture Ministers meeting has taken place. According to the 23 November edition of the magazine *European Report*, a total ban could be put to the vote at the next meeting, which I believe is today and tomorrow.

In *Farmers Weekly* dated 6 December the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is reported as saying that he did not think that the issue was one where he could use his veto. That is presumably because he does not regard it as an issue of vital national interest. Will he state, therefore, whether that ban will be tested by a majority vote? Clearly, a ban on the use of hormones as growth promoters would have an effect on patterns of trade. The restrictions would apply to inter-Community trade in meat and livestock, imports into the EC and exports to third countries.

There are major trade implications for third countries using growth promoters, such as Argentina, the United States of America, Brazil and Uruguay, which supply the EC with about 450,000 tonnes of beef and veal each year. What discussions have taken place with those countries, and how much warning would they be given in the event of a ban? Does the Minister agree that short notice of a ban would be regarded by some as unfair, especially to the poorer countries?

The explanatory memorandum of 19 November 1985 states that a ban could become operative from 1 January 1986. That baffles me because we seem to have a great deal of beef in production. What will happen to it? Will it be destroyed, or will special dispensations be made for beef already in production? Will the Minister tell the farming community what will happen to existing stock which is in the 18-month productive cycle, if the ban of 1 January 1986 is enforced?

The EC report of 23 November 1985 states that Commissioner Andriesson said that the provisions of the draft directive would provide an adequate basis for limiting the risks of fraudulent use of hormones. Will the Minister explain to the House exactly what the EC Commissioner meant by that, since it conflicts with the views of many people who are associated with farming. It is felt, for example, that it will be extremely difficult to distinguish whether a hormone-based substance is used for therapeutic or fattening purposes.

Finally, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the British Veterinary Association believe that hormone-based growth promoters must be fully tested and properly controlled. They also believe that consumer protection methods which reflect sound scientific principles will always attract full support from consumers. They feel that the requirements of the consumer can be met without going to the extreme lengths proposed by the Commission in document 84/295. They also feel that new substances should be administered by a vet or someone under his direction. It is not surprising that those two institutions would make that recommendation, but it is worthy of note. They add that the sampling of animals—both meat and meat products — would call on resources out of all proportion to the need, and that competent authorities in member states should be trusted to carry out such checks using agreed methods.

10.49 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Responsibility for the meat surplus is increasingly being attributed to anabolics. That is erroneous for several reasons. It is true that there are extensive public stocks of meat—720,000 tonnes at the end of July this year. It is true that typical growth promoters make the conversion of grain to meat more efficient. However, those facts are not related. Meat surpluses occur in countries where anabolics are banned, just as they occur in countries where they are used.

Anabolics make cattle raising more efficient. It is a basic economic axiom that efficiency means greater economic benefits for all. Hormones increase growth rates of animals. For example, the farmer adds protein to the animal in a shorter period at less cost in feed. The result is more efficient use of capital and land. The amount of meat available to the consumer does not increase but is supplied more efficiently at less cost.

Since the gestation period for producing offspring cannot be altered, the number of animals remains unchanged in any fixed period. Animals are not larger than normal; they simply mature more quickly. The total available quantity of meat remains the same unless herd size is increased or decreased. That has nothing to do with growth promoters.

Anabolics, when used in the safest manner through implants, result generally in a 10 to 15 per cent. improvement in total weight gain and a 10 to 15 per cent. improvement in feed conversion ratios. Those are savings that can be passed on to the consumer.

Allegedly, a shift in consumer tastes has occurred and people are eating less beef. That is largely incorrect. The decline in the consumption of beef today in Europe is related to price, not to shifts in taste. Thus it stands to reason that the current slump in beef consumption could be turned around by allowing the greater efficiency of feed conversion ratios to contribute to overall lower prices. Increasing efficiency would not cause the cattle raiser to lose revenue. His operation would be more efficient. In the long run he would gain because of the expansion of the market for his product that would result from lower prices.

Today's meat surplus in Europe is largely the result of short-term policy measures and is not a long-term problem. To associate meat surplus in Europe today with the use of anabolics is to adopt a very short-sighted approach. One of the main causes of today's meat glut is the attempt to reduce the size of dairy herds. More animals are consequently being slaughtered. That will not last for ever. Then where shall we be in five to 10 years when the dairy problem is solved? Meat shortages, with accompanying higher prices for the consumer, will be the result.

To reject the use of anabolics on the basis of meat surplus in Europe alone also evades a fundamental issue which concerns all. A very large sector of the world's population is suffering from lack of protein in the diet. Europe and the other industrialised countries must set an example so that the less fortunate can learn and adopt more efficient techniques instead of receiving charity and emergency relief. Europe is considering rejecting those techniques which could be so essential in combating one of the greatest problems of the modern world —

[Mr. Andy Stewart]

starvation. Furthermore, anabolics, especially the safest ones which are implanted, risk being rejected not on rational economic grounds but because they are efficient and economically beneficial.

10.54 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): There is a surplus of European beef, with over 600,000 tonnes of meat in intervention store. It has been said that the balance of the cost of storing that meat equals the advantage of using hormones. Live weight has increased by 15 per cent. through the use of hormones. We have to look at the subject overall and balance the arguments against hormones with those in favour and see what conclusion we arrive at.

Is it desirable to have a 15 per cent. increase and to have 600,000 tonnes of meat in intervention stores? As we have heard, the analysis is that stilbenes and hexoestrol have already been banned by the Community and, in addition, one can make a strong case for banning anabolic steroids, the commercial names being Ralgro and Finaplix. Whether there is a case for that should rest on the scientific evidence of their harmfulness to humans. Methods have been made available through the Food Research Institute and the institute at Compton to measure the effects of anabolic steroids on animal residues.

There are immunological techniques that will negate the effect of growth inhibitors in the animal's body and thereby marginally increase the growth of the animal. With good foundation the natural hormones that are increased as a result of that process increase the weight gain of meat. We must wait for the Lamming committee to report before we get an objective assessment on these matters.

On balance, one must say that there is a case against the use of hormones because of the reduction in the overall quantity of meat produced. We must also recognise that, the elasticity of demand for beef being sensitive to price, if less beef is produced the price will increase and that will benefit the farmer. We must take that factor into consideration. The production of more pure beef breeds will assist in the production of more quality beef, which is desirable at present. We must also recognise that if hormones are banned, there will be more bull beef. Comments have already been made about that.

The technology that has enabled use to be made of hormones has, in part, been responsible for over-production of beef. That is fuelled by certain commercial interests, which have an interest in increasing beef production through the use of their products. I can fairly confidently predict that the rest of Europe will probably reject the notion that our hormones are safe, and that the implantation of hormones in beef will be banned. That could occur early next year, and it could affect our exports of meat to the rest of Europe.

Many farmers now agree that a ban on hormones would be helpful. I believe that the industry is divided on the issue and that we shall find an equal number of farmers who are in favour of the use of hormones. Therefore, I do not think that there is a clear view on the part of farming in favour of the banning of hormones.

With hormones being used for cull cows and animals such as holsteins, which do not have a good conformation, there is a case for hormones being used to increase their conformation. We must rightly ask whether that is desirable when we could be producing more genuine quality beef.

However, serious drawbacks have to be set against those arguments on behalf of British farming. Our farming is geared to the use of steers and castrated animals on extensive systems. It has been said that it would be extremely difficult for farmers to change overnight to more intensive systems, and to bull beef systems at that. Therefore, this country cannot face a change with such rapidity.

The powerful point has been made that, if hormones are banned, there will be an increase in illegal trade in veterinary products with growth promoters. If we cannot regulate that, there could be a serious problem in the illegal under-the-counter trade in those products.

The value of the use of hormones to the United Kingdom beef trade is £40 million. That is a significant sum. It is clear that Europe has less to lose than Britain on the banning of hormone promoters. We should wait for the Lamming committee to report, and for factual scientific evidence on which to judge those products objectively.

11.1 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary the same question that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) asked. It is the crucial point about the proposals. What will happen if we find that the Council of the EEC votes for the ban by a majority vote?

It is all very well all of us in the Chamber going away with all-party agreement and no vote, and saying, "We are all in complete agreement, and these ludicrous regulations must not go through," but if our wisdom is not echoed in the Council of Europe, and it decides to ban, we shall have a bit of a panic on our hands. In agriculture, we do not want the same to happen as when quotas were introduced. At the time we said that we were fighting to the death for price restraints. We did up until the last moment, when the EEC decided that quotas were the answer, and overnight we had to adopt quotas. That caused a little bit of a problem, which is probably an understatement.

What will the effects be? What are our plans if our wisdom is not accepted in the EEC, and we end up with the ban?

I agree entirely with the Government's plans that we should come to conclusions on scientific matters based purely on hard scientific evidence. In this case, the scientific evidence does not warrant a ban. Similarly, if we are making law, it should be based on reality, not on emotion. Much of the movement towards a ban on hormones has come about through emotion. Emotion may not affect us in the Chamber, coolly, rationally and sensibly debating the issue, which I bet we shall never hear on "Yesterday in Parliament" or "Today in Parliament", but never mind. Emotion might not affect us, or the splendid gentlemen who wrote the report in complex scientific language, but unfortunately the people about whom we should be most concerned are the housewives, the 35 million housewives and consumers who will be purchasing foodstuffs produced in this country and the EEC.

Many hon. Members probably do not have the report as standard reading in the Tea Room or at home, but instead of reading the superb EEC documents, they should

look at one of their wife's magazines, such as "Cosmopolitan", "Woman's Own" or even the latest pseud foodie magazine "A la Carte". There hon. Members will see time and again the message now being put across that any hormone implants are bad for us.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). Some of the decline in the consumption of beef has come about because of changing consumer taste——

Mr. Andy Stewart: And price.

Mr. Maclean: The price mechanism is there as well, but I think that the reason is changing consumer taste.

The greatest danger to British agriculture is not the effect of the weather or the EC, not the effect of politicians——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is the Government.

Mr. Maclean: No; not necessarily of the Government, or even the Opposition. The greatest threat to British agriculture is changing consumer trends. Time after time, we find in our postbags reports suggesting that too much fat, too much sugar, too much starch and too many carbohydrates will kill us within the next two years. Last week, I received a form to fill in detailing every item of food that I eat in the House of Commons in one day. I believe that if I go to the Lower Waiting Hall next week, the form will by analysed by computer, which will predict the exact week of my heart attack.

Such information is being given to the housewife all the time. If, at the end of this month, a majority of members of the EC conclude that hormones should be banned—however irrational or wrong that decision, which is not based on scientific evidence, may be—we can bet our bottom dollar that all television programmes, all food magazines and all the magazines read by housewives will carry that information. It is no good our saying "Hormones are not dangerous and everything will be all right," because the housewife will believe that those products are unsafe. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food must be ready to cope with the problem and to give advice to farmers.

I agree with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that there is no unanimity among farmers. I believe that the NFU in Cumbria has decided, by an extremely narrow margin, that artificial hormones should be banned but that natural ones should not be banned. I suspect that it came to that conclusion, not on an analysis of the scientific evidence, but because it believed that a ban on artificial hormones might placate public opinion, and that the housewife might be convinced that natural hormones are good for her. However, the NFU in Cumbria agreed completely that there is no question of Britain implementing the ban unless it applies equally in effect —not just in law or in name only—to all EC countries. It must be seen to be enforceable and it must be policed.

There is no case for banning those products, and my hon. Friend's stance is correct. But we must be prepared to face the day of judgment at the end of this year, when Britain will be in splendid, knowledgeable isolation, and the EC imposes a ban to which we must rapidly adjust. Let us start warning our farmers now about the consequences.

11.7 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): With my hon. Friends, I await with interest the Minister's response to the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). It deserves a serious answer. Because of his comprehensive speech, I wish to put only two different questions to the Minister.

The first question concerns anecdotal evidence in relation to the black market in veterinary drugs. Are the Government worried about that? It seems that cheap, though relatively effective, stilbenes are on the market for those who wish to indulge. Therefore, control is becoming increasingly difficult. Are the Government as worried as some other people are about the black market in veterinary drugs? If they are worried, what mechanisms do they suggest for its control? I believe that it will be extremely difficult to control it. It is all very well for politicians to clamour for controls, but this is easier said than done. Of course, a complete ban would drive hormone sales underground. Controls on residues in meat are extremely costly to operate, so I must ask how much this will cost.

My second point is completely different. For four and a half educative years, I was a Member of the European Parliament or Assembly—according to taste—and saw a good deal of the scientific set-up in Brussels, which in those days was impressive and efficient. I should be the last to sneer at Brussels bureaucrats, as those people operated extremely effectively and had access to the best information throughout Europe.

Against that background, why should Commissioner Andriessen suddenly blurt out opinions when he knew damned well that an expert scientific committee was due to report to him? Professor Lamming has every right to be angry, because his conclusions were prejudged. The information that I managed to garner at the weekend was that the Commissioner was pandering to certain vociferous elements in his own country, West Germany and Belgium. That is no way for the Commission to operate.

Will the Government try to extract from Andriessen an explanation for his behaviour? The Minister is right. Either we believe in proper scientific assessment or we do not. If Commissioners take action on what seems to be whims and fancies that is not the way in which Brussels should operate. There may be another side to the story, but I am not sure that there is. Did Andriessen take action on the basis of advice and agreement with his colleagues on the Commission? If not, why was he allowed to get away with it?

In the final analysis, this is a matter which should be raised with the Commission as a collegiate body. There are other examples—it would be out of order to cite them in this debate—in recent times in which, on a scientific basis, the Commission has been shown to have acted somewhat irresponsibly. If I am being unduly harsh, doubtless the Minister will tell me so.

11.11 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): This is a well-informed and rather surprising debate. It seems to be common ground in all parts of the House that hormones can lead to live weight increase and thus benefit the consumer, that there is no scientific evidence so far to justify the claim that the use of hormones causes any damage, but that scientific research should be continued to see whether there is any risk of damage. I think that it is also common

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

ground that if such evidence emerged it would be an extremely serious matter and the Government should act at once, no doubt with the support of the whole House.

It also seems to be common ground that the European Community in its wisdom is moving towards a ban on hormones for two reasons. One appears to be that the removal of the growth progenitor in this way will assist in reducing the increasing surplus of meat caused by overproduction. The other seems to be the fear that the products in question might be used inappropriately, obtained through the black market and not subject to proper control.

I should declare an interest, as a company in my constituency with which I have a connection manufactures the products in question and has been good enough to brief me on the subject. I believe that the veterinary profession, the manufacturers and the distributors in this country have a very heavy duty to ensure that the products are distributed and used correctly. They should work with the Government to ensure that standards in this country, which I believe to be higher than in the rest of Europe, are maintained.

The argument that hormones lead to greater growth and therefore greater overproduction and excess in Europe is the most curious of all. Despite massive publicity given to worldwide hunger and the fact that one third of the world's population goes to bed hungry every night, it is said that we should be worried about overproduction in Europe. European practice tends to be followed elsewhere. If we ban the manufacture and use of these products, we shall eliminate productive capacity, make hormones more expensive and set an example that will be followed. A ban in Europe would be counterproductive for those who are short of food. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will advance these and other arguments that have been advanced when standing up to her European colleagues who want to impose a ban.

11.16 pm

Mrs. Fenner: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

It is quite clear that this subject exercises the minds of many hon. Members. May I tell the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) that I have become used to his presence on the Front Bench so I did not realise that this was his first attendance at the Dispatch Box. I naturally congratulate him. He shot his questions with tremendous rapidity so, if I do not answer all of them, I shall ensure that after a close study of *Hansard* I provide answers to those that I have omitted.

The hon. Gentleman told us that *Farmers Weekly* said that the Minister was out of touch and asked whether farmers wanted a ban. *Farming News* took quite the opposite view and asked, "What hormones?" It went to Balham high street—*[Interruption.]* No, this is not the man on the Clapham omnibus but the man in Balham high street.

Mr. Home Robertson: Are they farmers?

Mrs. Fenner: No. They buy meat in Balham.

The paper asked shoppers to list their priorities when buying meat and one said that she bought fresh meat once a week

"and the principal thing I think about when buying meat is to maintain variety. I am not worried about all the health talk I hear about meat. I do not believe it."

If consumers do not share that view, farmers are free to produce hormone-free meat just as they produce free-range eggs and organically grown vegetables in response to the market.

Several hon. Members have mentioned monitoring. Since December 1980, we have operated the national surveillance scheme which is designed to monitor the extent to which residues of veterinary substances, including prohibited substances, are present in the meat supply. The scheme is designed to serve as a check on controls on the distribution and sale of veterinary substances laid down in the Medicines Act 1968, to keep a watch on the observance by farmers of directions for use and any recommended withdrawal period between the last treatment and sale for human consumption and to enable export certification to be provided in accordance with the requirements of some importing countries.

The statistical design of the scheme is such that, if there is a residue problem in more than 1 per cent. of a given animal population, there is a 95 per cent. probability that it will be detected. That is achieved by collecting at random 300 tissue samples annually from the carcases of animals from the main slaughter populations—cattle, calves, sheep and pigs—from slaughterhouses in Great Britain. Chicken and other poultry were brought within the scope of the scheme as from September.

The Government fully appreciate the importance of effective residue controls for the protection of public health, and the development of our national monitoring arrangement provides a useful assurance to consumers. It is significant that the same statistical sample is used in the United States although the animal population is much larger there than in Britain. The results of the surveillance scheme have been generally very reassuring. I assure the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that for stilbenes, which are now banned substances, none of the samples analysed in the past 12 months have been positive.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked why we are discussing an out-of-date document. The answer is that we are not. The 1984 document is modified by the 1985 document, and the constitutional elements that relate to article 43 of the treaty stem from the 1984 document. The hon. Gentleman asked, as did the hon. Member for Linlithgow, whether the scientific evidence on trenbolone and zeranol was or was not complete. The full evidence has been submitted to the scientific working party but the working party did not complete its work because the Commission cancelled its last meeting—a move which we deplored.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked me to confirm that I am satisfied with the administration of these substances in the light of consumers in Europe having asked especially about observance. Traditionally, there has been reliance on farmers to use animal medicines in accordance with the directions for safe use and to observe any stated withdrawal period between the last treatment of the animal and sale for human consumption. We monitor the degree to which farmers observe the recommendations through the national surveillance scheme for residues in meat, which I have outlined in some detail. We published in August a code of practice for the safe use of veterinary medicines on farms, which reminds farmers of the importance of using medicines properly and

f keeping adequate records. The operation of the code ill provide useful experience on which any future egislation to control the use of veterinary medicines can e based.

Hormonal growth promoters are prescription-only nedicines and may be administered only in accordance vith the directions of the veterinary surgeon who is esponsible for the care of the animals concerned.

Mr. Viggers: Am I right in thinking that our European artners are not always as scrupulous as we are in bserving the rules? Would it not be a good course for us o follow to encourage our farmers to exercise care rather han yield to the blandishments for a ban?

Mrs. Fenner: That is a course that we follow onstantly in ensuring that good standards are universal hroughout the Community. We do not always succeed but ve have managed in areas of animal welfare to introduce irections which are harmonised throughout the Community and which raise standards. Britain has been very much a part of that process. I understand what my non. Friend says and I can assure him that we try to ensure hat that which he suggests is done.

Consumers within the European Community suggested hat residue testing needs to be stricter. Some controls have already been adopted and the Council is considering what further measures may be needed. It has been proposed that animals which have been implanted should be identified by a mark.

It has been agreed that animals or carcases would be sampled for residues. That may give some reassurance to my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers). The scale of sampling is being debated. If illegal levels of residues are identified, it has been agreed that the authorities would trace the carcase to the farm of origin and carry out further tests there.

Animals containing illegal hormones could not be sold for animal or human consumption. Animals with excess residues of authorised substances would need to be kept under surveillance until those residues fell.

Arrangements for marking animals are yet to be discussed in detail in Brussels. We intend to ensure that any system that is introduced will be cost-effective. We have some anxiety about that.

The possibility of labelling to satisfy consumers has been mentioned. We believe that it would be difficult to label all cuts throughout the chain.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked how the proposal would operate in respect of third countries. That is not clear. It seems that meat could be imported, as I said, from third countries which already authorise the use of hormones provided that the animal has not been treated. If that is acceptable for third countries, we cannot understand why it is not acceptable for intra-Community trade. Nations could then use their own system of growth promoters but for intra-Community trade could certify that the meat had not been treated in that way.

The Government continue to argue for third-country implications to be taken fully into account before decisions are reached. The hon. Gentleman asked whether the decision was sudden and whether third countries had had sufficient warning. I said that some different arrangements, including an interim period, were being discussed last week at official level, and that could be of assistance.

The hon. Gentleman referred to discussions with third countries. I am not aware of any such discussions. The proposal has been introduced at short notice. He referred also to meat already in store. The disposal by us and third countries of meat treated with hormones would have to be a matter for discussion.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the use of the veto, and whether the matter would be decided by a majority vote. The proposal is a draft regulation based upon article 43 of the treaty of Rome, which allows the Council to adopt measures by a qualified majority vote. However, directive 81/602 requires a unanimous Council decision on authorisation.

My right hon. Friend has already queried the legal validity of the proposal in its present form and he will continue to press those points in the Council tomorrow.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) agrees that scientific evidence should provide the basis for the use of hormone promoters. He referred, correctly, to Professor Lamming's working party; we regard the cancellation of its last meeting as deplorable. He also asked what contribution the growth promoters had made to the beef surplus. At the end of November, EC stocks were about 650,000 tonnes. The cyclical peak in production in 1984 coincided with the imposition of dairy quotas and the consequent high level of cow culling. The forecast for 1986 is a better balance for the EC as a whole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) said that housewives have been worried, which is why some farmers think that a ban might not be a bad thing. As I said, farmers can respond to any market request. He asked whether housewives' lack of confidence might cause a further decline in meat consumption. The National Food Survey statistics show a small increase in beef consumption in the most recent quarter — an increase of 4 per cent. between January and September 1985 conpared with the same period in 1984. I do not believe that housewives are now lacking in reassurance. One would always want to feel that they are wholly reassured about any such substances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Maclean) asked what would happen if the Council voted for a ban. My right hon. Friend the Minister will remind the Council that a vote on this issue would be illegal in the Government's view, and it would then be open to the Government to challenge the legality of such a vote in the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): Do I understand the hon. Lady to say that the Government will challenge the legality in the European Court?

Mrs. Fenner: I said that it would be——

Mr. John: Open.

Mrs. Fenner: —open to the Government to challenge the legality.

Mr. Ron Davies: (Caerphilly): Answer the question.

Mrs. Fenner: That is as far as I am prepared to go at the moment.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow expressed his concern about anecdotal evidence of a black market in veterinary drugs and about whether stilbenes were in circulation. The enforcement of the law relating to distribution lies with the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Recent successful prosecutions demonstrate that enforcement seems to be working. However, we agree that the cost of

[Mrs. Fenner]

enforcement will increase substantially if all growth promoters are banned. We have firmly pointed out to the Council of Ministers that we believe that that will happen.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) asked sotto voce whether it was the Commissioner, Mr. Andriessen, or the whole Commission that was responsible. In the days of Mr. Lardinois, the Commissioner would have taken that responsibility, but he would have paid great attention to scientific evidence. Are the Government prepared to require an explanation from Mr. Andriessen as to why he behaved in this extraordinary way?

Mrs. Fenner: Yes; but we believe that it was a decision taken with the consent of all the Commission. At the last Council, my right hon. Friend protested to Commissioner Andriessen about this issue. He intends to do so again tomorrow. I must reiterate that the proposal was issued with the consent of all the Commission.

I hope that I have covered the majority of the points made by hon. Members. It has been a valuable debate which has reinforced our concern at this decision, which is based on not waiting for the scientific judgment of the last two hormone growth proposals.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered explanatory memorandum dated 19th November 1985 concerning a proposal for a Council Regulation amending European Community Document No. 7948/84, draft Directive amending Directive 81/602 on the prohibition of certain substances having a hormonal action and any substances having a thyrostatic action; and supports the Government's view that, while the provisions of this proposal should take into full account the interests of consumers, livestock producers, the meat trade and the pharmaceutical industry, they should be firmly based on a rigorous scientific assessment of the available information as to the safety in use of hormone growth promoters.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the statutory instrument motions.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Social Security

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Specified Diseases) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.

Agriculture

That the draft Agricultural Holdings (Fee) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 7th November, be approved.

Consumer Protection

That the draft Asbestos Products (Safety) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 21st November, be approved.

Forestry

That the Forestry (Modification of Felling Restrictions) Regulations 1985, dated 25th September 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 22nd October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved—[*Mr. Lennox-Boyd.*]

Question agreed to.

Dangerous Goods (Imports)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]*

11.35 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): With 13 shopping days left before Christmas this is a timely occasion to debate the importation of consumer goods, many of which are dangerous. Each year about 7,000 people in Great Britain die in home accidents—more than are killed on the roads. An estimated 3 million sustain injuries which require medical attention. This is too high a toll in human suffering and cost to the community. A proportion originates directly through the use of dangerous imported consumer goods.

I appreciate that the consumer has certain safeguards through regulations under two statutes. The Consumer Protection Act 1961 imposes safety requirements on prescribed goods and or requires that they be accompanied by specific warnings or instructions. Examples are the Toy (Safety) Regulations 1974/1367, which require that toys shall not have sharp edges or spikes and that there is no possibility of children swallowing glass eyes from a toy's face; the Pencils and Graphic Instruments (Safety) Regulations 1974/226 which require that pencils and paint on pencils should not contain more than a certain amount of lead; and the Babies' Dummies (Safety) Regulations 1978/836 which set safety standards.

Under the Consumer Safety Act 1978 goods can be required to conform to certain standards and persons can be prohibited from supplying goods which are not considered to be safe or which do not meet certain safety requirements.

Two examples of appropriate legislation under the Act are the Novelties (Safety) Regulations 1980/958 and the Novelties (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1985/128, which prohibit persons from supplying balloon kits containing benzene, tear gas capsules, and so on, and the Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1985/99 which prohibit persons from supplying toys, erasers, and so on, which look like food, smell like food or flowers, or taste like food.

I appreciate that prohibition orders have been introduced under the 1978 Act, such as the Toy Water Snakes (Safety) Order and the Expanding Novelties (Safety) Order, but they cease to have effect after 12 months unless the Government seek to renew them.

There is worrying evidence concerning a Japanese novelty known a "Grobots", "Grobugs" or "Grobeasts" which grow from about one and a half inches long—up to 200 times their size in water. They have become the subject of after dinner conversation in some households. However, if accidentally swallowed by a child, such a toy could cause a serious throat or stomach obstruction requiring surgery.

A prohibition notice was placed on the importing company on 21 November. That was not exactly speedy, since it was almost a fortnight after the first newspaper report was published.

That action illustrates the inadequacy of the present arrangements. It closes the door after the horse has bolted. It has not stopped the dangerous product entering the country. It has not stopped its distribution among the trade, or its retail sale. It does not prevent another company from importing the product. If the Expanding Novelties (Safety) Order had been renewed, none of this need have occurred and children would not have been placed at risk.

The penalties are inadequate. Contravention is an offence punishable by a fine up to a maximum of £2,000 and up to three months' imprisonment. Surely £20,000 or more would be more realistic, taking into account trade profits and the risk to which children are exposed.

The Department can ban a product, but its name can be quickly changed. It can ban by compositional structure, but analysis takes time. It can also give a general warning. Indeed, the Association of Toy, Stationery and Fancy Goods Wholesalers is operating a code of conduct—a dangerous toys early warning service—for its members and retail customers. Its members and local trading standards departments are notified about toys which are found or thought likely to be dangerous. It immediately informs its members who advise the retail shops. This is admirable, but it lacks legal sanction and—to judge by the way that defective goods enter the United Kingdom before Christmas—it is inadequate.

I place on record my thanks—which will be echoed throughout the House—to the *Yorkshire Post* for its investigatory campaign into unsafe imports. It has done a public service by highlighting such dangerous products as illegal toys, cheap, second-hand tyres and household goods.

I will give some examples of imported consumer goods on sale, starting with toys. There are bicycles, the front forks of which collapse; a soft toy, filled with small pieces of foam rubber, split and the pieces of foam created a hazard to a child; a mobile telephone with jagged edges on its metal bell; wooden toys with excessive lead in the paint with which they were coloured; a plastic gun, the plastic bullets from which shot through the air with excessive force; a toy crow, the face of which was held on with nails; a zig-zag toy with a sharp spring which trapped the fingers; a cloth doll found to contain a broken machine needle in its head; a teddy bear in a cage with a high lead and chromium content; water snakes from Taiwan which contained contaminated water; dolls with spikes in their heads. I have seen one, the head of which easily came off to reveal a nasty four-inch spike; and a drumming teddy bear from China with loose eyes, sharp edges and a high lead content.

Toys are not alone, even if they are more topical. Other dangerous consumer goods which the United Kingdom has imported include curling brushes from Hong Kong with poor wiring which made them electrically unsafe; an electrical amplifier from Taiwan which was electrically unsafe; hammers, drills and saw blades from the far east which shattered when used; cosmetics from Taiwan which contained excessive levels of heavy metal; a Rinko Pool filter of Japanese origin which was electrically unsafe and caused one death last year; medical first-aid kits from India which should have contained sterile dressings but were found to be contaminated; a car jack from Taiwan, an estimated 35,000 of which were sold in the United Kingdom, collapsed on a user causing hand injuries, rightly highlighted by the Consumers' Association. Indeed, that organisation in its current issue of *Which?* magazine records how two children died through such dangerous imports. In one case, a three-year-old died after swallowing and choking on the wheels of a toy lorry kit

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

from inside a chocolate egg. In another, a nine-month-old baby girl was strangled last Christmas in the elastic of a cot toy.

A relatively new safety standard for toys has been introduced by the British Standards Institution. It covers the mechanical and physical properties of all types of toys for children up to 14 years old and specific requirements for small toys for children under three years of age. While producers of goods complying with BSI standards attach kite and safety marks to their products, foreign manufacturers and importers do not have to comply with that code.

In recent days a product named "Snow Flakes" has been brought to my attention. I showed it to the Minister just before the debate began. It is an aerosol container which allows a pine-scented spray to give the appearance of snowflakes. It is dangerous and should immediately be banned because not only is the container inflammable but anything it sprays becomes inflammable. Will I wait another fortnight, until after Christmas, before hearing good news about that? I hope not.

Yesterday the *Mail on Sunday* illustrated a toy racing car powered by a live hamster, a form of cruelty which is almost inconceivable. I am pleased to learn that this American product was totally withdrawn from sale this morning.

I have shown that there is real concern about the range and potential danger of many consumer goods. Nobody wants to be a killjoy at Christmas, but it is clear that the festivities of some will be marred by injury caused by unsafe goods.

What can be done? The Government explored the possibility in their White Paper on the safety of goods published in July 1984, yet its recommendations have not been put into legislative form. I had hoped that it would be foreshadowed in the Gracious Speech, but it was significantly omitted, although I appreciated the pressure on the business timetable.

I have, as a result, sponsored an early-day motion, which has the support of 110 right hon. and hon. Members from all parties, this Adjournment debate and a private Member's Bill. I hope the Minister will say that he will support that measure.

Surely, the cardinal switch that we should make to protect the consumers is to place the legal responsibility on the importer. He should have the duty of care. We should expect an importer to check the safety of goods before placing an order. For example, an importer of goods with a potentially high lead content should send one off for a laboratory analysis and that evidence should be presented to the Customs and Excise on entry of the goods. The Customs and Excise officer should be able to pass confidential information on to the trading standards officers. Enforcement staff should be able to seize and control dangerous goods.

I welcome the EEC draft directive on product liability, and the proposal relating to toys in particular. I hope that the Government will take the lead in Europe in this sector. We need to stop dangerous imports from reaching the shops. It is unrealistic to have to wait until a complaint is made following the use of the products. By that time, the goods have been passed through the country. The point of entry is the correct stage to stop these goods, and I hope that this course of action commends itself to my hon. and learned Friend, and that, notwithstanding the pressure on Government time, he will support my endeavours.

11.45 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I support my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) in his admirable cause. I have a certain amount of sympathy for my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, who has to work in an extremely problematical sector. At times, it is difficult to be fully objective in deciding what is dangerous and what is not.

Every year, family tragedies arise from dangerous goods that should never reach our shops and stores. I shall add only one product to the list that my hon. Friend the Member for York has already given the House. Hon. Members may have seen the television series "Shogun", in one episode of which a group of assassins in dark masks and capes were extremely adept at hurling spiked discs, with lethal effect. I have sent one of these instruments of death to my hon. and learned Friend. They are easily obtainable in London, and are manufactured in Taiwan. I have heard through the usual channels that the case is to be investigated, not merely by the Department of Trade and Industry but by another important Ministry. I am now waiting agog to find what the Chinese symbols on these objects mean.

I join my hon. Friend in expressing the hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will use his talent to direct his attentions to finding a simple and quick method of removing dangerous toys from the shelves of shops. If necessary, there could be a quick application to magistrates. I emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend, that the onus should be on the importer. I have been in manufacturing for many years, and I see no difficulty for an importer, when he has placed an order with a manufacturer, insisting that a sample is sent. It can then be submitted to an inspector so that the importer can be reasonably satisfied that he is not importing dangerous toys. I am sure that will go a long way towards minimising the number of tragedies that occur.

11.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) for raising this important topic on the Adjournment of the House.

I know that many people have expressed concern that, from time to time, unsafe consumer products imported from abroad find their way on to the market place and then into our homes. It is right that we should be concerned. Consumers are right to expect that the goods that they buy —wherever they were made—afford a reasonable level of safety, and conform to relevant safety legislation. Our manufacturers are also right to be concerned that the importation of unsafe goods represents unfair competition for them. It may be that the foreign manufacturer is unaware of our safety requirements, or that he is cutting corners on safety to undercut his competitors on price. The net result is the same—whenever unsafe products from abroad find their way into shops, it is against the interests of both United Kingdom industry and United Kingdom consumers.

We should not forget, of course, that in the United Kingdom we enjoy an open economy and that the

consumer benefits greatly from the freedom of choice represented by the ability to buy goods from all over the world. Many importers perform a valuable service to consumers in this country. In some cases British manufacturers are themselves importers as they find that the best way to provide their customers with the goods that they want is by drawing on manufacturing resources overseas as well as on their own factories.

But the safety of our imports is of major concern to me. It has been estimated that as many as 80 per cent. of the total number of consumer safety complaints made to trading standards officers concern imported goods. There are, of course, wide powers already available — and frequently invoked — to prevent unsafe imports from reaching the consumer. My hon. Friend the Member for York referred to the Consumer Protection Act 1961, which empowers my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to make safety regulations covering specific classes of goods. The Consumer Safety Act 1978 modified and extended these powers. The later Act widened the range of requirements which could be imposed in safety regulations, and gave new powers to the Secretary of State to prohibit the supply of goods and to require suppliers to issue warnings. Enforcement of consumer safety legislation was vested in trading standards departments of local authorities.

My hon. Friend also referred to a number of instances when those powers had been used. I certainly intend to ensure that they continue to be used whenever it is appropriate to do so. For example, there has been much concern in recent years about the safety of poor quality electrical plugs and sockets, many of which come from the far east. We are therefore preparing new regulations to prohibit the supply of dangerous plugs and sockets. When the regulations are in place, plugs and sockets will have to comply with relevant British Standards and it will be illegal to supply imports which fail to meet those standards.

But regulations do not—and cannot be expected to—cover every type of consumer product. Where there are no specific regulations, the Consumer Safety Act allows my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to make prohibition orders or issue prohibition notices to ban the supply of any goods he considers are unsafe. These powers were introduced to provide a procedure whereby dangerous products, whether manufactured in the United Kingdom or abroad, could be withdrawn from the market quickly without going through the inevitably lengthy process of making regulations.

I should of course make it clear at this stage, however, that the vast majority of goods on the market are not dangerous and that the vast majority of traders are responsible and do not need the force of prohibition orders or notices to persuade them to remove from sale goods that are shown to be dangerous. Problems are usually resolved in informal discussion between trading standards officers and the traders concerned. There was a problem recently, for example, with certain Japanese metallic marker pens containing xylene, the fumes from which could cause eye irritation. As my hon. Friend is aware, importers voluntarily agreed to add warning labelling of those items advising that the pens should only be used in a well ventilated environment.

But from time to time, where traders have not co-operated, stronger action has been necessary. As my hon. Friend mentioned, early last month I banned an importer by means of a prohibition notice from supplying a range of expanding novelty items made in Japan. My hon. Friend was not entirely satisfied with the time scale by which that ban was brought into effect, but it is right that where it is possible to proceed by voluntary action, every effort should be made in an attempt to do so. Initially at any rate, we should seek to achieve our objectives in that way. That was our initial approach in the example that I have mentioned. The supplier of these expanding novelties—dignified by the name of Grobugs—was not prepared to co-operate and a prohibition proved necessary.

The legislation that we have currently available has prevented the supply of many dangerous imports. Many potential injuries have been avoided and, no doubt, lives have been saved.

Nevertheless, we recognise that despite all the existing powers, more needs to be done to ensure a safe market place. Experience has highlighted the absence of preventive prodecures for identifying and halting the supply of unsafe goods, particularly imported goods, before they reach the shops. That has been apparent in many cases, for example when large numbers of unsafe electric curling brushes, imported from Japan, were on sale in the United Kingdom a few years ago. The brushes contravened the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations, and many traders were prosecuted. But the case made it clear, however, that further powers were needed to halt dangerous items higher up the chain of supply. It was with such problems in mind that we issued last year a White Paper on the safety of goods. It contained a number of proposals designed to prevent dangerous goods, particularly—though not exclusively—imported ones, from reaching the shops.

At present, trading standards officers have the power to seize and detain goods for ascertaining whether safety requirements have been contravened, but only if they have reasonable cause to believe that such provisions have been contravened. It is proposed that trading standards officers should have the power to detain goods which they believe have not been supplied in the United Kingdom, for the purposes of ascertaining whether the goods satisfy safety requirements, including the proposed general safety requirement. That will allow them to detain imported goods to see whether they are safe, whether or not they already have grounds for believing that they are unsafe.

In addition, trading standards officers are to be empowered to require first suppliers to produce any relevant documents, such as test certificates, evidence of quality control procedures and so on, so that trading standards officers can ascertain whether safety requirements may have been contravened.

Powers of seizure are at present limited to the taking of samples for the purpose of testing or use as evidence. They do not permit authorities to halt directly the sale of goods, even where there are strong reasons for believing that the public may be at risk. The Government propose to empower trading standards officers either to suspend the supply of, or, if necessary, to seize, goods that are in the supplier's possession. That power could be used against anyone in the chain of supply, from the importer down to the street trader.

Local authorities are usually aware of manufacturing and retailing activity in their locality, but often have difficulty in identifying importers. It is, therefore, proposed in the White Paper that Customs officers should be authorised to provide trading standards officers with

[Mr. Michael Howard]

information about consignments of goods imported into the United Kingdom. This information will be extracted from that already collected by Customs and Excise for entry purposes. It will enable authorities to have warning of the arrival of goods, and valuable information about recent past imports, and, if appropriate, to investigate their safety further with the importer or, if necessary, to seize or suspend unsafe imports at the point of entry. Trading standards officers will be under a duty to respect the confidentiality of information received from Customs and Excise.

Another major proposal is the introduction of a general safety requirement. All suppliers of consumer goods will be required to ensure that their goods are safe in accordance with sound modern standards. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be empowered to approve particular published standards for the purpose of this requirement. Suppliers will be required to comply with the standards, or to show that their products afford at least an equivalent level of safety. That will be a significant advance over the present system of piecemeal regulation, as it will cover product areas not covered by safety regulations, and should prove a flexible form of requirement which adapts easily to changing technology and safety standards.

Some people have called for even more stringent measures. But the Government consider that first suppliers, including importers, should be allowed to retain flexibility in choosing how to set about ensuring that their goods meet safety requirements. It is, therefore, not proposed to introduce a rigid requirement that first suppliers must carry out specified checks. Nor is it proposed to introduce across-the-board compulsory-type approval or certification schemes. But the counterpart of flexibility is responsibility. First suppliers who rely on other suppliers for the specification of products, or materials, for finished products should consider carefully the degree of confidence they place in their source of supply. They should not rely on information supplied by another person unless they have taken reasonable steps to verify that information.

The new measures that we propose will be particularly potent weapons in the enforcement officers' arsenal. They have been welcomed by industry and consumers alike, and I assure the House that we are planning to introduce them as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits. No one was more disappointed than I that we were unable to introduce them in the present Session.

As for the Bill proposed by my hon. Friend, we shall have to wait and see exactly what it contains. I am keen to have all the measures proposed in the White Paper on the statute book as soon as possible, and am sympathetic to my hon. Friend's cause, but I cannot tonight give him any specific assurances about the degree of assistance that we shall be able to offer him. In the meantime we are not standing still; we are making good use of our existing powers and will continue to do so whenever the need arises. Work is, of course, proceeding on updating British Standards in advance of the general safety requirement.

Safety-conscious firms abroad who wish to export their products to Britain will have nothing to fear from our proposed measures. They will not be used to discriminate against imported goods in favour of British goods but they will be used to weed out—we hope at the dockside—any dangerous goods from abroad which at present can be intercepted only at the point of retail.

My hon. Friend referred to the recently adopted European Community directive on product liability, which should also help to curb the import of unsafe goods. The main purpose of the directive is to impose throughout the Common Market a system under which manufacturers and importers will be strictly liable for damage caused by defective products that they put into circulation. We hope to implement that directive alongside the proposed new consumer safety legislation. My Department has issued a consultative document seeking views on the detail of implementing the directive.

My hon. Friend also referred to the import of toys. We are indeed anxious to secure a European directive on toys, although progress in relation to this has not been as speedy as we should have hoped.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) referred to a weapon which is said to be incendiary but which he, in fact, handled. I am not sure that that added to the safety of the procedure. He is right to say that I have passed responsibility for it to my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Home Office, because it comes within the definition of an offensive weapon, although I cannot promise him that that Department will afford him the services of translation of the Chinese characters which appear on the surface of the item, as he would apparently desire.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for York in congratulating the *Yorkshire Post* on its excellent work in drawing the dangers of unsafe consumer goods to the attention of the public. I hope that the debate will play a part in achieving that objective. The consumers themselves have an important part to play in being alert in endeavouring to ensure that the goods that they purchase and use are safe. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Pension Ownership

1. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made with the extension of pension ownership.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): Major improvements in benefits for early leavers from pension schemes in the Social Security Act 1985 will come into effect on 1 January 1986. These will mean that early leavers' rights are protected against inflation and there will be a new right to a transfer value. These measures correct a major injustice affecting members of occupational schemes.

Mrs. Currie: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Would he care to hazard a guess as to how many more people are likely in future to have their own pensions as a result of legislation passed in this Parliament?

Mr. Fowler: I wish to make it absolutely clear that we want to see a major extension of occupational pension schemes. About 11 million people who are already in schemes will stand at some stage to gain from the reforms which we have already passed into legislation.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State reward those who have provided themselves with small private pensions by withdrawing the proposal to reduce housing benefit by £500 million, as that proposal will strike at those very people?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman must wait to see what the White Paper states about housing benefit. He need be in no doubt that we intend to expand and extend occupational schemes so far as it is possible for that to be done.

Mr. McCrindle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any move into the desirable area of personal portable pensions will rely to a considerable degree on the tax inducements which may be forthcoming? May we have an assurance in advance of the White Paper—I appreciate that my right hon. Friend cannot say much about that today—that consultation will take place between himself and the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Fowler: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's interest in pensions. He will appreciate that the Chancellor and I share the aim of seeing a further extension of occupational pensions.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that when he issued his consultation document on personal pensions he was careful to draw attention to the fact that under the proposals employees would bear the risk that is now borne either by employers or by the state? While he understandably wishes to concentrate on what people stand to gain from what the Government have done, will he acknowledge that many people stand to lose from the changes that he proposes to make?

Mr. Fowler: No, I will not acknowledge that. The hon. Lady should refer to one of the original documents that we published at the time of the inquiry on retirement, which showed that it was the ambition and aim of the vast majority of people in Britain to have an occupational or personal pension of their own, and that is what the Government desire.

Community Social Services Support

2. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to seek to secure that community social services support is provided to a common standard throughout the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): The primary responsibility for providing adequate and appropriate social services rests with the local authorities. The Department issues national policy guidelines and our social services inspectorate is active in identifying and promoting good practice among social services departments.

Mr. Madden: Is the Minister aware that those in Bradford who are dependent on community social services believe that they are receiving an extremely raw deal? Is he further aware that there are 140 severely mentally handicapped people in Bradford who are being cared for by people who are themselves 65 years old, or older, and that Bradford will have no resources to make proper arrangements for those severely mentally handicapped people when those now caring for them are no longer able to do so? Will the hon. Gentleman stop displaying the complacent attitude that he has displayed at the Dispatch Box and announce that extra resources will be made available to places such as Bradford so that they can make proper arrangements for the care of those who are extremely dependent on the social services?

Mr. Whitney: If the people of Bradford are dissatisfied with their social services they should direct their complaints to the local authorities in Bradford. The personal social services under Conservative rule have increased by 20 per cent. in cost terms. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that national spending on the National Health Service has increased by 20 per cent. so far and will increase by the 6·7 per cent. forecast as a result of the latest statement by my right hon. Friend.

NHS Funding

3. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the growth in real terms in the funding of the National Health Service since 1979 to the latest convenient date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Spending on the Health Service in Great Britain has risen from £7·75 billion in 1978-79 to £17·5

billion in 1985-86. That is an increase of 21 per cent. in real terms. Over the same period, public expenditure generally has increased by only 10 per cent. We plan further real increases in health spending in each of the next three years. These figures demonstrate the Government's continuing commitment to improving the National Health Service.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that it completely rebuts the claim of those who assert that the Government have imposed cuts on the Health Service, and shows that in recent years the only Government who did so were the Labour Government? Will he take this opportunity to remind Health Concern and others that inefficiency and waste in the operation of the Health Service are the enemies of proper patient care?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said. I also agree that the challenge to the Health Service is to use its resources to the fullest extent. My hon. Friend is also right to say that the Labour Government presided over cuts in the Health Service. They were the largest capital cuts in the history of the Health Service, never mind in the last 10 years.

Mr. Kennedy: The Secretary of State talks about the Government's expenditure on the Health Service. Will he clarify exactly what measurement of inflation is taken into account? Is it the retail prices index, or the internal mechanisms of inflation within the Health Service, which, for reasons of technological pressure and demographic change, are significantly higher?

Mr. Fowler: The measurement is the RPI, as I said in my answer, and that is the effective measure of the resources that the Government have to make available. But there is also an increase compared with NHS pay and price increases. However the hon. Gentleman wishes to calculate the figures, the fact is that this Government are devoting more resources to the Health Service than any other Government in history.

Dr. Mawhinney: In addition to the welcome real increase in growth in the Health Service, how much extra money has been made available for patient care as a consequence of the Government's policy of requiring health authorities to use the money more cost effectively?

Mr. Fowler: The Health Service is at present providing about £150 million a year from cost improvements. That illustrates that the Health Service is now using resources more effectively than at any stage in its history.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the figures he gave reveal savings but no efficiency? Let me give three examples. First, because of a cut in the number of acute beds, three hospitals in this region are taking their emergency cases to three teaching hospitals not far from this place. Secondly, two hospitals in my constituency have been closed. Thirdly, because of the Government's privatisation policies, I know of two hospitals in which patients are scrubbing out the lavatories.

Mr. Fowler: More resources are being devoted to the Health Service, but a better measurement is the use made of those resources, which shows that the Health Service is now treating more inpatients, more day patients and more outpatient cases than ever before—dramatically more than when the Labour Government were in power.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the new hospital now being built in Hemel Hempstead was cancelled by the previous Labour Government? Is he further aware that within over-resourced regions there are areas that are suffering from lack of resources? When will he make more resources available to those areas, at the expense of the over-resourced areas in inner London?

Mr. Fowler: The policy of reallocating resources is continuing. I do not think that there is any disagreement in the House about that. My hon. Friend is right about capital spending. The Government have restored the capital programme, and we shall now develop it further.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Secretary of State aware that many people who live in deprived inner city areas, especially inner London, will fail to understand what he has said today, when all around them they see ward and hospital closures?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will explain to them the reallocation of resources proposal which was supported by the Labour party and with which, as far as I know, the Opposition spokesman on health matters does not disagree. The policy aims to put resources where people are. That is sensible.

Mr. Conway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Shropshire warmly welcomes the substantial increase in health spending, especially in hospital provision? Will he give a thought to the speed with which the region transfers resources to the area health authority to take account of the fact that Shropshire now has the fastest growing population in the west midlands?

Mr. Fowler: That is one of the issues about which I shall talk to the regional chairman of the west midlands.

Dr. Marek: So that the British people can make a balanced judgment on these figures, will the Secretary of State now dare to write to the chairmen of district health authorities and ask whether they have sufficient funds to provide adequate funding of the NHS in 1986-87, and publish the replies?

Mr. Fowler: It would be more useful to do what we are already doing—*[Interruption.]* Rather than write, we prefer to talk to them. That is what we are doing. We do not believe in government by circular, which is what the Labour party stands for. As far as I am aware, district health authority chairmen understand our policy a darned sight better than does the Opposition spokesman.

Renal Failure

4. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been treated for end stage renal failure; and how this compares with the situation in 1978-79.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available figures show that there were 11,270 renal patients receiving treatment in the United Kingdom at 31 December 1984. This compares with 6,167 on the corresponding date in 1979, an increase of 83 per cent.

Mr. Thompson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that this encouraging news is a further sign of increased efficiency in the Health Service and contradicts utterly the continual whingeing that we hear on this subject from the Opposition?

Mr. Whitney: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Carter-Jones: I congratulate the Minister on the increase in the number of patients receiving treatment. Does he consider 50 per million new patients per year for end stage renal failure as a distinct possibility by, say, July next year? Will he consider putting the names of people who carry kidney donor cards on a computer to which they can contract in or out, as transplantation seems to be the best method of resolving end stage renal failure?

Mr. Whitney: We are constantly improving our achievement in terms of take-up. The take-on rate has increased by 50 per cent. since 1979. We have a long way to go, but we are making progress. We are ready to consider every possible way of promoting the transplant campaign.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Can my hon. Friend give us any idea of the length of the waiting list for kidney transplants? What thought has he given to changing the present system whereby, although a deceased person carried a kidney donor card, his or her wishes are not carried out unless the next-of-kin gives permission? If such people's wishes were carried out, many more kidneys would be available and there would be many more transplants.

Mr. Whitney: We do not have central figures for the transplant waiting list. That is a matter of clinical judgment in individual cases. We shall continue to consider every possible way in which to improve the system and to reinforce the transplant service.

Social Security Reviews

6. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on the social security reviews.

Mr. Fowler: We have received more than 7,000 responses to the Green Paper.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State confirm that more than 80 per cent. of those representations were against his proposals and that they included a petition with more than 20,000 signatures, the largest petition ever raised by the people of Coventry? Is it not ironic that the Secretary of State plans to increase temporary staff at the DHSS by more than 10,000 to deal with the proposed cuts, but refuses to increase the permanent staff to deal with the present work load? Is he aware that in some inner city offices the turnover is between 50 and 60 per cent. due to the work load and the low pay, and that my constituents are suffering severe delays in the payment of benefit?

Mr. Fowler: The overwhelming view is that very few respondents are satisfied with the present system. As I have said, the Government's proposals will be set out in a White Paper very shortly.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members are hoping for a radical review of the social security system and look forward especially to the abolition of SERPS because it is no part of Conservative policy to provide a nationalised earnings-related pensions system?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend has only a short time to wait before all will be revealed.

Mr. Pike: Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that many families are concerned about the changes in housing benefit, which will affect the most deprived families, and that local authorities will be hard hit because they will have to pick up the additional burden? Will he ensure that those families do not suffer and that local government is not further penalised financially by the Government?

Mr. Fowler: There is not a great deal that I can add to what I have already said, save to point out that housing benefit goes further up the income scale than basically any other income-related social security benefit.

Mr. Favell: What proportion of the representations were from professionals employed by welfare organisations with a vested interest in the status quo?

Mr. Fowler: No breakdown of that kind has been done, but I will see whether it can be done.

Mr. Soley: Will the Secretary of State respond to the representations from the Hammersmith Unemployed Workers Centre, which objects strongly to the suggestions in the review? Is he aware that people have to sleep on the floor at the centre because the supplementary benefit offices cannot provide a proper service, not least because one office has been smashed up as a result of pressure on claimants and staff in the area? What does the right hon. Gentleman intend to do about that, and what message does he wish me to convey to those people?

Mr. Fowler: I shall look at the problem raised by the right hon. Gentleman and seek to reply to him.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that on Friday I attended a meeting called by the TUC Week of Action, at which 35 people were present, and that, apart from the representative of the Child Poverty Action Group, who made some valid comments, the majority of the remaining 34 people favoured combining supplementary benefit and family income supplement? Is he further aware that the vast majority of my constituents look foward to the White Paper and to a simplified system for those in need?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Very few people are satisfied with the social security system. The present system is indefensible. It is far too complex and help does not always go to the right people. The time for reform has come.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that relief at the preservation of SERPS will be premature and wrong if he makes major cuts in pension benefit for which the Government Actuary has found not an ounce of justification? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this is a national insurance scheme for which people have paid in full and in which they have entitlements and full rights to benefit? Does he agree that any private insurance company which unilaterally reneged on its obligations in the way that he seems to intend would be taken to court for bad faith and breach of contract?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman should not rehearse his speech before he has seen the proposals. Perhaps he will now publish the Labour party's proposals on social security and tell the British people whether he still intends to abolish mortgage interest tax relief, because the public want to know.

North Middlesex Hospital (Cancer Treatment)

7. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will refuse his consent to the ending of treatment for cancer at the North Middlesex hospital.

Mr. Whitney: No, Sir. This is a matter for the health authorities concerned. The current review by the North-East Thames regional health authority of its cancer services is about finding the best way of improving services to patients. If the review leads to changes which involve the closure of the North Middlesex radiotherapy unit and re-provision of the service elsewhere, there will be full local consultation. If the community health council objects to any such proposal, the matter will be referred to Ministers for a final decision. Further comment from me at this stage would not be appropriate.

Mr. Atkinson: Is it not a fact that the proposed changes are of some size? The suggestion is that five cancer centres should be created in London and that the North Middlesex hospital should be merged with the Royal Free hospital. If that happens and there is the creation at the Royal Free of a cancer centre, the linear accelerator that has already been ordered for the North Middlesex hospital and the building which has already been constructed there will be scrapped. It will make nonsense of the travelling arrangements that people in both north London and the outer areas will have to make to get to the centre should it not be established at the North Middlesex hospital. To provide a rationale, will the Minister intervene before the consultations take place so that a sensible plan can be devised for the cancer centres in London?

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman gives currency to completely unfounded scare stories. This is a consultative proposal about the possibility of providing a better service for patients. It is not a question of saving resources.

As for the future of the North Middlesex hospital, as opposed to a possible rationalisation of cancer treatment services, the hon. Gentleman ought to be aware that the latest plan suggests additions of about £8 million in the next few years for the North Middlesex hospital, including three new geriatric wards. If that suggests the closure of the North Middlesex hospital, it seems to be a very strange way of going about it.

Mr. Hayes: I hope my hon. Friend appreciates that there is considerable feeling and outrage on both sides of the House about this report, which has been pilloried by the medical profession. I am not prepared—and I am sure that many of my hon. Friends are not prepared—to stand idly by and see some of our cancer patients, who are suffering enough as it is, having to travel long distances.

Mr. Whitney: I hope my hon. Friend agrees that it is entirely right for the health authority to take every possible measure to seek the best method of delivering these services to their patients.

As for medical opinion, I remind my hon. Friend that this inquiry was conducted by Professor Whitehouse, Professor of Medical Oncology at the University of Southampton. I repeat that this proposal has not yet been considered by the authorities.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister recognise that there is concern, both within London and in those parts of the North-East Thames regional health authority that are outside London, about the proposals? Does he also recognise that it is necesary for him to intervene so that cancer treatment provision in Greater London and outside that area can be seen as a whole? The North-East Thames regional health authority should not be permitted to go ahead with its piecemeal proposals without bearing in mind what is happening in other parts of the south-east.

Mr. Whitney: I am well aware of the concern, as is the regional health authority. However, I am also aware that the regional health authority has a responsibility to study this proposal and that it has every right to do so. I hope the hon. Gentleman recognises that should this procedure go a step further, we should then enter into a consultation process in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and other ministerial colleagues would be involved.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware that the proposal to close the cancer treatment unit at the North Middlesex hospital is part of an overall package, put forward by the North-East Thames regional health authority, which will also affect the cancer treatment unit at Southend? Is my hon. Friend also aware that the report is riddled with errors and inaccuracies and that it is no more acceptable to the people of Southend than it is to people in the North Middlesex hospital area?

Mr. Whitney: I am well aware of that concern. I have no doubt that the regional health authority will take note of that concern in reaching its conclusion on the report.

Heating Additions

8. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals the Government intend to bring forward over heating additions for those on limited incomes.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): We have recently again increased the supplementary benefit heating additions which go, for example, to all supplementary pensioner householders over 65. The total now spent on such additions is some £400 million a year. In the social security Green Paper proposals, expenditure on heating additions would be included in resources for the income support scheme and their pattern would be taken into account in setting the income support premiums for pensioners and for other groups, such as the disabled.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware, and do the Government care, that so many people, especially pensioners, cannot afford to heat their homes during the winter months and dread the nightmare of those months? Many such people receive no assistance because they do not claim supplementary benefit. Does the Minister wish to deny that if the Green Paper proposals are put into effect fewer people will receive help with their heating bills?

Mr. Newton: The improvement in heating additions for recipients of supplementary benefit, including pensioners, is now much greater than it ever was under the Labour Government. That reflects the Government's concern about this matter. I cannot add to what I have said about income support premiumns. As all supplementary benefit pensioners transferring to income support would receive a premium under the proposals, and as those premiums would take account of the current pattern of heating additions, the hon. Gentleman can draw his own conclusions.

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend aware that the proposal to incorporate heating additions and other allowances in the premium rates of income support will be widely welcomed by many pensioners as a simplification that increases access to benefit? Will he ensure that the premium rates payable to pensioners fully reflect the energy costs that pensioners necessarily incur?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly our intention that the premium rates in the proposed income support scheme will take account of the additional costs falling on pensioners generally and that heating costs will be an important part of our consideration of those premiums.

Mr. Wilson: Has the hon. Gentleman seen reports in today's Scottish papers to the effect that the Secretary of State for Scotland has been pressing for a special social fund for Scotland from which payments could be made for heating allowances to cope with the cold climate? If the Secretary of State finds it necessary to press for such a fund because he cannot accept the prospect of Scottish pensioners having to decide between eating or heating, will the hon. Gentleman support that decision? This would mean that people in Scotland, with its colder climate, would have sufficient heating to enable them to live in comfort.

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly consider any views attributed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the development of our social security proposals. We shall take any such points into account in working out the proposals for the social fund.

Mr. James Hamilton: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that last year Scottish pensioners got the rawest of raw deals from the Government? Does he recognise that climatic conditions in Scotland are worse than in any other part of the United Kingdom? Will he take cognisance of that fact and ensure that on this occasion those pensioners get a fair deal?

Mr. Newton: I can at least assure the hon. Gentleman that supplementary pensioners and other supplementary benefit recipients in Scotland, including the long-term sick and disabled, will have benefited, as in other parts of the country, from the large increases in heating additions made by the Government, which were increased again just a couple of weeks ago at the time of the uprating.

Mr. McCrindle: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is no particular virtue in paying these heating allowances separately? Does he accept also that the idea of embodying them in a general needs assessment will be warmly welcomed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House? Will he confirm that, in moving towards that system, it is proposed to wind up the special weather allowance, which has caused great concern because it has been paid in one constituency and not been paid in another just a few miles away?

Mr. Newton: I welcome the first part of what my hon. Friend said. As about 90 per cent. of supplementary benefit pensioners now receive a heating addition, it is obviously more sensible to give such benefits in a more generalised way, along the lines of the premiums that we have proposed. As to the exceptionally severe weather payments, my hon. Friend will be aware that the chief adjudication officer issued new guidance on the administration of those regulations last week. Ministers continue to consider the matter in the light of the guidance and the commissioner's ruling, but I cannot add anything to that.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that there are ominous signs that many old people are losing the battle to keep warm, as is shown in Stoke-on-Trent, where the major hospital already has a red alert because many old people are suffering from chest diseases and cannot keep warm? The Government are responsible for people who are old being cold.

Mr. Newton: I have always hesitated to be over-aggressive with the right hon. Gentleman, but, in the light of what the Government have done to increase heating additions, not only for pensioners but for many disabled people, it is ridiculous for anybody who supported the miserable provision by the last Labour Government to be attacking this Government.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is fairly outrageous for a Minister in this Government to talk about the increases in heating additions without also referring to the increases in fuel prices imposed by the Government? Will he accept that if there is any truth in the rumours—I hope that he will take this opportunity to deny them—that it is intended not to reform but to restrict the operation of the severe weather allowance, such behaviour by the Government will be regarded as a disgraceful act?

Mr. Newton: I sometimes wonder where Labour Members were during the period of the last Labour Government. If anybody has more nerve than the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), it must be the hon. Lady, who has forgotten the deplorable record of fuel price increases under the previous Labour Government.

Social Fund

9. **Ms. Harman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has discussed the social fund proposals with the British Association of Social Workers.

Mr. Newton: The British Association of Social Workers and local authority associations gave evidence to the review of supplementary benefit, and have submitted their comments on the Green Paper on the reform of social security. In addition, I attended a seminar on the reviews organised by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 26 July, and addressed the joint social services annual conference on 27 September.

Ms. Harman: Did the Minister have second thoughts about the social fund when he faced enormous criticism at the joint social services annual conference, at which not one Conservative councillor would speak up publicly in his support and in favour of the social fund? Conservative councillors in Coventry have told me that the Secretary of State has said that the social fund will not be cash limited. Will the Minister either confirm or deny that? If he denies it, we can tell the Conservative councillors in Coventry that they have been misled.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. friend the Secretary of State has asked me to say that he cannot recall having made such a statement. We are continuing to consider the detailed proposals for the operation of the fund, and further proposals will be set out in the White Paper before long.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend accept that there are certain aspects that concern others besides the British Association of Social Workers? Is he aware that today I received a letter from one of my constituents who had been expecting the restoration of the 5 per cent. rebate on the invalidity benefit, but did not get it? Why is this so, and if it is deliberate, will he take care of this in the new review?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's question strays a little from the social fund. The 5 per cent. rebate on invalidity benefit was restored, but there have been a number of other changes to some invalidity benefits, which may have affected the position of my hon. Friend's constituent.

Family Income

10. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services at what level of gross income a man with a wife and two children aged 10 and 15 years, who was claiming all benefits and allowances to which he and his family are entitled, would be as well off in net weekly spending power while working as he would be if unemployed *(a)* before the recent uprating and *(b)* after the uprating.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): Before the recent uprating the man's gross earnings would have needed to be £40·55 compared with £40·68 after the uprating.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Is my hon. Friend aware that I am disappointed with his reply, because although he has told us the point at which such a person would enter the poverty trap, he has not told us at what point he would escape from it? Is he aware that such a person needs an income in excess of £130 a week to make working worth while before the uprating, and that the greater part of the work force falls into a similar category? Is not the only way to escape from this depressing situation to raise the tax thresholds well clear of the benefit cut-off points, by ceasing to index benefits and by a co-ordination of the taxation and welfare systems?

Mr. Major: It is true that the gap between income, whether in or out of work, does not become significant until gross income exceeds £110. My hon. Friend is aware that one of the main objectives of the Green Paper is to ensure that people are better off in work than out of work. We can study the proposals in the White Paper shortly. My hon. Friend is aware that income tax thresholds have risen by 20 per cent. since 1979, taking 1·25 million people out of tax.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister referred to £110 being the significant level at which wages and benefits diverge. Is he aware that fewer than one in five adult manual workers earn below that level of income, so we are talking about very low wages indeed? Is the Minister aware that that level of income is only two thirds of what one of his hon. Friend's last night boasted had been paid to him, on an annual basis, for his support of one of the fixed Channel link propositions? Is that not the real measure of the division in our society?

Mr. Major: I have no comment to make on the hon. Gentleman's second point. On his first point, I hope that, in view of what he said, he and his party will support the proposals in the White Paper—which, to a substantial extent, will be geared towards meeting the problem that he outlined.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of those concerned about the potential disincentives to taking paid employment because of our welfare and taxation systems believe that the maintenance of child benefit at realistic levels is one of the most effective ways to counteract the unemployment and poverty trap?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is a powerful lobbyist on that point. She knows that we have given strong support to the child benefit system in recent years. I hope that she is satisfied with what has been achieved.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The question asked by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) highlighted the problems of the take-up of benefits. What is the Minister doing to increase that take-up, without which there is no point in having benefits? Is not a great deal of poverty caused because people do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled? Does the Minister intend to increase publicity to help to alleviate that problem?

Mr. Major: The answer to increased take-up of benefits is not simply one of publicity. One substantial difficulty has been the complexity of the system. I hope the hon. Gentleman has noted that we have reviewed the system, one of the benefits of which may be substantially higher take-up. For example, we expect the family credit system to have a much higher take-up than family income supplement.

National Health Service

11. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the responsibilities of the chairmen of the regional health authorities, the National Health Service management board and himself, respectively, for the running of the National Health Service.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): The powers and duties of the Secretary of State in relation to health authorities, and the functions of regional authorities, are set out in the National Health Service Act 1977, as amended by the Health Services Act 1980. The regional authorities are accountable to the Secretary of State.

The National Health Service management board has been set up by the Secretary of State to give leadership on his behalf to health authorities, so as to secure the better provision of hospital and community services to patients.

Mr. Smith: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that this rather complex system at the top of the NHS will be sufficient to encourage effective and decentralised line management at unit level?

Mr. Hayhoe: We are certainly seeking to get the relationships and strategies that will enable downward delegation to take place, as well as upward accountability. The Griffiths reforms and their successful implementation are essential to that end.

Mr. Dobson: Can the Minister confirm that when a private cleaning company falls down on the job of cleaning a hospital, the whole NHS hierarchy swings into operation? Is it not true that the district health authority is

not allowed to sack that firm? The authority must make representations to the regional health authority, which then takes up the matter with the private cleaning company. If that does not work, the Minister gets in touch with the directors of that cleaning company's holding company, rather than simply allowing the contract to be terminated?

Mr. Hayhoe: If anyone falls down on his job within the NHS, it is essential that management takes appropriate steps to remedy the deficiency.

National Health Service

12. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many manager's posts still remain vacant at regional and at district level within the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: All regional general managers are in post and have been for some time. Of the 191 district general manager posts, just one remains to be filled, and I am confident that this appointment will be made soon.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the Minister aware that the administrative system has been devastated and that that has been disruptive to the morale of nurses? Will he ensure that in the new unit management structure that is being established the bedside nurse will be responsible to the head of nursing services and accountable to her, and that she will be a qualified nurse? Will he make a statement about the 17 district health authorities and his vetoing of their plans for the filling of managerial posts?

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's strictures. It is right that doctors and nurses should continue to play an important part in the management of the NHS, and I am glad that they are being appointed in significant numbers to general managers' posts. The new arrangements at district and unit levels should command the confidence and commitment of the professional bodies involved.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

1. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with Secretary of State Shultz. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Yeo: Has my right hon. Friend noticed some of the alarmist reports today about the possible consequences of a fall in oil prices? Does she share my view that the gloom is largely misplaced? If the price of oil declines and that leads to a reversal of the recent strength of sterling, there will be a direct benefit to British exporters and a general boost to international trade. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most likely overall consequence will be a further strenthening of Britain's already healthy balance of payments?

The Prime Minister: I believe that large disruptive movements in the price of oil would not be in anyone's interests. I agree with my hon. Friend that comparatively small movements would reduce world inflation. The autumn statement took into account the possibility of a small fall in world prices.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the Prime Minister seen the report of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service on the autumn statement? Will she tell the Committee and me why she is so coy about explicitly admitting to the major changes in economic policies that have made everything dependent on high interest rates? How will she respond to the CBI's call for an immediate cut in interest rates? Do her Budget intentions still include tax cuts, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer has repeatedly implied? Does she intend to continue to sell off public assets to finance the consequences of her economic failures?

The Prime Minister: Government policy depends upon the factors which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has frequently set out and which were set out in his autumn statement. He did not provide a fiscal adjustment. There used not to be a fiscal adjustment given in the past, but the practice was changed temporarily. My right hon. Friend has returned to previous practice, which I believe is thoroughly wise. The privatisation programme will go ahead. The public sector borrowing requirement, either including or excluding the assets of the privatisation programme, is still a smaller percentage of gross domestic product than it has been since 1971-72. Therefore, policies will continue as formerly. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that right now is not the time to lower interest rates.

Mr. Kinnock: The Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service was not convinced by the replies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I do not think that anyone can be convinced by those of the Prime Minister. Will she tell us how she will respond to the CBI's call, and the call of manufacturers and employers throughout the country, for an immediate cut in interest rates?

The Prime Minister: On further reflection, the right hon. Gentleman will realise that today is not the time to call for further cuts in interest rates. I also point out to him and the CBI that although a 1 per cent. cut in interest rates would benefit industry to the order of £250 million, a reduction of 1 per cent. in wage rate increases would benefit industry by £1 billion. Thus, it will know where to get the greater amount.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: Would my right hon. Friend care to express a view, in her role not only as Prime Minister but as the nation's science supremo, on the breach that has recently occurred of the fundamental principle of the freedom of members of the Association of Scientists, irrespective of the political views of the Government for whom they work? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent decision at Southampton is most regrettable? Can anything that follows from that be of any possible benefit to all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are dependent on the high quality of science that must be observed, not least in South Africa itself?

The Prime Minister: As usual, my hon. Friend makes his point well. Scientific talent must depend on scientific ability, not on political views.

Mr. Steel: Does the Prime Minister recall the thoughtful speech by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in March about the strategic defence initiative? If so, will she tell the House what answer she has given

to the question that he raised about whether the enormous funds to be devoted to such systems might be better employed?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that is a matter for the United States. It is for them to decide what funds will be devoted to the system. I believe that it is right to go ahead with the strategic defence initiative, and it is right that the Alliance should be well ahead in the latest scientific and technological advances in defence. That being so, I believe that we were right to take part in SDI. Other countries will follow us. They may not like it, but, as usual, we went ahead first.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Is my right hon. Friend aware that her support for the coal industry has seen the creation of Britain's newest trade union—the Union of Democratic Mineworkers? I am proudly wearing its lapel badge today. On the badge it says, "Democracy reborn 1985". Is my right hon. Friend not surprised that she cannot see the badge being worn by any Labour Members?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend, and congratulate him on the way in which he put his question.

Q2. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Prime Minister explain to us what priority she has when, to use her own language, she can throw £250 million of taxpayers' money at the festering abscess of Johnson Matthey and yet refuse to pay a professional wage to the teachers who are carrying out a vital task for the community? Does she not realise that they have a deep feeling of frustration because of the Government's conduct? That moderate section of the community has struggled alongside most of the people in Britain for a living wage, yet, in her obdurate intransigence, along with the Secretary of State, the Prime Minister refuses to give them a professional wage when they have proved over and over again that the gerrymandering of the Burnham committee will not solve the problem of getting our children back to school.

The Prime Minister: I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science that in dealing with teachers' pay it is vital to set out a statement of their contract of service so that there can be no other argument about it. It is also vital to have a pay structure that means that the better teachers will be paid more. Subject to those two things, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, some £1·25 billion over four years, over and above the normal pay increases, has been offered to the teachers. That would result in a pay structure starting at £7,500 for a new graduate rising to £24,000 for the headmaster of a large secondary school. We believe that that is reasonable.

Q3. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Leigh: Given my right hon. Friend's responsibility for Government publicity, will she reject the cynical advice offered to her by the dirty tricks booklet from the Association of Liberal Councillors? Does she agree that, whatever else may divide us from the Labour party, we fight on the real issues, not on character assassination and cynical appeals for tactical voting on behalf of what has become the refugee camp and dustbin of British politics?

The Prime Minister: I am not responsible for the propaganda of the Liberal party. I have fought the Liberals all my life in my constituency, and beaten them every time.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Prime Minister aware that some hon. Members are receiving financial rewards from companies interested in the Channel tunnel? Does she agree that if votes are cast by those hon. Members in connection with the scheme, it must be bordering on corruption?

The Prime Minister: Whether hon. Members cast votes in connection with something in which they have an interest is a matter for the House. Many and varied interests affect both sides of the House.

Q5. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Spencer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the district health authority in Leicester has saved over £400,000 by putting out to competitive tender cleaning contracts at the Glenfield hospital and Leicester general hospital? Does she agree that in the Tory party it is the patients who come first?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that contracting out some of the domestic, catering and cleaning services in the National Health Service has already saved a good deal of money, and that money is now being put towards extra patient care, which is a good thing. There are about £1 billion worth of such services, which leaves a lot of scope for more contracts going to the private sector.

Q8. **Mr. Amess** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Last week I presented the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves). Will the Prime Minister join me in hoping that the Bill enjoys a swift passage through both Houses and that its opponents do not talk it out?

The Prime Minister: If I did that on every Bill that I may or may not support, I should soon be in acute difficulty. I hope that my hon. Friend will have a good debate on those important issues.

Mr. Douglas: I revert to an earlier supplementary question. How will the Prime Minister ensure a small reduction in world oil prices in view of her profligancy in producing 2·7 million barrels per day from the North sea at present?

The Prime Minister: I said that the autumn statement had already made provision for a small change in oil prices. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not for any one of us to be able to effect a change in world oil prices —up or down.

Q9. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cockeram: Does the Prime Minister share the concern of the general public at the depths to which the BBC will now stoop to present a "good" programme, as demonstrated by the intimidation and threats to the witnesses in a recent case featured on the programme called "Rough Justice"?

The Prime Minister: The Lord Chief Justice made his strictures very clear, and as far as I can remember they are absolutely unprecedented. I feel sure that the BBC will take them very seriously. Indeed, it should do so.

Q10. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: Now that the 1922 Committee has ruled that only Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies can vote in the Scottish group of Tory Members, will the Prime Minister consider extending that good democratic principle to all Scottish business in the House to bring to an end once and for all the undemocratic practice whereby the majority of Scotland's elected representatives are often outnumbered and outvoted when the Lobbies——

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Canavan: —are infiltrated by Tory extremists from the deep south?

The Prime Minister: The rules of the House are for the House and the hon. Gentleman would be the first to criticise me if I were to arrogate them to myself.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise directly out of questions?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, Mr. Speaker. You will recall, that during Question Time there were at least two references to the Register of Members' Interests, with specific reference to the Channel tunnel. You may also be aware that last night it was revealed on BBC television's "Newsnight" that certain Tory Members of Parliament were not entering their names on the Register in time. Indeed, it was suggested that one entry on the Register was made only after the challenge had been made on television by the interviewer.

As you, Mr. Speaker, are ultimately responsible for the register being properly drawn up, are you satisfied that it is up to date? Can I be satisfied that, on the sale of Cable and Wireless in the morning, those concerned with that matter in stockbroking do not include the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), whose firm, remarkably, has been granted the opportunity to take part in that sale? That is a family firm and the hon. Gentleman was a partner until recently. His father is the consultant to Pilling Trippier and Co. and his sister is also a partner. That borders on corruption and should be examined.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I was in the Chamber last night when the programme went out so I do not know what was said on it, but I have heard about it this morning. The House knows that interests must be registered in the Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise directly out of Question Time?

Mr. Winnick: It does arise from Question Time, Mr. Speaker. It arises from a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and, with respect, it is not simply a matter of the Register of Members' Interests. There is a larger issue involved. Financial rewards are being paid to hon. Members by companies seeking a contract for the Channel tunnel. The television film last night revealed that there is the utmost pressure by companies and payments are being made to hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) asked about the Register of Members' Interests. There is nothing in the register about rewards paid to hon. Members. I have raised that point previously. Is it in order, Mr. Speaker, for hon. Members to receive financial rewards in respect of contracts that are being bid for by companies? Does not that call into question whether there is an element of corruption? How can any hon. Member speak and vote when he is being financially rewarded by a company?

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman come to the point?

Mr. Winnick: I want you to rule, Mr. Speaker, on whether the practice that is now going on is acceptable, or whether, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has correctly said, it borders on corruption.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you consider the points put to you by my hon. Friends the Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), could you also consider the references made at Question Time and Prime Minister's Question Time today to the increased privatisation of cleaning and other services in the Health Service, and Tory Members who are directors of or consultants to the companies that receive the contracts?

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order take time from our next debate, but I shall take them if they arise directly on this matter.

Mr. Ashton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the programme last night certain definite allegations were made that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) had not registered his interests. After questioning by the programme, he altered the entry in the Register of Members' Interests, which is available to the House. Either the programme was guilty of contempt or breach of privilege, or the programme, which made serious allegations about the lobbying that is taking place, should be investigated.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is surely notorious that, although a Select Committee made a recommendation which was accepted by the House, the House never enforced its rule against the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who has refused to comply with the requirement to register interests

in the Register of Members' Interests. That is why the matter has fallen into disrepute and disuse. I notice that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who complains of a failure of the Register of Members' Interests, has not complained to you that the most notorious case of this has endured for years—that of the right hon. Member for South Down. Because the House has, wrongly, never chosen to enforce its rule in his case, as he is articulate and television-worthy, it has become clear that the rule is not a rule at all. Either the register should be enforced, which is what I favour, or it should be done away with as spurious. It should not be left in its present condition, in which one of the most senior Privy Councillors defies it with impunity, and has done so for a decade.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take one more point of order.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you, on our behalf, look at the film and see whether it raises any matters of privilege? I saw the film last night in company, and after it people raised matters about the way in which hon. Members behaved, which needs investigation.

Mr. Speaker: If the right hon. Member is alleging the involvement of privilege, he should raise it in the normal way. I take the point of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). There is a Select Committee which deals with complaints about the registering and declaring of interests. The House lays down the rules governing declaration, and it is right that they should be followed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Every right hon. and hon. Member knows that if he has an interest in an enterprise, it should be registered. That is a matter of honour.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Robert C. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have nothing more to add.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have nothing more to add to what I have said.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If it is a different point of order, I shall take it, but I will take nothing more on that subject.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the past four weeks at business questions on Thursday I have asked the Leader of the House whether a report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which was published last July, could be brought before the House for debate. As I understand it, that report may well be debated next week and, indeed, at the beginning of January. If any hon. Member wishes to make representations on the matter, he could do so during that debate. However, the point that is being raised is an extension of that. It is whether those who declare an interest should vote. That is an extension of the principle that we have not examined in the Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Members makes a wise point. The House should debate the report.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the oath:
David Gordon Clelland Esq., for Tyne Bridge.

Tin Industry

3.42 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of giving consideration to a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the international tin crisis and the consequent redundancies in the Cornish tin industry."

I submit that the matter is specific in that it is nearly seven weeks since trading in tin was suspended on the London Metal Exchange, and the crisis has still not been resolved. It is certainly a matter of importance, given that the crises has many international repercussions, including many domestic ramifications. It has implications for the good name of the City of London and for trading arrangements, particularly if certain nations renege on their international commitments to support the International Tin Council.

The matter has extremely serious implications for the Cornish tin industry, and that is my prime interest in the subject. I have taken this step of asking for an emergency debate under Standing Order No. 10 because yesterday the Geevor tin mine in my constituency took the first step which could result—I hope that it will not—in 340 of its 375 work force being made redundant. Yesterday—I have the greatest sympathy for all concerned—the mine issued protective notices under the Employment Protection Act 1975. If the situation is not resolved within three months, it seems almost certain that those 340 people will lose their jobs.

The Geevor mine is in an extremely remote part of Cornwall, being five or six miles from Land's End. There is literally nothing else there, apart from tourism and farming, to support that community. I am grateful for the fact that the Minister for Trade has taken an interest in the matter and I know that he is doing his utmost behind the scenes to try to resolve the situation, at least from the point of view of the International Tin Council.

I am also grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for seeing a couple of weeks ago a delegation formed of members of the industry, the county council, mining interests and others who came to plead their case and impress on him the dire crisis which that part of Cornwall will face if this and other mines close. My right hon. Friend gave a sympathetic reception to the delegation and I am sure that he will give equally sympathetic consideration to the points that were made. The issuing of redundancy notices yesterday underlines the seriousness and urgency of the situation. That is why I seek this emergency debate under Standing Order No. 10.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the international tin crisis and the consequent issuing of redundancy notices to miners in Cornwall."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said and fully understand the point he makes on behalf of his constituents. However, I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10; therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Crown Agents (Amendment) Bill

Ordered,

That the Crown Agents (Amendment) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Orders of the Day

Gas Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, I should tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel).

3.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The gas industry has had a very long connection with this House, and due to its nature it has always had a connection with Government. Indeed, a committee of 1847 was asked to look into the difficulties of a number of gas companies that were competing down the same streets, with the result that those streets were always in a state of disrepair, but in reality, no benefit was obtained in the longer term because of the manner in which a street was eventually served by a single supplier.

As a result of that committee of inquiry in 1847, and because it was unlikely that there would be several suppliers for each street, subsequent Governments decided that there was a need for some form of price regulation upon the activities of the gas industry.

There was a considerable expansion of the gas industry while it was in the private sector before it was nationalised in 1948. A colossal investment went into that industry, and a large section of the public was supplied by it, primarily under local or private enterprise control. Mr. Gaitskell, the then Minister of Fuel and Power, who moved the nationalisation Act in 1948, pointed out that Parliament's first approval of a gasometer was for the one in Great Peter street that supplied the gas lighting for Westminster bridge.

During that period there is no doubt that the enterprise and initiative of the gas industry throughout the country brought considerable benefit. If one reads the 1948 measure, one will see that the reason for nationalisation was to comply with the mood of the then Labour Government, who thought it was sensible and right to bring all these things under public and national control as part of an overall programme of nationalising all our major energy industries.

Looking back on the hopes and aspirations expressed, and the speeches made, in those nationalisation debates, it is sad to reflect that in practice the idealistic hopes of those who nationalised in the 1940s have not been achieved. In reality, we have not seen the ownership of industries by the people, the employees or the customers, but direct ownership primarily in the hands of the politician and the civil servant. For that reason, my view is that, rather than coming under the constant pressure of Whitehall and the current politician in charge, it is far better in the interests of the country to ensure that commercial managers have charge of those industries.

The Department started to consider in July 1983 the feasibility and nature of the privatisation that should take place. In September 1983, I set up a section of the gas division in my Department to make a thorough examination of all the options and to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a private sector gas industry as operated in other countries. That section examined the world gas industry for several months. It considered gas industries in the private sector or under municipal control and all the regulatory authorities, and reached conclusions on the advantages and disadvantages, the mistakes and success stories.

We also considered how the gas industry is organised in Britain and the advantages and disadvantages of dividing it into regional companies, or into companies with different functions, or overall privatisation. The industry was examined thoroughly between September 1983 and April 1985, when I presented a major paper to my Cabinet colleagues giving the options and the arguments in favour of privatisation.

The fundamental advantage offered by the Bill is that it will ensure that people employed in the industry, managers and customers will be able to participate directly in the industry's success. That is a much better system than the present one, which involves politicians and civil servants. The fact of a nationalisation, whether under Labour or Conservative Governments, is that there are three levels of management. There is the board, then there is the sponsoring Department, which crawls over most of what the board wants to do — whether it be pricing policies or investment programmes — and then there is the Treasury which crawls over what the Department has crawled over.

I well remember when, in 1970, I first became a Minister responsible for a nationalised industry, I was asked to approve capital investment by British Rail in a new railway station, I had a 120-page report from my Department which criticised the BR proposal in some detail but which nevertheless concluded that, in view of the delays that had already taken place, the Secretary of State should approve the station. I asked whether anybody in my Department knew how to build a railway station. There was nobody with commercial experience of building such stations. If I had had such people in my Department, it would have been much better if they had been working for BR, building stations. Having completed my examination, however, I had to get Treasury approval for my consent. That example demonstrates the enormous interface between any nationalised industry and its sponsoring Department and between that Department and the Treasury, which serves only to interfere with the speed of decision taking.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sure that all my right hon. and hon. Friends are convinced by the logic of my right hon. Friend's argument. When does he intend to bring forward a coal Bill to put the coal industry into commercial management? My right hon. Friend said that there were arguments about why the industry should be denationalised in one chunk rather than broken up into regional companies. Will he advance those arguments?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I shall advance those arguments later. We are not discussing the future of the coal industry today. I have given my views and those of the Government from the Dispatch Box several times.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Does the Secretary of State agree that the conversion to North sea gas, which took place under the gas corporation, was a thorough success? There is no great demand for

privatisation from customers because they are well satisfied with the service provided by the board. The gas industry is one of the great successes of nationalisation. Will the right hon. Gentleman admit that the reason for the Government's proposal is sheer dogma and nothing else?

Mr. Walker: The conversion to North sea gas was a substantial success for the corporation and for the mass of private contractors who dealt with it throughout the country. To my knowledge, there was only one failure —when my own house was nearly blown up as a result of a mistake. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who did it?"] Alas, it was the gas corporation. I am not criticising the many successes of the industry. Like all major industries, private or public, it has had its successes and its failures. Free of interference from Conservative or Labour politicians, it will be in an even better position. I welcome the fact that a large number of the managers and employees and, if they wish, the customers will for the first time have the opportunity to participate directly.

It has been argued—incredibly—that consumers will not have the protection that they have enjoyed under nationalistion. The record of the House of Commons shows that for the past 20 years, whenever the Conservatives have been in power, the Labour Opposition have strongly criticised the enormous increases in gas prices, and that, whenever Labour has been in power, the Conservatives have criticised the enormous increases in gas prices. The Alliance has been in the happy position of being able to condemn both Governments for constantly increasing gas prices. It is entirely untrue that nationalisation has protected consumers from major increases in gas prices.

The 1976-77 annual report and accounts of British Gas states:

"the Corporation increased gas prices under their published tariffs by an average of 12·3 per cent. on 1st October 1976. At that time it was intended that, subject to the Government's management of the economy, no further increase would take place for 12 months. However, on 15th December 1976 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in connection with negotiations for the IMF loan that the Government was asking British Gas to raise prices to increase the rate at which the corporation repaid capital to the National Loans Fund to the extent of £100 million".

This resulted in a further 9·6 per cent. increase in gas prices. In other words, gas prices increased by 22 per cent. in six months. What protection was provided by nationalisation then? Throughout the present Parliament, the Opposition have criticised the way in which gas prices have been increased. Events under Governments of both parties show that nationalisation is not super for the consumer. Both parties have argued in opposition that nationalisation has been bad for the consumer.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): In the debate on the Loyal Address in 1946, Churchill described the Labour Government's proposal to nationalise the gas industry as a fraudulent deception on the housewife. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the whole history of nationalisation has proved that prognosis to be correct? The wonder is not that we are privatising the industry but that it has taken 39 years to get around to it.

Mr. Walker: It is certainly difficult to argue that nationalisation has brought any great benefit to the consumers. Our legislation will provide a form of price control and protection for the consumer. British Gas will continue to be the main supplier of tariff customers throughout the country. We have, therefore, built in powerful safeguards to protect consumers against abuse of that monopoly position. The legislation requires that there must be fair treatment between customers and rules out undue preference for or discrimination against individual customers or classes of customer.

The overall level of price is subject to a maximum set by means of a pricing formula in the licence. Price control will operate by controlling changes in tariff gas prices and by reference to changes in the retail price index and gas costs. However, it will also build in, for the benefit of the consumer, a share in the benefit from the improved efficiency of British Gas. It will give clear protection, therefore, to consumers, as well as the benefit of improved efficiency, while retaining fairness for those who invest in the gas industry.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the pricing formula to which the Secretary of State has referred cover all categories of customers? If it does not, what is his justification for excluding certain customers?

Mr. Walker: I shall be dealing in a few moments with the one area that the formula does not cover.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): When dealing with the price to the consumer and the advantages to shareholders, will the Secretary of State bear in mind the price at which it will be offered to the shareholders? We are dealing with public assets that are equivalent in a normal year to the sale of gilts. When the Government sell gilts they receive very fine prices indeed—to within one eighth of 1 per cent. However, when public assets are sold they can be sold for as cheap as half price. Will the Secretary of State regard the sale of public assets, whatever they are, as of importance to the taxpayer in order to make sure that taxpayers receive the full value that those assets represent?

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the full value of the assets. However, he is aware that the full value of an asset cannot be specified without looking at what that asset yields, what it produces, what the future of that asset will be, what its replacement cost will be and a range of complicated factors. These factors will be carefully considered when a decision is taken about the nature and the price of the offer. Therefore the formula which we have provided to protect the tariff market, which affects all domestic users and a number of commercial and industrial users, will be subject to the price discipline which will be in the power of the regulator.

In addition, we have provided in the legislation for both standing and connection charges. Standing charges are included in the overall price control formula. Standing charges are important for small consumers in particular, for whom we have introduced a further level of control. The licence will restrict the increase in standing charges to no more than the rate of inflation. The non-discrimination provisions will also prevent the company from treating any consumer unfairly.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the protection that he is offering to the consumer is an average increase in price? This is exactly what happened with British Telecom. There has been no protection for the domestic consumer, whose increases have been double or treble those imposed upon the business consumer. That applies also to the

[Mr. Alan Williams]

standing charge. As the standing charge is a charge against capital that has already been invested, there is no justification whatsoever for allowing an increase that is equal to the rate of inflation.

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for making a comparison with British Telecom. Having studied the legislation relating to British Telecom and the licence, the right hon. Gentleman knows that it was made very clear that, because there was an imbalance in the charges to commercial and domestic consumers the formula to be applied in British Telecom's licence for the first period would endeavour to achieve a readjustment. That was made clear in the licence and it was discussed at great length in the heated debates upon that issue. I am delighted to be able to inform the right hon. Gentleman that with British Gas there is no imbalance between commercial and domestic consumers and that this formula will hold good for the domestic consumer.

Mr. Williams: What will the extra safeguard be? There is the same average requirement. The licence will contain nothing that will force the gas company to conform to the advice that the Secretary of State is now giving. It could do whatever it felt was in its commercial interests.

Mr. Walker: If the right hon. Gentleman examines the licence carefully, and the legislation, he will find that the regulator has the power to fix the maximum price. He will have available to him all the information that he needs to fix the maximum price. The fact that there is to be a maximum price and that there will not be an imbalance between commercial and domestic users will protect the position.

It is argued that this is a great monopoly and that there will be no alternatives to it. However, one only has to look at television advertising to see that there is immense competition between gas, electricity, oil and coal in both the domestic and the industrial markets. If British Gas is to succeed, it will need to try not only to retain but to increase its share of the market. The idea that it will do so by increasing its prices is wrong, because it has no monopoly of energy supplied. It operates in an area of very fierce competition.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend could help the House about one point. Competition in tinned tomatoes is a matter of buying one brand rather than another, but if one has a gas central heating system one cannot just switch to electricity; the capital cost is enormous. Therefore, to prohibit the cross-subsidisation of the domestic consumer compared with other classes of consumer is a very real problem. We have corresponded about this matter, and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. However, I should like the House to know what protection is to be provided, because I am not sure myself, in what is not a competitive situation, like buying different products in a shop. Moreover, if there is no gas connection and the price of obtaining a connection is excessive, there will be no competition with electricity. These are the realities.

Mr. Walker: In reality, if one looks at the commercial nature of British Gas, the electricity supply industry and the oil industry, one has to consider carefully, if one has only one form of heating, the factors involved in moving to a different form of heating. However, each year there is a substantial market of people who are installing central heating for the first time. There is also an expanding market of people who are replacing their existing systems. May I also point out, in Energy Efficiency Year, that if any domestic heating system is more than 10 years old if can almost certainly, due to the newest technology, be replaced by a new one, which will be more than self-financing.

If one is running British Gas, one is desperate to obtain an increasing share of the new market that comes on stream every year. Failure to do so results in damage to the business. All the competitors are desperate to obtain new business and to keep their share of the market. If the price of gas were increased for all those who already have it, the new gas company could not discriminate under the legislation in favour of new customers. We shall prevent discrimination of that nature. In addition, the regulator will have the power to investigate the gas supply accounts — they will have to be kept separately — and decide whether there has been any form of cross-subsidisation. My hon. Friend will therefore find that substantial protection has been provided.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: The regulator will have the power to investigate, but can he stop cross-subsidisation?

Mr. Walker: If my hon. Friend examines clause 9, he will see that considerable power will be given to the regulator to stop it.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Secretary of State knows that it is much more complicated than that. For example, the Central Electricity Generating Board would have liked over a long period to convert to gas-fired power stations. They would have been much cheaper than other options. That was prevented, because no Government wanted gas to be used in that way, or gas stocks to be depleted at a rate which is controlled by the Secretary of State. If we are talking about a free market, does it mean that the CEGB will be able to close down its existing power stations and open gas-fired power stations without restraint and that the rate at which our limited gas resources can be depleted will be lifted, which will mean that the new gas company can deplete gas resources at any rate that it chooses?

Mr. Walker: I am delighted to say that, because of the mass of improvements in the cost effectiveness of coal, there would be a competitive position there. No one will rejoice more than the right hon. Gentleman about the improvements in the coal industry.

Connection charges are important. It has been suggested that the imposition of a connection charge could prevent someone from obtaining his rights. We have come up with a formula that will provide protection for customers. The corporation will have to set out the principles that it will apply to those charges.

There will be a substantial improvement in pricing compared with what happened under nationalisation. We have decided to set up a new consumer body. We have carefully examined the operations of former consumer bodies and obtained their advice, knowledge and information. We have spoken in great depth to consumer organisations and, obviously, to British Gas. British Gas is anxious to retain contact with the consumer, because it believes that a good consumer relationship greatly benefits the industry.

The new consumer body will have regional offices and staff to deal with complaints. In cases in which the Director General of Gas Supply has responsibility, the staff will report to him and to the Secretary of State. In other cases, they can, if they wish, report to the Office of Fair Trading. The regional offices will be able to take up all the complaints of gas consumers, including, if they wish, those about appliances and all the activities of British Gas. The corporation wants that to happen and very much values the professionalism of the service that it has maintained. In combination, this provides a basic system for the consumer which is much stronger than anything since nationalisation.

All the present obligations to supply gas, which have existed for a long time, will be carried over to the new company. The legislation provides for other suppliers to be authorised by the Secretary of State to bring gas to areas that have not previously enjoyed those supplies. Those gas suppliers will have the same obligations and be brought under the same regulations as British Gas.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Why will the Director General of Gas Supply not be the final arbiter in a dispute concerning industrial gas users? Why will the matter have to go to the Director General of Fair Trading?

Mr. Walker: I shall deal with that point when I come to the industrial market.

All the safety provisions applying to British Gas will be transferred to the new company. For some time, the Health and Safety Commission has been responsible for enforcing safety factors in relation to British Gas. We have reviewed the statutory obligations of the gas industry and have decided to tighten up a number of important areas. The period of 24 hours within which British Gas has to deal with an escape has been reduced to 12 hours. Until now, the statutory requirements have been imposed on the British Gas side of the meter. They will now be extended to the customers' side of the meter.

In discussing the improvements in safety provisions that will occur following this legislation, we have had the full co-operation of British Gas. It has been exceedingly anxious, because there is no other way in which it can succeed as a business, to retain a reputation for high safety standards.

I turn now to the subject of the industrial market which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). In supplying the gas industry, British Gas is in a highly competitive market, competing with fuel oil, gas oil, electricity and coal. Gas accounts for only 35 per cent. of the industrial energy market—65 per cent. is in the hands of direct competitors. Apart from one year when a prices and incomes policy was imposed, the Government have never interfered with the contract pricing arrangements of British Gas. The corporation has been left to compete in that market. It would be an absurdity to say, "Now that you are to be privatised, we no longer want you to have the freedom to compete with other energy suppliers. We want to put you under a rigid system in which someone else fixes your prices." In concluding that that would be absurd, we took account of the views of the main industrial users. We met the CBI's energy committee and had detailed discussions with the leading and smaller users of gas in the CBI. We discussed the desirability of keeping the contract market unregulated. Those users concluded that it was in the interests of greater competition and of industry for the market not to be regulated. We met the biggest users of gas—in the chemical industry—which came strongly to the same conclusion and gave us the same advice.

There could be an outside fear that, for some reason, British Gas will decide suddenly to increase its prices, which would swiftly result in it losing its share of the market to the other main competitors. I do not believe that that question will ever arise; but, if it does, we provide in the legislation that it will be as free as it is now and as free as its main competitors. This involves studying not just gas in isolation, which is the task of the Director General of Gas Supply, but the whole nature of competition in the contract market between gas, electricity, oil and coal, all of which are fiercely competing at present. The Director General of Fair Trading has the ability, knowledge and freedom to note all those fears, not just one. We therefore provide in the legislation that, if the Director General of Fair Trading looks into a complaint and finds that it is justified, he can, among other things, suggest that the whole matter will then be brought into regulation by the Director General of Gas Supply. Obviously, if he did that, the market would be totally regulated.

I can only say to those of my hon. Friends who rightly argue for the advantages of the benefits of competition that, in the view of the CBI, industry or commerce, it was not justifiable to regulate something that had never been regulated during the whole period of nationalisation. The new company, in setting out its policies as required by the licence, will be including two clear assurances for industry. First, for the three years after privatisation, it intends holding contract prices to certainly not above and probably below the inflation rate, subject to there being no substantial and unforeseen changes in the exchange rate which would savagely affect its position. Secondly, the new company will not set prices in such a way as to restrict, distort or prevent competition. That assurance will be pronounced and presented publicly by British Gas. It will give the Office of Fair Trading a further weapon should the office decide that it needs to examine prices.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): My right hon. Friend said that it would be made certain that price increases for industry would not be greater than the rate of inflation. What would happen if, for example, the price of oil on the world market decreased so that energy prices were reduced? Heavy users of gas would prefer lower rather than higher prices.

Mr. Walker: That is why, under nationalisation, British Gas has competed successfully in the market. That is why the CBI and the chemical industry have asked the Government to ensure that regulation is not imposed upon them. I think that one will find that British Gas, would be delighted, in the fierce competition in which it is involved, to take advantage of any downward movement in price and to obtain a better share of the market. The only people who made strong representations to me that this sphere should be regulated are those currently in competition in it.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): In the light of what the right hon. Gentleman has said, and of the intervention made by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about British Telecom, will the Secretary of State explain whether what he is saying about the regulation of industrial prices means that the domestic

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

prices will have to rise by more than the RPI formula? He is admitting that there is a differential, similar to that in British Telecom.

Mr. Walker: I cannot acknowledge that. I am saying that, in this sector of contract pricing, British Gas has done well and is doing well and there is not an imbalance of return as there was in the commercial sector of British Telecom. It has a commodity that competes well — it controls 35 per cent. of the market. Its major competitors are the oil companies, the electricity boards and the coal industry. I am glad to say that the latter is becoming an important competitor as a result of the benefit that the Government have given it through the coal conversion scheme, and some of the major users have recently transferred rom other energy to coal. This is a fiercely competitive market place, and it would be absurd to say that in privatisation, our desire is to move the gas corporation from its competitive position, which is helpful to industry and commerce, to a regulated position.

Mr. Madden: The Secretary of State has said that the Office of Fair Trading would, under the powers that he proposes, be able to investigate any complaint from an industrial customer if he felt that his company was being badly treated. As bulk supply contracts have hitherto been commercially confidential, will the Office of Fair Trading have the powers to require from the new, privately owned gas corporation information about the privately negotiated contracts?

Mr. Walker: The Office of Fair Trading has that power in connection with any investigation of any company. Another provision is written into the legislation, which is that for the first time, the Office of Fair Trading can demand that British Gas publishes its maximum prices for contracts. Therefore, one will be able to see to a greater extent than before the method and basis on which the company is doing the pricing.

The Office of Fair Trading will be able to take action through the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under existing trading and fair competition law. Close regulation of the kind proposed for tariff customers would therefore be extended to contract gas sales if necessary, and intermediate stages, falling short of regulation, could be proposed by the MMC. The Office of Fair Trading, rather than of gas, is the right body because it has a wider remit and sees what is happening among the competitors in this important market.

Therefore, in the industrial sphere we can claim that the Bill's provisions, which meet the views on regulations that bodies such as the CBI have given to the Select Committee, comply with what is required, and will assist. There are other ways in which this legislation improves the position of the competition, particularly with regard to competition in common carriage. My predecessor introduced legislation that, for the first time, gave to other gas suppliers the opportunity to use BGC's network. I recognise the importance of giving greater opportunities for competition within gas supply to reinforce the competitive pressures that are already felt from other fuel suppliers.

Therefore, the Bill pushes forward considerably the position under the Oil and Gas Enterprise Act 1982, which first opened up the possibility of private sector supplies to individual consumers. The Bill will carry forward and reinforce these provisions and in addition will complete the process started by my predecessor by removing the unique status of British Gas as the only authorised gas utility. There are no unnecessary obstacles in the way of other companies that wish to become utilities in areas not already served by the British Gas Corporation.

It has been argued that splitting the corporation into area boards serving different parts of the country would achieve greater competition. I carefully examined this possibility, and looked into the advantages and disadvantages that it would bring. Under such an arrangement, each consumer would, as is now the case with electricity, face a single supplier in their area. Breaking up the corporation would also put at risk economies of scale through the integrated transmission and distribution system that has been developed and the advantages of central co-ordination, which allow best practices to be spread rapidly through all parts of the country.

The major structural change would, as in the past, mean far greater regional diversities in prices and would have inevitable disadvantages in disruption to consumers and industry. At the end of the day, the idea is that a therm of gas could be obtained at such and such a price in the north-west as opposed to London or the south-east. In reality, as our examination of the American system showed clearly, there is no effective competition as a result of comparisons with gas prices in one region as opposed to another. In fact, there are always considerable differences in the cost of distribution and other factors that give a reason for variation.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that electricity in Scotland comes under the control of the Secretary of State for Scotland and that two electricity boards provide electricity for Scotland at a cheaper rate than that provided by the CEGB? In those circumstances, why does he not consider the prospect of reinstating the old Scottish gas board, which was an autonomous organisation with headquarters in Scotland? That would give rise to much-needed employment, and also, because it has access to its own autonomous indigenous gas supplies, it would be able to compete with the BGC elsewhere.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise the reason for the advantage in Scottish electricity prices, which is that those boards have gone nuclear to a far greater extent than has anybody else. I am sure that he will support that trend in other parts of the industry. As to gas, significant regional variations would not be to the advantage of either industry or the country, and would not add to the competitive position.

The most significant opportunities for competition in gas are provided by the freedom given by the Oil and Gas Enterprise Act. Under that, sales of gas to individual customers are permitted, and it provides, for the use by third parties of the British Gas Corporation supply system for the delivery of gas to such customers. We are strengthening these proposals. The Bill continues the right, created by the Act, for third parties to use the BGC system and for the price to be set by an independent arbitrator. Unlike a report that appeared in a newspaper today, consistent with our decision on the enforcement of the regulatory system generally, this task will be for the new Director General of Gas Supply.

A new element in the Bill is the possibility of licence conditions concerning the use of the system by others. As was made clear when I published the licence, my intention was to reinforce the present system in two important parts by means of licence conditions. First, it is important that the British Gas Corporation should make clear to all concerned the likely terms on which it would be prepared to enter any such deal. Therefore, I propose to require it to publish such information, including its suggestions of the typical prices that BGC would propose, consistent with the principles set out in the Bill for the determination of charges by Ofgas. We have put a statutory provision into the Bill as to the manner in which the appropriate cost will be considered so that the Director General of Gas Supply has a statutory duty to ensure that the decisions that he takes are based on a realistic assessment of the cost.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Despite all these complicated rules, it seems that the right hon. Gentleman expects more gas to be consumed, whether by the British Gas Corporation, the successor companies or rival carriers. Given that probable increase in demand, is it proposed to maintain the same limitation on sourcing of that gas on the new privatised company, perhaps by relaxation of his rule on Sleipner, or by what other means will the new company, with the advice of his Department, guarantee that there will be supplies of gas in the latter part of this century?

Mr. Walker: Imports and exports are most complicated in both directions. There is a complication in terms of the potential power of exporters and of importers. The subject is involved in large long-term contracts. Before any flotation takes place, during the passage of the Bill, we shall announce in detail the Government's views and policy on the future of imports and exports. That announcement will not be part of the Bill — it has nothing to do with the legislation. However, we have to make clear our policy, and we shall do so at a later stage.

As was made clear when I published the licence, it is my intention to reinforce the present system in two important areas through licensing conditions. First the BGC must make clear to all concerned the likely terms of any deals. Secondly, a real restraint on supplies by independent companies is their inability to guarantee a continuous supply, whereas the BGC can do that because it has a wide variety of suppliers from different fields. One way of overcoming that problem is for BGC to provide a back-up supply of gas to cover any interruption of supplies from a third party, either planned or in an emergency.

In our discussions with the oil companies, it was shown that one of the weaknesses of the previous legislation was that it did not provide for a back-up supply. Therefore, I propose to require the BGC to state the conditions under which it would be prepared to make available such a back-up supply, including the method by which it would calculate charges. The publication of that would enable firms to make decisions about their total supply to a would-be customer, which would substantially improve the position.

A further obstacle to common carriage deals has been the difficulty of matching the output of individual fields with customers' demands, especially the disposal of residual production over and above that which can be taken by a purchaser. I have asked the BGC to make it clear in a public statement that it will not discriminate against offers of residual gas but will consider them in exactly the same context as the other companies' requirements being considered at that time.

The proposals in the Bill—including the statement on principles for setting charges for the director general and the power for him to adjourn cases so that normal negotiations can continue—represent a real advance on the regime introduced in the 1982 Act. They will give new impetus to companies to conclude such deals, and hence reinforce internally the already strong competitive forces that are emerging from other fuels.

One restraint that will be removed from the BGC is its inability — due to pressure from Whitehall under both Labour and Conservative Governments — to take full advantage of its research programmes and the international opportunities that have been presented to it. There is no doubt that had the BGC operated with the same freedom as British Petroleum during the past 10 or 15 years, its contribution to the British economy, both nationally and internationally, would have been very much greater.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Under the previous legislation, the Secretary of State took the power to remove from BGC something that it could do—and as BP does—its right to drill for oil. Now the right hon. Gentleman is reinstating that facility to suit his views of Tory doctrinaire policy.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly reasonable criticism. He is correct to say that the Conservative Government have interfered with the management of the BGC. Can he explain why, during the last five years of the Labour Government, the capital investment programme of BGC was substantially reduced? Was that the result of any Government interference? Was it the result of the Treasury leaning on BGC?

The hon. Gentleman quoted an example of my Government interfering with the BGC. I have quoted examples of the Labour Government similarly interfering with the BGC. It is a perfect illustration of how the commercial ability and talents of the BGC have been frustrated by nationalisation.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): My right hon. Friend is aware of my interest in this matter. He is also aware of the apprehension felt by the smaller oil companies, many of which have contributed greatly to the North sea. They are concerned that they will be subject to predatory attacks by BGC once it is independent and capable of bidding for them. Can my right hon. Friend give any assurance to those oil companies that they will be protected against such attacks?

Mr. Walker: The powers of non-discrimination against suppliers will be clearly stated because they are important. My hon. Friend says that the oil companies are concerned about take-over bids. He is aware that such attacks could currently be made by BP, Shell or any other major company operating around the world. I do not believe that the creation of another independent major company will make the threat of attack even greater.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Answer the question.

Mr. Walker: I am answering the question. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) knows enough about the oil industry to appreciate that the

[Mr. Walker]

possibility of a large company taking over a smaller company already exists. Many large companies operate in the North sea with such rights and powers. My hon. Friend is also familiar with the terms of the licensing arrangements that will continue to operate. Whoever may be Secretary of State, he has the power to ensure that the medium and small-sized companies obtain a share of those rights. My hon. Friend knows that that policy has been pursued by successive Governments and will continue to be so. I do not believe that any new fear arises out of this legislation. It will be no different to the current position of major companies operating within certain freedoms.

Part I of the Bill deals with the arrangements for the control of gas supply and the system of licensing. It sets up an effective regulatory body for the whole of domestic and industrial tariff gas. It has an appropriate safeguard for the contract market, but allows industry to benefit from the considerable competition in that market.

Part II provides for the arrangements to transfer BGC to a private company and for the sale of its shares. I hope that the sale will take place soon after Parliament has approved the legislation, and in a way that allows the managers, employees and customers of BGC, as well as other people, to have real participation, for the first time, in that important company.

Part III deals with some of the miscellaneous matters, including protection of commercial information. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport knows that the protection of information by oil companies—small, medium and large—is an important factor. After careful consultation, we have included provision to deal with the anxiety expressed and the points raised.

This is a carefully considered and well-thought-out piece of legislation. I believe that it will be to the benefit of gas consumers, employees and managers. It will also be of very great benefit to the whole country.

4.36 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Most hon. Members, and people throughout the country, are aware of the reason why the Government have introduced the Bill. It has nothing to do with productivity, efficiency, or competition. It is solely designed to raise revenue so that the Government can implement the only major policy that remains to them—to reduce taxation in an endeavour to buy votes at the next general election.

The Bill will result in the selling off, at cut price, of a major public corporation which has shown superb public enterprise and which is one of the great success stories of the past 20 years.

Twenty years ago, the gas industry was a sad and declining energy supplier, losing its market share and calling out for investment. Today, it is modern, efficient, profitable and responsive. It is one of the 10 largest businesses in the United Kingdom, employing 93,000 people and serving 16 million households and 35 million people.

The BGC's ability to make profits in recent years has never been in doubt. Indeed, the Secretary of State referred to that. Its profit in 1984-85 was £803 million, and more than £504 million was paid to the Government through the gas levy. Its success in productivity is also undeniable. A four-year financial target was set from 1983-84 for an average annual return of 4 per cent. on average net assets. That represents a 12 per cent. reduction in unit net trading costs measured per therm of gas. Not many industries, whether public or private, could match that.

During the past 20 years the industry has been rebuilt to create a national gas transmission system to supply gas safely and securely to 60 million households. It is a technical, commercial and financial success story, which has been achieved by public enterprise and a nationalised industry.

To achieve that success, the Governments of both parties vested in that corporation an enormous set of powers—of first purchase of gas, of sole supply, and of exclusive access to the North sea. By any standards, that is enormous monopoly power. That power was justified for the tasks and objectives that were set, but surely they are not transferable to any private body. Such powers could be justified only if they were made accountable to the Government of the day and to Parliament.

The Secretary of State has described accountability as interference, but it is nothing of the sort. He has exercised his justifiable right in broader national and energy interests to prevent the Sleipner deal, for example. We may quarrel with his decisions, but we do not deny his responsibility to make the corporation, which has enormous power and influence over key national and energy matters, accountable and answerable.

The right hon. Gentleman has told us that the difficult and delicate issue of imports and exports of gas is one which the Government will have to examine further. That is not mentioned in the Bill, nor is it referred to in the licence. The right hon. Gentleman said that he would spell out the issue in Committee and in the Bill's subsequent stages in its passage through Parliament. Why is it not in the Bill now? Why must we rely on a statement by the right hon. Gentleman? It should be recognised that we are talking about a method of interference by the Secretary of State and the Government.

There are other issues that are outside the Bill that we shall have to examine in great detail in Committee and as the Bill passes through the House. Enormous powers are to be transferred from a public monopoly to a private monopoly, and there will be no real public accountability. There is no evidence that the Bill will improve efficiency, provide a better service, produce cheaper gas or, least of all, create competition. I say to Conservative Members, and especially to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who, like me, was a member of the Committee which considered the British Telecom Bill, as it then was, that the Bill offers no return to the market place or market forces.

The Government's privatisation programme has had a series of curious and contradictory objectives, stretching from Amersham International to British Telecom. The Government's high priest of privatisation, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, had some interesting comments to make about privatisation in November 1983. He said:

> "The primary objective of the Government's privatisation programme is to reduce the powers of the monopolist and to encourage competition. As the programme moves into the heartlands of the public sector, maximising competition will become of dominant importance."

There is nothing in the Bill that meets the remarks of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Despite the

mutterings of the Secretary of State, that cannot be gainsaid. The right hon. Gentleman was then, as now, a member of the Government.

The Government will have established a private monopoly that will operate in the fuel market both as a buyer and as a seller. It will not be accountable to Parliament, but it will be able to make decisions that could render nonsense the energy and fuel depletion policies that have been determined by the Government. The Secretary of State has recently issued a draft licence to give privatised gas a 25-year monopoly. That can be terminated only if 10 years' notice is given. We note the rather pathetic attempt by the Secretary of State, in the Bill and in the licence to breathe some life into the dead provisions of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982. It is a fact that the Bill will provide no competition, despite what the right hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The right hon. Gentleman is making much of competition. He has told us on previous occasions that a Labour Government would renationalise the gas industry. Will he tell us how much competition there would be with a renationalised gas industry?

Mr. Orme: At a later stage, I shall come to what a Labour Government would do, when I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's question. If there is no competition, there must be public accountability. That is the argument that the Opposition have always advanced when faced with measures to privatise nationalised industries — *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State continues to mutter. It would be interesting to hear what he has to say about the gas levy. We are told about the powers of the new Gas Users Council. We believe that it will be able to investigate only those complaints that arise from tariff gas supplies. It will not be able to deal with contract customers' complaints, nor with complaints about installing, contracting, sales and repairs of appliances. It will have no statutory rights to investigate such complaints, yet the corporation controls more than 80 per cent. of appliance sales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is no specific provision in the Bill of the sort that the right hon. Gentleman appears to want, because the Bill provides gas tariff powers. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that the new council will have powers to enable it to examine complaints of the sort to which he referred. If a specific reference is required in the licence, that can easily be met. British Gas and the Government have said publicly that they will consider and examine all these matters.

Mr. Orme: The Secretary of State has not answered my question. Clause 32(2)*(b)* states:

"any matter (not being an enforcement matter or a matter relating to tariff customers) which relates to the supply of gas through pipes and in respect of which any functions of the Director General of Fair Trading under the Fair Trading Act 1973 or the Competition Act 1980".

That provision is directed to supplies. Where is the comparable provision for appliances?

Mr. Peter Walker: I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that all the activities of British Gas will be able to be investigated by the council, including those which relate to appliances. There is no need to set out in the Bill that which the right hon. Gentleman requires. British Gas, the Government and the current chairman of the National Gas Consumers Council have all stated publicly that all these issues will be considered. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman is relieved to know that that consideration will be open to the new council.

Mr. Orme: There is nothing of that sort in the Bill. I hope that the Minister of State will be more explicit when he replies to the debate. I can give the Secretary of State a firm assurance that we shall table amendments in Committee to take up the matter.

My right hon. and hon. Friends supported the powers that were vested in the public corporation, but we believe that they should not be transferred to a privatised company. The powers should not be unaccountable. A privatised BGC will not have fewer powers, and it will not be accountable to the Government or to Parliament. We are being offered the creation of another quango—Ofgas —that will be a pale imitation of Oftel. We are all aware that telephone subscribers are unprotected by Oftel. The recent increases in consumer charges by British Telecom have been met by a wave of protests from consumers, and even some members of Oftel have said that changes should be made in their powers and responsibilities. I wonder whether the Secretary of State and Conservative Members heard the director of Oftel on the radio this morning. He was being interviewed during the "Today" programme on Radio 4. If that is the watchdog that we have in Oftel, I urge the right hon. Gentleman to ensure that a better person is appointed to be in charge of gas. In part I we are being offered cut-price consumer protection. The provisions of the draft licence are no reassurance.

I shall now deal with the rather complicated price formula. We have had only a short time to look at the licence, because we have had it for only a few hours. However, as I see it, the licence contains a complicated price formula with two elements — X and Y. What figure will X be established at? That covers only half the costs. We then have Y, the allowable costs, the North sea costs that can be transferred to the consumer. It is a free-for-all on an increasing proportion of the price of gas. There is not much protection there. Therefore, we are entitled to know what X and Y represent.

Another issue that is unclear is whether the licence allows for differential pricing. Are we to see the introduction of higher regional gas prices? The Secretary of State referred to his opposition to regionalising the gas industry—breaking it up—because of the difficulty as it is a monopoly supplier for consumers. Is there anything in the Bill that prevents the regionalisation of prices? That is an important matter.

Mr. Wilson: Will the right hon. Gentleman support the formation of a Scottish gas company if the Bill goes through, rather than allowing Scotland to be buried in the middle of the British Gas company that may be established?

Mr. Orme: No, because I think that Scotland is well served by the British Gas Corporation at the moment, and there is no need for such a change.

There was speculation that a formula in the licence would ensure that standing charges would rise faster than the rate of inflation. That is not in the licence. Instead, we have the weasel words "best endeavours". What does that mean? What protection is there for the hard-pressed consumer? Why is there not a simple formula of, say, RPI

[Mr. Orme]

minus Z? I am sure that the House would support such a formula, but there is no statutory provision within the Bill or in the licence; only the words "best endeavours". That does not seem to meet the point in any shape or form.

We understood that codes of practice were to be included in the licence. They are not. There is just an obligation for them to be published three months after the licence is granted. Are there any changes to existing codes of practice? If so, the House should have the opportunity to look at them first.

I remind the House of those who will not be protected by the Bill. The Secretary of State spent some time dealing with industrial consumers. In fact, 38 per cent. of gas consumption is not covered by the Bill. These are the industrial and commercial consumers, many of them small businesses, who buy their gas under contract, amounting to about 6·8 billion therms per year. They will not be protected. In that regard, the Secretary of State's press release is totally misleading. He said:

"The new system of regulation to be applied to the whole of the domestic market and the industrial tariff market will mean that the price of gas will be regulated in such a way that the consumer will obtain a real and direct benefit from improved efficiency by British Gas".

The right hon. Gentleman said that while conveniently forgetting to tell the press and the public that the industrial tariff consumer represents only 5 per cent. of the industrial market. The remaining 95 per cent. will not be protected by regulations, licence, Ofgas, the Director General of Gas Supply or the Gas Users Council. Over 1·25 million customers who buy appliances from the BGC are not covered by the Bill and are not within the remit of the Gas Users Council. We shall await further information on that from the Secretary of State. All those who need to have their appliances repaired and serviced are not covered by the Bill, and I have already quoted clause 32.

That is linked to the question of gas showrooms. Their future is in jeopardy, and we heard no word from the Secretary of State about that. The Government previously found out, to their astonishment, the rapid reaction of the consumers when they tried to strip and sell off gas showrooms. There are over 800 gas showrooms, which are the local contact point for the consumer for payments, queries, servicing and complaints. They are the point of contact for the consumer to report emergencies.

Any closure must represent a loss, not only in jobs, but in a decline in service. Any reduction in the number of gas fitters employed as a result of closure must mean a less satisfactory emergency service. No statutory provision can make up for the loss of means to provide a proper and safe service. If any showrooms are closed, the customers will suffer and the consumers will be the victims. They will not be the only victims. We have heard nothing about this from the Secretary of State.

In 1984, British Gas invested in British goods to the extent of over £1 billion, giving support to 250,000 British jobs. If privatised gas follows the British Telecom model, we shall see major orders placed overseas, the loss of British jobs and more damage done to the already declining manufacturing industry within the United Kingdom. Those are crucial points.

We noticed recently that the Secretary of State had a difference of opinion with his noble Friend Lord Stockton about the selling of the silver. In fact, I agreed with the Secretary of State when he said that the Government were not selling the silver. It is not the silver that is being sold, but the table, the chairs, and the house itself. That is once and for all. Once that money has been used, it cannot be replaced. A future Government will have to replace it.

Twenty per cent. of the shares of British Telecom were sold overseas on the first day, making a killing of £180 million. That is the size of the problem. We are dealing with a major British industry that is worth about £16 billion, and it is likely to be sold for anything between £6 billion and £8 billion. It is an absolute disgrace that that should be taking place at a time of high unemployment and industrial decline in the United Kingdom.

We have heard a little about greater share ownership from the Secretary of State. Again, I look at the British Telecom figures. The maximum stake of any employee is one millionth of 1 per cent. of the total shareholding. Perhaps the most humiliating aspect is that employees' shares do not entitle them to attend the annual meeting. That is absolutely ridiculous. The vast majority of the 16 million gas consumers in Britain are finding it hard enough to pay their bills. Not many of them will be beneficiaries from such a development.

Labour believes that the British Gas Corporation belongs to the nation. Under Labour, it will be in the public sector. We shall ensure that the new public utility meets the needs of the economy, the consumers and the workers in the industry. That will be achieved in a way that is consistent with our other economic aims and priorities. The industry will be publicly owned and publicly accountable. That is our policy, and it is the policy that we shall implement.

Mr. Bruce: I take it that that is an unequivocal declaration that the Labour Government, if there ever were one, which is unlikely, will take the British gas industry back into public ownership, regardless of the cost. Where will the right hon. Gentleman get the money to do so?

Mr. Orme: I have clearly stated Labour's policy. I give the hon. Gentleman this assurance. He will have a little more time to study our proposals than we have had to study the licence.

Mr. Heffer: My right hon. Friend has made an absolutely first-class speech. Can he take it slightly further and say that we shall consider taking the industry back into public ownership without paying huge sums of compensation because, in the past, it has been the people's money and the people's assets that the Government have got rid of? It is right that the Labour party should take back the people's assets.

Mr. Orme: We shall re-acquire the assets, based on the policy of the Labour party conference and that of the national executive of which my hon. Friend is a member. That policy has been clearly laid down.

Many of the key issues are outside the terms of the Bill and the licence. As well as service, showrooms and the manufacture of gas appliances, there is no mention of research and development, trade union rights or the valuation and sale of the BGC.

I should like to refer to the gas levy. Paragraph 2 of schedule 6 states:

"No order shall be made under section 2(3) of that Act specifying for the year 1991-92 or an earlier year a rate of levy higher than the rate of the preceding year."

Are we to understand from that that the gas levy will be maintained, and will continue until 1992? Will the

Government still impose a levy on a privatised gas industry? We were entitled to be told the answer today, but we were not.

The debate should be taking place with the full facts presented to us. The Secretary of State has not answered many points, certainly those that I have raised. For instance, what percentage of shares will be sold overseas? How will the golden share be operated to protect British interests? Will there be any restrictions on the number of shares bought by oil companies, for example? The haste with which the Government have introduced the measure has left many questions unanswered. Those matters are vital to the future of gas, and we are entitled to the answers.

The Secretary of State said that while the industry was fairly successful it could be improved under privatisation. I refer him to the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells report. They are the management consultants whom the Department appointed to look into the BGC. The report states:

"British Gas management and employees can look back at many excellent achievements, the principal being the conversion from town to natural gas and the substantially increased share of the energy market. These have been combined with a good safety record, a significant improvement in customer service and good industrial relations. Finally, BGC has generated sufficient profit and cash flow to meet financial targets and to self-finance its investment programmes.

We consider that the management and employees of any commercial organisation could be proud of such a record, and also that it reflects well on the sponsoring Department of Energy."

What better evidence is there than an independent assessment of the British Gas Corporation?

There is only one reason why the Government are proceeding with the Bill. I have mentioned it before. It is to finance tax cuts, while maintaining high unemployment. The Bill is irrelevant to the economic and industrial problems facing Britain. We shall oppose it, and we shall reverse it.

5.6 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I declare my full support for the main principle behind the Bill: privatisation and the transference of the ownership of British Gas to the real public — the employees, the consumers and the investors. I was sorry to hear the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) clearly state that when — if ever — Labour had the opportunity to renationalise the industry, it would deprive the employees, consumers and investors of any increase that they may have achieved in the value of their shareholdings. That should be well and truly taken on board by those people.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the way in which he has presented the measure and on the methods that he has used to ensure the success of the forthcoming flotation.

Ever since the prospect of privatising the British Gas Corporation began to appear before us, my main concern has been that it would prove impossible to formulate a method that would safeguard the interests of all the various parties concerned — new shareholders, gas consumers and gas producers. Ideally, from my point of view, I should have liked to see a breaking down of the monopoly/monopsony structure so that effective competition could be introduced at all levels of the industry. But as I looked more deeply at the nature of the industry and the worldwide situation, taking into account the finite nature of the basic resource, the single supplier distribution requirements and the vital safety aspects, it became obvious that splitting the British Gas Corporation into several regional or other sorts of gas companies would leave us not only with monopolies in the regions but with the certainty of loss-making areas, such as my own in the south-west, with large populations spread over wide areas. Therefore, with regret I had to accept, looking across Britain as a whole, that it would be extremely difficult to set up a regional structure of a privatised gas company or companies with equal access to gas supplies at a fair price.

Therefore, reluctantly I accept the continuation of the whole corporation as a single entity and with that the need for a system of regulatory control to protect all consumers and producers — all those who need protection from what will be a powerful private sector monopoly. Incidentally, it will be led by potentially the toughest capitalist monopolist of them all — Sir Denis Rooke. I have the highest regard for his knowledge of the gas industry and his ability to manage it to the best advantage of its employees, but, without any yardstick to judge the gas industry's comparative efficiency over the years, I do not know — and I challenge anyone else to know — how to measure successfully its cost effectiveness. That will be just as difficult under the new regime.

Competition in gas, as my right hon. Friend said, will have to be achieved by other means — by comparisons with other fuels and close examination of costs. Here regional accounting might help, although I appreciate that the gas industry is different from the electricity industry where that is more feasible.

The use of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act by new suppliers could afford an opportunity for some comparisons of efficiency. Although I welcome the improvement for access for industrial suppliers, there probably will not be any great immediate surge of competitive markets here given the power of BGC to resist any such competition in the domestic and industrial markets.

That leaves me still worried about the monopsony situation of the BGC as a buyer and seller of North sea gas. I am convinced that the slow development of gas resources in the United Kingdom sector in the 1970s is directly related to that factor. The low prices offered to gas producers affected the market and it was only when shortages became imminent, especially to the industries sector in the late 1970s, that prospects of higher price imports helped raise the gas offer price to new producers.

That directly resulted in a sharp increase in gas exploration and the subsequent realisation that there was plenty of gas around and that we did not need to buy high cost Norwegian Sleipner gas. Norwegian, Russian and Dutch gas is becoming available throughout Europe, making Europe extremely well provided for. Britain should not be completely isolated from the European scene. I strongly urge my right hon. Friend to give full consideration to a freer export and import market in gas.

There are grave fears in the industry that the absence of such competition from the European market will allow the BGC to squeeze United Kingdom gas producers unfairly both on prices for gas and through its own activities as a private sector producer of oil and gas.

So long as we have had a sensible Government policy framework in recent years, the oil companies have generally accepted that the BGC has acted reasonably within that framework, but with privatisation they are increasingly concerned that a new conflict of interest now

[Mr. John Hannam]

arises. Here we have a company under obligation to maximise its profit-making potential, but at the same time continuing to have effective control over the development of all United Kingdom gas resources.

Therefore, we should obviously try to ensure that the BGC operates in a way that allows for the most efficient development of United Kingdom natural gas and does not hinder the activity necessary to maintain a stable long-term gas supply from our North sea sector.

As has already been mentioned, one problem area is the discriminatory purchase practices which exist. In all sorts of different ways the BGC could favour those companies with which it is involved in, for example, joint ventures or the disposal of associated gas. We must ensure that there are safeguards against such prejudicial treatment and that competition between producer companies is on an equal footing for gas sales.

Another area of worry is that relating to access to information and all kinds of geological data which are provided by gas producers in the course of contract negotiations. That is always a ticklish area when dealing with the oil industry. Trying to get producers to unite to present a case at any time has always been difficult because of the confidentiality of geological information.

It is easy to see that such information could give British Gas a substantial advantage in applying for future exploration licences and also in the acquisition of other oil and gas interests which are certain to take place. Firm legal safeguards are needed to prevent any flow of such valuable information from the purchasing arm of British Gas to its exploration arm. My right hon. Friend referred to the protection in clause 9, and perhaps the Minister of State will elaborate further on that when he replies. I hope that he will accept the difference between the purchasing and exploration sides of British Gas. They must be kept separate.

The new BGC will be in a unique position for a private company in the oil and gas industry. It will have a captive market in buying and selling and a major say in how, when and where gas and even oilfields are developed.

In addition, BGC will be able to carry on business as an oil and gas exploration and production company in direct competition with others in the industry. That may add up to an attractive proposition for investors, but it also poses obvious dangers to what has been an incredibly successful free enterprise North sea oil industry.

Therefore, it is essential that we establish a clear statutory definition of what BGC can or cannot do. Otherwise, the BGC's obligation to serve its shareholders by the use of every commercial advantage at its disposal could be at the possible expense of effective development of United Kingdom gas reserves. A free export-import gas market would be one way of ensuring a more competitive environment and would guarantee the full development of United Kingdom gas resources, and, incidentally, create a large number of new jobs. In the absence of such a market in gas, other safeguards should be included if we are to secure the best gas developments for Britain.

Nearer to home, I have one or two queries on the regulatory system and on consumer protection. First, there is the problem of small businesses using more than 25,000 therms. What recourse will they have for complaints on unfair pricing? The Gas Users Council does not seem to have been given responsibility for such small and medium sized businesses, so it would be useful to know exactly what avenue of representation is open to them. That applies particularly in my region of the south-west where we have a large geographical spread and a large number of that size of gas consumer.

In the south-west region we have seen the devolving of consumer organisations to about 12 management districts. Will the new consumer users' council structure have the flexibility to deal with the needs of rather diverse regions in Britain?

I have always been particularly worried about the safety of our gas supply system. I welcome the introduction of the stricter safety regime through the Health and Safety Commission. However, as we move into Energy Efficiency Year, I hope that some positive steps will be announced by the commission towards energy-saving audits, equipment standards and general safety matters.

When does the commission expect to announce the action that it proposes to take on some of those fronts, particularly on the safety of imported gas appliances? For years our manufacturers have warned us of the unsafe features of cheap imported gas appliances which do not have to conform, as ours do, to British safety standards. Recent tests have confirmed what we have always been told — that cheaper, often quite attractive, appliances represent real safety threats. Something will have to be done if we are not to see standards drop as our own manufacturers lower their construction standards in order to retain their competitiveness.

The safety of gas supplies, installations and equipment is obviously a vital factor in the public perception of this privatisation measure. I hope that the Health and Safety Commission will soon be able to make some positive pronouncements on those matters. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend has placed such importance upon the safety regime and the role of the Health and Safety Commission.

I welcome the Bill and the transfer of ownership of the gas industry to the real public—the consumer, employee and investor. I welcome the consumer protection structure and ask that it be as flexible as possible to cater for the regional disparities in Britain. Finally, I welcome the release of this great industry from the constraints of Whitehall interference, something which my right hon. Friend stressed. I am sure that the confidence that he is placing in the management and work force of BGC will be well rewarded in future.

5.18 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to introduce competition into the operations of British Gas; maintains the British Gas Corporation's monopoly market power without establishing effective regulatory machinery; provides inadequate protection for consumers from unfair pricing; and continues the Government's reckless and irresponsible policy of disposal of national assets to finance current consumption."

The Bill is rather phenomenal—first, because of the scale of the flotation for which it provides and, secondly, because of the implications of this privatisation measure for the British Gas Corporation's consumers and competitors, and for the effect that it will have on Government revenue.

The Bill is interesting because, as far as I can see, it fails to meet any of the known philosophical or ideological justifications that the Government have advanced for any previous privatisation measure.

The BGC is a huge centralised monopoly now. When the Bill is passed it will still be a huge centralised monopoly. Given its size and market power, it is difficult to see how the BGC can be subjected to significant competition other than on the margins. The Bill contains some rather fanciful provisions in respect of "any licensed gas company". We all realise that in practice we are still talking about British Gas plc as the supplier.

It is the difficulty of weakening British Gas's monopoly that makes us critical of the measure. I recommend that hon. Members should read our reasoned amendment, because it spells out in detail why the Bill is wrong on the Government's criteria. Our reasoned amendment takes the Government to task because they have not attempted to introduce competition or to tackle the monopoly.

We do not believe that the Government's proposals provide anything like adequate protection for the consumer. We object to the sale because it is irresponsible and because it has serious long-term implications. It is being introduced, as we are all aware, as a short-term expedient to finance pre-election tax cuts.

The Government are not allowing a free market in North sea gas. The Secretary of State said that he might tell us something about it during the Bill's passage. That was a further sign of how hurried and ill thought out the measure is.

The Government are not taking powers to prevent the BGC from using its monopoly in the way that the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) was worried about—to see off competitors by cross-subsidising or by using predatory defensive pricing to keep people out of the market.

The BGC will be free to move back into the oil business. It could do that merely by gobbling up the independent smaller oil companies which are currently operating at the mercy of the market. They should be protected from being swallowed by a predatory BGC. Why should not Government make the exploration, development and production of the BGC a separate company?

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): For a Liberal, the hon. Gentleman is coming close to enunciating a policy. Is it his policy that the free import and export of gas should be allowed? Will he confirm that?

Mr. Bruce: I was trying to elucidate the Secretary of State's policy. He could not tell us. He said that he might be able to tell us in a few months' time. If the Government are trying to privatise BGC to promote competition, we would expect to see measures to extend competition before we are asked to vote on the Bill. I have made it clear that we do not believe that the Government have justified what they are proposing to do, because they have failed to tell us what they are doing.

The loss of growing, small oil companies would be bad news for my area and for Britain. We welcome the fact that those oil companies are diverse in type and offer more contract opportunities and jobs. From the Department of Energy's point of view, the small independent companies have a creative approach to exploration and development and they will maximise our resources and development opportunities.

We know that the BGC wants to get back into oil. It is no wonder that those independents are worried. Why is nothing being done to break up the BGC into its constituent parts? The point has already been made that the Government could have chosen this opportunity to re-establish regional companies. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) has already referred to the possibility of a Scottish gas company. There seems to be no reason why that could not be done and why such companies could not compete in exploration and distribution.

The Government said nothing about retail operations. Having tried to privatise them separately two or three years ago, it is rather surprising that the Government have not referred to them now that they have brought the whole corporation to market.

The Government claim that the sale of the BGC will mean wider share ownership. We welcome wider share ownership. A flotation of this size must secure wider share ownership to raise the money that the Government need. Those shares will have to be offered at a discount, for two reasons. The first is the size of the flotation. The second is the need to ensure that first-time shareholders receive a reasonable bonus and are not put off the whole idea of share-owning from the start. We know from experience that a year or two after privatisation most of those shareholders will have sold the shares to the City institutions and that the real widening of share ownership will not be as great as the Government hope.

We are worried that the BGC will use its size and the power that it has in the market to the detriment of existing or potential competitors. We are even more worried by the Bill's implications for the corporation's 16 million consumers. That represents a great many households as well as an important number of corporations and companies.

It seems that the pricing formula is to be based on the retail price index minus X plus Y, where Y is the allowance for the cost of acquiring new supplies. Hon. Members should strongly question that pricing policy, because there are serious implications behind the licence that the Government will issue.

The licence means, first, that the Government's abuse of the BGC monopoly, when they forced up prices by the RPI plus 10 per cent. for three consecutive years, will be frozen as the base from which all future price increases are calculated. That is an unacceptable starting point. Secondly, the increased cost of new supplies gives BGC an open-ended opportunity to increase prices. The Secretary of State said that measures will be taken to restrict increases for industrial users. That means that the burden will fall more heavily on the 15.5 million domestic consumers. Pensioners and other low income groups will be dismayed by the fact that the Bill permits the continuation of standing charges. Many of them are campaigning to have those charges abolished. We only have the rather lame exhortation, which the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) mentioned, about BGC using its "best endeavours" to keep standing charges under control.

Those pressures will not make the BGC improve its efficiency or cut costs in such a captive market. The market cannot do that for the reasons that I and other hon. Members have given. The regulatory authority cannot do it because the Government have not given it the power or the authority to do so.

[Mr. Bruce]

On the Government's instigation, the BGC has squeezed consumers to the point of yielding £2,068·2 million in gas levy since the Government introduced it in 1980, and a further £1,217·1 million in tax to the Treasury during the Government's term of office. That is a total of £3·25 billion to the Treasury.

When I suggested to the Minister of State during last energy Question Time that the Government should introduce a utilities commission modelled on some of the American examples, all the Minister could say was that he noted my liking for bureaucracy. The Secretary of State is offering us the worst of all possible worlds. He is offering us a regulatory body and a director general with powers and functions that spread over 47 of the Bill's 66 clauses but does not give that body the authority or funding to ensure the proper protection of consumers.

Substantial theoretical power is given to the director, the Gas Users Council and the Secretary of State, but with, according to the Bill, a budget of under £2 million and a staff of under 100, it is doubtful whether the director general's sphere of operations will be all that wide. He is also constrained by being one director general rather than a commission. He is appointed by the Secretary of State. He is subject to pressure from and is accountable to the Secretary of State.

For a Right-wing Secretary of State, that may of course be designed to allow the BGC to maximise its profit and ensure that the Government's friends in the City are satisfied. It also allows a Left-wing Secretary of State, such as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who has no doubt read the Bill carefully, to approach the matter in the opposite way and undermine the BGC's viability to keep down prices. That power is contained in the Bill.

In reality, the director general does not have the power and resources that he needs, either to investigate the pricing policy of the British Gas Corporation and its costing, or to prevent cross-subsidy or the abuse of monopoly power. A much more powerful commission is required. It should be established at arm's length from the Secretary of State, and should have five or seven commissioners with wide-ranging experience, because only then can we be sure that it will operate independently. Obviously, the commission should have regional offices, as the Secretary of State envisages his directorate will have and adequate resources levied on the British Gas Corporation, which is the normal practice in these circumstances.

It should be recognised that a licence to operate a huge monopoly such as the BGC is a privilege, and that that is the basis for issuing the licence. It can and must be used to provide a reasonable return to the operators, but not to maximise profit. The monopoly should not be allowed to pursue unfair pricing, which is being favoured by the Government in their interference with the British Gas Corporation. The commission should have the resources to be able to state exactly how the costs are arrived at, to investigate the abuse of monopoly and cross-subsidy, and to direct the BGC to reduce its prices, if abuse is occurring. That is the strength of authority that we seek, but it is not what we have been offered. The commission should also be allowed to take account of the need to promote conservation before it sanctions further investment and price rises.

Whatever Labour spokesmen may say, it is unrealistic to assume that, once privatised, the BGC could be renationalised. First, the Labour party cannot win the general election outright—there is no chance of that. Therefore, it would not be able to introduce the appropriate measure. Given that it will not have a majority, there is no chance of the House sanctioning nationalisation. Secondly—the Labour party would do well to think about this—a new Government, pledged, as we would be, to deal with appalling unemployment, environmental decay and the need to re-establish a diversified manufacturing base, would have far higher priorities for the billions that it would cost to renationalise the BGC than to waste them on transferring ownership back from one sector of the British economy to another. We would use the money to create new wealth, investment and jobs.

The Government are wrong to believe that the highest price for the flotation—that is presumably what they seek, given that we know why they are introducing the Bill—will be secured by offering minimal regulation. The size of the flotation and the need to attract new shareholders with the prospect of a bonus will do most to depress the share price. The Government's friends in the City would be well advised to note that, if the regulatory powers contained in the Bill prove to be as weak as we believe them to be, and as ineffective as they will be, and if BGC is allowed to make massive windfall profits, a future Government that could include a future Conservative Government if, heaven preserve us, there is one after the general election—may have to introduce tighter regulatory measures. In government, the alliance would not hesitate to introduce a powerful regulatory gas commission, if we felt that the public interest required it. That is the right way to ensure that the BGC is properly brought to account and disciplined in a realistic world.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if the BGC is free and allowed to make profits, it could do the one thing which at present it cannot do — that is, become another effective multinational company, which will develop at home and overseas, and export the profits back to the British nation for its benefit? Surely we are freeing the corporation from the straitjacket of being involved purely and simply in British business.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman has greater enthusiasm for developing more multinational companies than I or other hon. Members have. The BGC is profitable at present in Britain on behalf of the nation. I have already said that there is scope for international operations, but that does not mean that it should not be regulated, nor that it should necessarily be privatised.

The size of the flotation, and its effect on the City and on competition for funds worries me. The City is somewhat bedazzled and starry-eyed at the blue chip monopoly that the Government are offering it. The City would be wise not to think that it is being offered a licence to print money. The billions of pounds that will be raised must come from somewhere. If the private sector invests in the acquisition of shares and the City funds that, it cannot fund other projects. It would be better if the City put more money into creating new wealth, rather than move bits of paper about so that 10 per centers can make a fortune, with no new assets, jobs and installations being

created. The Government must recognise that the competition for funds is likely to damage other sectors of our economy. They have failed to recognise that in bringing more and more of our national assets to the market.

The surplus from the BGC is substantial. The Government will use the money from its flotation to finance tax cuts. How will those tax cuts be paid the year after the Government have sold the BGC, and how will the Government continue to fund tax reductions? How will the tax cuts be used? If the money is used to reduce the standard rate of income tax to 25p in the pound, where will the tax cuts go? They will be used by the better-off members of our community to buy imported goods, which will aggravate our underlying economic problems. That will not help our basic problems.

The most depressing aspect of the Bill is that it is being introduced by the so-called Department of Energy. The Government have never had an energy policy, other than not to have one. That has been the stated proud policy of the Government, and is the reason why the Department of Energy has been regarded, presumably by the rest of the of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, as a suitable repository for dissident wets, which is what the Department of Energy has become.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I should like to finish my remarks.

The Secretary of State has led his team of wets, presumably to save his skin in Cabinet, given that he was mooted to be for the chop, to offer the BGC up as their sacrificial lamb to redeem the Tories' pledges of pre-election tax cuts. That is the essence of what is being offered. It has nothing to do with sensible planning or use of our energy resources. Indeed, the Government are putting all their eggs in the energy basket. They live off oil revenues, and will live off the sale of the BGC.

If the energy market goes wrong, as today's newspapers suggest, the country will be in a mess because the Government will have failed to pursue an energy policy or to diversify and broaden our manufacturing base. The Government's action amounts to the rape of our energy industry, and is a party political game. There is no ideological justification for it. The Government, including their friends on the Right, know that this is not about competition, markets or efficiency, but about obtaining money to pay for tax cuts.

There will be less, not more, competition as a result of the measure, and the 16 million British gas consumers can expect only one result—to pay increased gas prices, higher than the rate of inflation, for years to come. They can see no alternative when the Bill is passed. Therefore, I urge the House to take account of our reasoned amendment, which demonstrates clearly and categorically that there is no justification for the measure as proposed by the Government and that we should reject it.

5.38 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I welcome the Bill, unlike the Opposition, who wholeheartedly but honestly reject it, and unlike the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who spoke on behalf of the Liberal party and referred to his reasoned amendment, which consists of all of five and a half lines. It states that the Liberals would like to privatise the British Gas Corporation, but because there are one or two difficulties involved they do not recommend that it should be done. It is another case of the Liberals saying, "I would if I could, but I can't."

I welcome the Bill because too much of British industry has been in public hands for too long. When the Conservatives came to power in 1979, 40 per cent. of the capital of British industry was in public hands. We have already brought a large amount of that back into private hands, and by 1988, 20 per cent. of that 40 per cent. will have been taken out of the private sector and placed back into private hands. What is happening now, therefore, is just another part of the Government's policy of extending the capital-owning democracy which began so ably with the sale of council houses.

Privatisation also gives us the opportunity to increase the number of people in Britain who own shares. It has already doubled the number who owned shares in 1979, and the privatisation of British Gas is one more move in that direction, and it is to be applauded. When British Telecom went private, a substantial number of its employees bought shares, and 90 per cent. of those who bought have retained them. I am confident that the same will happen with the privatisation of British Gas.

While I congratulate my right hon. Friend on getting the Bill to its present stage so quickly, I must remind him that some of us have had difficulty in digesting all the terms of the licence and the regulatory conditions. Hon. Members who served on the Select Committee have not been helped, because of the speed of the Bill's progress, to get through all the evidence that we wanted to examine before this stage of the Bill.

Gas is a major part, a £7 billion sector, of British industry. It supplies 60 per cent. of the domestic energy market, 40 per cent. of all heat, 36 per cent. of the energy used in the industrial sector and 30 per cent. of that used in the commercial sector. Though it is extremely large in energy terms, the fact that most of those figures are below 50 per cent.—averaging perhaps 40 per cent.—shows that gas has competition. Without competition, the figures would not be so modest. Thus, there is competition in energy, even if there is not competition in gas supply, and that will continue when British Gas is privatised.

Since 1962 the rise in gas prices has been less than half the rise in oil, solid fuel and electricity prices, so that although British Gas has had a monopoly for 20 years or more, it has adopted a responsible attitude towards prices. While in recent years it has been buying from the North sea gas which has been extracted at a reasonable price, British gas has not abused that position; prices to the customer have been kept low and, as I say, it has adopted a responsible attitude towards prices.

Mr. Wilson: Whereas the corporation may not have been raking off huge profits from its customers, the Government gave in to the temptation to do that when they did not exercise the same self-restraint in terms of the gas levy.

Dr. Clark: The gas levy was a responsible act by the Government to ensure that this premium fuel was not depleted too quickly, so ensuring that we would have gas in future for chemical feedstocks, plastics, fertilisers and aviation. It has been necessary to conserve hydrocarbons, and that was the purpose of the gas levy.

[Dr. Clark]

Three aspects of competition are disturbing, and we must keep an eye on them. First, let us consider the domestic consumer. It is clear from the terms of the licence published yesterday — naturally, we have had only a limited time to examine it — that there will not be a requirement to disclose the monopoly profits made from selling gas to the domestic consumer.

The argument is that regulation will be by price rather than by profit. If we are to have regulation by price, we must remember that price determines the amount of the commodity that is sold, whereas profit determines competition. If profits are high and generous, others will want to come in and share in them, and hence competition will be generated. That is why I question the wisdom of regulating by price rather than by profit.

I could accept the decision to regulate by price rather than by profit if the profits made from selling monopoly gas to the domestic consumer were revealed for all — hon. Members and the public at large — to scrutinise. But, we are told, the plans are that we shall not see the details of profits made from selling gas to the domestic sector.

The public at large will see in due course the profits made overall by privatised British Gas. They will also see the dividends paid to British Gas shareholders, many of whom will be employees of the company. They will wonder what proportion of that profit came from them, buying gas from a monopoly supplier, and they will not know the answer. I hope that when he replies to the debate, my right hon. Friend will address that point and will reconsider the clause in the licence which says that profits made from supplying the domestic sector will not be revealed. The only way to be sure that the price charged to the domestic customer is fair and reasonable is for us to see the details of the profits made from that business.

Secondly, a clause in the licence refers to domestic prices being set by the complex formula to which the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) referred. I agree that X and Y appear in the formula, but after studying it for some time, one can see how the figures and control details are derived.

There is a factor in the formula by which, in exchange for making profits from the sale of gas under the monopoly powers that privatised British Gas will have, there is a requirement progressively to reduce non-gas costs. That is fair enough, but the Y factor then allows for all increases in North sea gas supply costs to be passed straight to the customer.

That will weaken the resolve of British Gas to negotiate prices firmly with its suppliers and will weaken its intention to be as efficient as possible in all stages of its business, from supplier to delivery. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will comment on that feature when he replies to the debate. To pass costs straight on without any dilution or modification is a temptation that many companies would not be able to resist.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend spoke about breaking up British Gas into regions. He said that there was no need to do that because economies of scale would be gained from having one large organisation rather than having competing organisations in the various regions.

If there were regional areas within British Gas—with different supply problems and differing purchasing prices —costs to the consumer would vary in each region. The public would then be able to identify those regions which were operating efficiently. Even allowing for the different circumstances of trading, the public would be able to see which areas were not performing properly and needed to improve. It is a shame that British Gas is not broken down into various regional areas or areas of trade and business, so that there is more competition.

The second aspect of competition is the common carrier —the use of the gas network by those other than British Gas. We on the Select Committee have interviewed a number of oil companies, which say that it is unlikely that they will seek to use the common carrier. As a result, it is likely that British Gas will be the only user of its pipes and network of gas supply.

Why have the oil companies said that they are unlikely to use the common carrier? We all know that the price of gas at its ultimate destination is the purchase price plus the cost of distribution. Oil companies, large and small, can determine through their efficiency and luck of their finds the price of gas taken from the ground or the sea, but the distribution costs will be entirely in the hands of British Gas.

What will British Gas charge anyone else who breaks into the common carrier? If it charged less than it charged itself, that would not be fair on those who purchase straight from British Gas, who would be subsidising those who purchase gas from an oil company. If the oil company was charged exactly the same as British Gas charged itself, there would be no incentive for British Gas to go to all the trouble of allowing the common carrier to be used. The incentive arises only if British Gas charges more for the use of its distribution network than it would obtain by using that network itself. If it charged more, an independent oil company would consider using the common carrier only if its prices at source were considerably lower than British Gas prices at source. Therefore, with a low source price and a high distribution cost, there would still be a benefit to the consumer.

However, if independent oil companies have to get their source price down so low before they can use the common carrier, and if British Gas tempted them with a small margin over and above the price at which the oil companies intended to sell, the gas would simply go back into the British Gas system. One wonders what will happen with the common carrier, and one fears that it will not be used by anyone other than British Gas.

The third area of competition is exploration by the privatised British Gas company. There is no reason why a privatised British Gas should not go back into exploration. Indeed, we have been given reason to think that it will do so—and it might explore for oil, too. The funds for this expensive exploration can come from cross subsidisation, whereby British Gas can charge high prices to the domestic consumer and put the profits to good use by exploring for new gas fields, but what is to stop British Gas favouring the purchase of gas from its own fields rather than buying gas at a low price from independent oil companies? If it does so, there will be no control on price, and price competition will be weakened. That will be a major worry for the independent oil companies, which will be unable to sell gas to the privatised British Gas company unless, perhaps, they are prepared to give up acreage to British Gas in exchange for supplying it with the gas that they have already found. That is another area about which we have reason for concern, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will give an answer when he replies.

The Office of Gas Supply and the Director General of Gas Supply are very unlike the organisation that was set up to control privatised British Telecom. It appears that the director general will not have a specific duty to promote competition. That is sad and surprising, because it should be one of his prime requirements. He will not be the final judge on any industrial complaints, which will go to the Office of Fair Trading. However, my right hon. Friend said that if those complaints were frequent, the regulations could be changed.

The director general can also require British Gas to publish typical prices for conveying gas down the common carrier, and determine a general policy on the use of the common network system by a third party. That does not go far enough. These are statements of policy, not regulations. He cannot require British Gas to accept a third party on the common carrier, but can only require it to make a statement about the terms and conditions under which a third party would be accepted. There should be precise regulations and controls on when, why and under what conditions a third party can use the common carrier.

By the very nature of the gas industry, privatisation, however welcome, will have some imperfections. Despite that, I welcome the Bill because I believe that privatisation of this large industry will be beneficial to customers, to employees of the organisation and to the economy. Strenuous efforts have gone into preparing the regulations and the licence. I hope that my right hon. Friend will keep a careful eye on how the regulations are used and how the licence is applied. If in the future there is need to tighten them up, I hope that he will bring them back to the House so that they can be considered again.

5.57 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): One could not have a clearer description of the difference of opinion that divides the two sides of the House. Like a vulture, the Conservative party is already beginning to hover around the British Gas Corporation to see what rich pickings it can make for its own people.

So far there has been no mention of the fact that many people look to gas for security of supply, high levels of maintenance and repair and high levels of safety at a price that they can afford. During this winter, as with every other, many people will be wondering whether they will be able to pay their gas bill when it arrives later in the year. As is well known, people die every winter from hypothermia simply because they cannot afford to pay the price of fuel. Therefore, to look to this industry as a way of making more profit, rather then of meeting a need, shows the real motivation behind the introduction of the Bill.

The Secretary of State was totally unconvincing. His arguments for privatisation were not valid, and he never mentioned the real reason for this measure. In 1969-70 and from 1975 to 1979, I was the sponsoring Minister for the British Gas Corporation. Since the public ownership of gas there has been major investment, higher safety standards and a very good repair and maintenance record. The industry has bought British equipment, which has maintained employment, and there has been a sense of service. Successive Governments have taxed the industry, but one can also tax an industry in private ownership. For example, we tax petrol. Anyone who thinks that once gas is in private ownership it will be free from a predatory Chancellor does not understand how this works. For various reasons, any Chancellor will from time to time look at ways of raising revenue, and private gas could be taxed as easily as public gas. The only difference is that gas is now being taxed for a different reason—to make it more profitable to sell it off.

I happened to be Secretary of State when North sea gas was brought ashore. Because British Gas was a monopoly buyer, it was able to get a good price from the oil companies because the oil companies could not play one customer off against the other. British Gas was able to say, "If you want to sell gas in Britain, you must sell it at the price that we offer." One reason why gas prices have been so low — in some ways too low, to make it easy for electricity and coal — is that British Gas was able to force oil companies to sell gas at a low price.

Massive investment in a new distribution network was set up and a programme to convert appliances was successfully established. The case for the common ownership of gas is unanswerable. It was not always and only in private ownership before nationalisation. Hon. Members might remember the phrase, "gas and water Socialism." There was a proud municipal record of running town gas before nationalisation.

Gas is a vital national asset. Energy policy under any Government is bound to take account of depletion policy. It would have been possible for British Gas, if it had so chosen and if the Government had allowed it, to deplete at a massive rate and bring the gas ashore so that people converted to gas when it was cheap, only to be caught with equipment that they could not afford to use when more expensive gas came in because ours was starting to run out. Energy pricing as between gas, electricity and coal is a central part of national policy.

I should like to mention one consideration that has not come out so far, unless the Secretary of State dropped a hint. Once gas is taken out of public ownership, British Gas will be under the complete control of the Common Market Commission. I have warned the House about this before, and am speaking from knowledge. When I was Secretary of State, it tried to argue in Brussels that the continental shelf was under the treaty of Rome. We said that it was not and were able to enforce our will because we owned the gas fields there. The Commission wanted the pipelines to take the gas straight to Europe rather than come through our system to the continent. We were able to say, "No, we do not accept that the continental shelf comes under the treaty of Rome." Privatisation will enable the Commission to enforce its will under the competition articles of the treaty. Moreover, the record of buying British equipment will dissolve because the EEC requirement to put orders out to tender will be enforceable with a private gas corporation, whereas it was not when it was public, when we were able to have regard to the long-term security of supply of equipment.

The Bill hands over North sea gas to Common Market control by the act of privatisation. It will lead to higher prices, greater fuel poverty, lower safety, a weakening of regulation, poorer maintenance, loss of control to the EEC and reduced demand for British equipment.

The real motivation for the Bill should be spelt out with absolute clarity, as the Secretary of State did not touch on it. It is to sell assets, which the Government do not own, to their business friends, who will buy the assets at knock-down prices. It is to pay City institutions enormous fees to sell the assets and to use the proceeds for a once-and-for-all tax cut to buy support at the next general election. It

[Mr. Tony Benn]

is important that, in addition to these technical discussions and dreams about the draft of the Queen's Speech when there is a Liberal Government — my gosh, that was interesting—we make it clear that business firms put up money to pay for Saatchi and Saatchi advertising to get a Tory Cabinet elected, knowing that a Tory Cabinet will put on the market, below their real price, assets the value of which comes from the labour of those who work in the industry concerned and public investment. They will buy them, make a large killing and support the Tory party again. It is corruption. There is no question about it.

I have been here for 35 years and I have never seen a measure which so reeks of corruption as this one. We should consider the figures. British Gas is valued at £16 billion. The Government have already sold £4.7 billion of public assets and lost £1·4 billion by under-pricing. That is statistically established. British Telecom shares, for example, rose 93 per cent. in value before night fell and the Government lost £1·3 billion in a single day — money that would have solved the problem of inner cities, made the Archbishop of Canterbury happy and ended the tragedy in the Broadwater Farm estate or in Brixton or in Liverpool or in Sheffield.

That money could have been used to meet needs, but it was used to pay an electoral debt incurred by the Government, who gained support from business companies. If the House doubts that assertion, the figures are public. The City institutions received £253 million——

Mr. Lofthouse: I thought that it was £300 million.

Mr. Benn: Well, the figures vary. They received getting on for £300 million in fees for selling assets. That is four or five times as much as Band Aid and Live Aid raised in one year of concerts for the starving of Ethiopia. The City of London was rewarded with six times as much as the generosity of the public could provide for the starving of Ethiopia. But here is the rub. Of the City underwriters, 33 of the 55 who got the business contributed to Tory party funds. I have some figures to prove it. Baring Brothers gave £25,000 to the Tory party in 1983 and shared in fees of £5 million to sell off Cable and Wireless. Kleinwort, Benson paid £30,000 to the Tory party and shared in more than £5.5 million for selling British Aerospace, £190 million for selling British Telecom, more than £5 million for selling Cable and Wireless and £9 million for selling Enterprise Oil. That investment of £30,000 in Tory party funds was pretty good. Hill Samuel paid £28,000 to the Tory party and shared in £5.5 million of fees for the sale of Jaguar. Lazards put in £20,000 and shared in £1.75 million for the sale of Wytch Farm. Morgan Grenfell put in £30,000 and got a share of £3 million for the sale of Amersham International and Sealink.

When I think of the district auditor chasing councillors in Lambeth on the ground that they were a bit late fixing a rate and compare that with the massive sums of money given, in effect, in return for political support to City institutions that have contributed nothing to raise the quality of service of British Gas or to provide safety for those who use it, I can only call it corruption. The public should know how it all works.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that an incoming Labour Government would deal with this matter. The precedents for legislation set by the Tory party are many. I have gone through the legislation of the 1970-74 Tory Government who took powers under the Counter-Inflation (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972 to control prices, to demand information, to amend statutes, to control profits, to vet investment and to control multinationals. They introduced the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Act 1973 which gave powers to veto directors, to inspect books, to issue directives and to define unfair practices. The fair trading legislation gave powers which included entry and seizure. The classic case was the one-clause Rolls-Royce (Purchase) Act 1971. Through one clause, they brought Rolls-Royce into public ownership. My right hon. Friend need have no fear that he will not be sustained by Tory precedents when dealing with this abuse of public trust, which is a denial of the fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers and the public of whom the judges are so ready to speak when they criticise Labour councillors.

There will need to be changes in the nature of public ownership. Over the years, for my sins, as Postmaster General and as an Energy Minister I have been responsible for many public corporations. There must be real accountability to Parliament. I have never believed it right for the Secretary of State of the day—I had many years experience of this—to have no explicit authority over a chairman such as Sir Denis Rooke, but always to have to twist the chairman's arm and then not be accountable to Parliament. There should be explicit powers of direction, subject to parliamentary approval.

Secondly, we should get away from the crude patronage of appointments of board chairmen. In the United States, an ambassador cannot be appointed without the approval of the Senate in committee. Parliament should have to approve the chairpersons appointed to our public corporations so that people can give evidence about them before they are confirmed.

The third point bears a little on the question of regional boards. I was doubtful about centralisation, but it was thought necessary because of North sea oil. Local authorities should have power over local managers of nationalised industries and be able to seek their removal if they are not sensitive to local needs.

A final precedent from the Tory party is the Trade Union Act 1984. Many Ministers have talked about the need to restore the power of union members over the unions. A minor amendment to the Government's own Act would allow workers in industry to choose by ballot the boards of directors of the companies for which they work. The alteration of one word — from "union" to "company"—would secure a measure of power for those who have invested their lives in the gas industry comparable with the power now supposedly enjoyed by those who have invested their money in it.

The party of which I am honoured to be a member, which still lives under the shadow of and perhaps affection for the Herbert Morrison legislation after the war, must look again at these matters. There must be accountability to Parliament. There has never been proper accountability. Parliament must be able to vet the chairmen of these great corporations. There must be accountability to elected local authorities to see that the big bosses in the public sector do not ride roughshod over local needs. Those who work in the industry must have powers over their own industrial

management — based, perhaps, on the legislation introduced by the Conservatives to deal with trade union democracy.

I have long urged those changes. When the history of all this comes to be written, for this privatisation will not last long, it may be that by breaking the Morrison mould the Government will be remembered for having paved the way to a form of common ownership which entrenches service to the public and not the pursuit of profit which is the Government's sole interest in introducing this measure.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Fifteen hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. Some of the speeches have been rather long. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has set an admirable example, but I ask hon. Members once again to be relatively brief.

6.12 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) manages to construct an incredible conspiracy around almost anything of which he does not approve. He should reflect on the fact that the vast majority of shares in denationalised public corporations will end up in the ownership of pension and life assurance funds, and that profits from them will inure to the benefit of the 11 million occupational pensioners in this country.

I wish to deal briefly with two aspects of the Bill—the principle of denationalisation and the need for competition. Although they are interlinked, I do not believe that they are mutually dependent. There is a respectable and persuasive case for denationalising public corporations regardless of the consequences for competition, although competition is clearly important.

Denationalisation results in genuine public ownership, rather than ownership by the Government of the day. It enables management to manage the business free from political interference. Investment programmes are not constrained by the annual imperatives of the public sector borrowing requirement target. The record of denationalised industry is most encouraging. Profits have almost always increased substantially, which results in a substantial increase in corporation tax, which inures to the benefit of us all.

It is time that we nailed the lie that the sale of public corporations is intended to finance tax cuts, because it is not. The purpose is to reduce gilt sales and to help fund the Government's capital investment programme. It is not like selling the silver to pay the butcher—an analogy commonly used by the Labour Front Bench—but more like selling an old picture that has been sitting in the attic for a long time, so as to avoid increasing one's overdraft.

Much of the criticism of the Bill in the financial press relates to competition, but the arguments are not so strong as they at first appear. The Labour party has no standing in the argument, as it wishes to renationalise the gas industry and to reinstate a state monopoly without any competition at all. The alliance seems to want to have things both ways. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) put his name to the amendment criticising the Bill for not promoting enough competition, but said in his own speech and in a Liberal party press release that it was virtually impossible to have competition in the gas industry. Similar statements have been made by members of the SDP.

Consideration of three areas of the corporation's business shows that the arguments about competition are not so persuasive. The Government are being urged to allow the free export of gas. Presumably this must also mean freedom for British Gas to import it. The people asking for that are the oil companies, and it would almost certainly result in an increase in price. In this area, there is a great national interest at stake — the rate of depletion of North sea gas and oil reserves—and it is reasonable for any Government to have some influence on that. I do not believe that it would be right to free the market internationally for North sea gas, but there is a serious danger of the British Gas Corporation exercising its monopsony purchasing power to the detriment of producers. I am sure that the Government will keep a careful eye on that. If there is any evidence of such behaviour, the Government will be able to hold over the corporation the threat of allowing producers to export, so as to ensure that the British Gas Corporation does not exercise its monopoly against the public interest.

Secondly, there is not a legally constructed monopoly in the Bill in relation to industrial and commercial supplies. Anyone will be able to supply industrial and large commercial customers and will have the right to use the corporation's pipes. The normal legal and free market rules will thus apply, and if the corporation abuses its effective monopoly by trying to charge unrealistic prices it will almost certainly find that it has competition. Moreover, the Director General of Fair Trading, backed by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, will have considerable power to intervene in any abuse of the corporation's considerable commercial powers.

It is also worth remembering that gas is not the only fuel available. People can use oil, coal or electricity. It may not be easy for industry to switch from one fuel to another overnight, but in general it is easy to make such a switch in the medium term because there are always industries coming on stream, introducing new plant or renewing old plant and thus able to make the choice. It is also open to the North sea gas producers to become suppliers to industry. There is thus no need to worry about the Bill not promoting greater competition in supply to industrial and commercial users.

In the domestic market, the criticism seems a little more valid, but one must ask whether there could possibly be competition in the supply of gas to domestic users. If there were two gas mains running down the street, some hon. Members would no doubt say that the two of them would conspire to raise prices, so more than two would be necessary. How many gas mains are there to be on each street? It is clear that we cannot have competing suppliers for domestic customers. We must bite the bullet and accept that. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, however, there will be competition from oil, coal and electricity. That competition is real and genuine. If the British Gas Corporation abuses its monopoly, the use of other forms of energy will increase substantially and its own share of the market will be greatly eroded. It seems to me, on reflection, that a privately regulated monopoly, with the kind of price formula that the Bill envisages, gives consumers a far better deal than a public, politically controlled monopoly.

[Mr. John Maples]

If one reflects upon the Bill, one is driven to the inescapable conclusion that, in general, denationalisation is good for efficiency — management, shareholders, employees, consumers and the taxpayer. The Bill, which denationalises the gas industry, allows and promotes competition, where it is practicable, and protects consumers where competition is not practicable. I am sure that it will prove a success, and I hope that it will soon be followed by the denationalisation of the electricity industry.

6.20 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Alongside my name in the Register of Members' Interests are the words

"Sponsored by the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union."

That union organises most of the workers in the gas industry, and I declare that interest. But in today's Second Reading debate I am speaking on behalf of the 72,000 electors at the poll in my constituency — or the vast majority of them, because very few of my constituents support this retrograde measure.

The Government intend to privatise the British Gas Corporation. With their gross majority they will hardly need to play the loyalty card to get Conservative Members, who ought to know better, to go into the Lobby and support this measure which—make no mistake about it —will rob the British people. The gas industry belongs, in the truest sense, to the British people. The investment in the gas industry was derived from the taxpayer and the raw material—gas—belongs to the British nation, not to any section of it. Governments, acting through the British Gas Corporation, hold it in trust. That trust is to be betrayed tonight by the Conservative majority in this House.

The Conservative Government and party say that they believe in the sanctity of property, but time after time they have trampled upon property rights, even if those rights were held collectively rather than individually. Something does not cease to be owned simply because not a single name is attached to it. The Government have fought this out the hard way—through the courts after the Trustee Savings Bank flotation. However, because the nation did not believe that it could be so blatantly robbed of assets such as gas, it did not think to bolt down those assets. Unfortunately, the option to bolt down the assets is no longer available to the British people.

If we consider the effects of privatising the British Gas Corporation, the first issue in people's minds must be gas safety. I worked for 30 years in the private gas industry. Then I worked in the publicly owned gas industry. Therefore, I am well aware of how important gas safety is to the industry's employees. A privatised British Gas Corporation will eventually be less safe than it is now. No amount of flummery will disprove that fact. The Secretary of State for Energy airily dismisses our worries about gas safety by suggesting that it would be commercial suicide for a private gas company to neglect gas safety. I agree entirely, but he has not taken on board the implications of his measure for gas safety right across the board. I want to deal with them.

The British Gas Corporation plc, or whatever it will call itself in future, will be forced into devising a tariff formula which, broadly, is about a reduction in non-gas costs. They include pipeline maintenance. Although the British Gas Corporation has been quite successful in reducing its non-gas costs, there comes a point when they cannot be further reduced without endangering the services that are provided.

In real terms, during the last 10 years the BGC has reduced its non-gas costs by more than 20 per cent. Pressure to reduce them further, to fit an artificial formula, could lead to the kind of risk assessment that defers a mains renewal until another financial year, or for two financial years. No fig leaf of commercial concern could hide the risk that that course of action would entail. We have seen such commercial concern lead to aircraft disasters. I do not believe that any hon. Member would be bold enough to say that there is not serious concern, to put it at its mildest, about some of the air disasters that have occurred both in this country and elsewhere, involving both the British Aircraft Corporation and foreign corporations.

Mr. Maples: Does the hon. Gentleman think that in that respect there is a difference in the safety record between airlines which are owned by their Governments and airlines which are privately owned? I suggest there is not.

Mr. Brown: I am prepared to accept that point, but at least the customer can choose his method of travel: whether by train, road, ship or air. The average domestic gas consumer has no choice.

A further element in non-gas costs are wages and salaries. As a percentage of all non-gas costs, they have fallen from 27 pr cent. to just under 19 per cent. When the pressure to reduce non-gas costs is applied, what better way is there to save money than to economise on staff costs? That point will not escape any corporation. Just by moving to a contractor-based industry, thereby getting rid of the obligation to provide pensions for its employees, the British Gas Corporation would save 17 per cent. of its costs. Although contractors will try to operate safely, their record in the domestic installation market is worse than that of the BGC's directly employed work force.

No one should kid himself that the Consortium of Registered Gas Installers was a cure-all for the cowboys in the industry. It was not. However, when a cowboy bodges a job, the skilled work force of the BGC can be called on at present to put things right for the customer. We cannot rely on the Government's bland assumption that privatisation will make no difference to safety. Of course it will. I am not suggesting that the difference will be immediately apparent and that the day after the Act is on the statute book everything will fall apart, but in the medium and in the longer term there will be vast differences in safety standards.

It is also the height of insult, as the BGC is now constituted, for the Secretary of State to trumpet that a new statutory requirement will be imposed upon the BGC to answer calls about gas escapes within 12 hours instead of within 24 hours. It is insulting to make out that there will be new protection. Does the right hon. Gentleman not know that British Gas already has an internal code that its work men get to a gas escape within two hours? The board for which I worked before I became a Member could proudly say that it attended a reported escape within minutes rather than hours. There will be no extra safety,

and it is hypocrisy to suggest otherwise. Costs and circumstances could lead the privatised company to take advantage of the 12-hour limit in a way that the public company would never dream of taking advantage of the present 24-hour limit.

Gas is an inherently unsafe substance but, thanks to the corporation's care, dedication and investment, the industry has the best safety record in the world. However, after privatisation, we shall have only the protection of commercial suicide rather than the ethic of public service. I know which I prefer. I know which one the public needs and deserves.

The Bill provides for the establishment of a Gas Users Council which will be able to maintain prices and make representations to Ofgas. Its powers will be more limited than present powers because they will be restricted solely to the price of gas. In effect, important chunks of the corporation's service will be excluded for ever — notably, appliance retailing and the code of practice on disconnection.

The staff of the gas consumers councils are all to be made redundant. A letter from the consumer affairs branch of the Department of Trade and Industry, Millbank tower, confirms that, stating:

> "This means that existing contracts of employment will come to an end when the new provisions come into force and all staff can therefore expect to receive redundancy notices in due course."

Those agencies have existed to protect the consumer. This overkill will result in a lack of continuity of expertise and knowledge. Behind all this is the Government's view that regulation and consumer protection will depress share prices. Regulation may affect share prices, but I submit that the City would not consider consumer protection important compared with direct regulation. Consumer protection will not affect share prices.

It is scandalous that, in those areas where the Government have the least political support — the regions with the highest unemployment levels, especially the northern region—the gas consumers councils have consistently handled twice the national average number of complaints per thousand customers, not counting inquiries, requests for guidance and advice. In the past two years in the northern region the gas consumers council retrieved £55,000 for consumers on disputed gas and service bills.

There can be no doubt that the ability of the Gas Users Council to maintain the operation of a rather complicated price formula—for both beachhead and non-beachhead costs—will be limited. That means that the price of the raw material will not be subject to any constraint, save the ability to pay. We can see the deals that will come forward. With gas costs being 46 per cent. of all costs, the scope for moving from average pricing to long-run marginal pricing is great. It has been calculated that gas prices in the medium to long term could cost a family of four an extra £1 a week. That sum is large enough to do away with the great bonanza of the tax handouts that the sell-off is intended to create.

Another matter of concern, which is probably of no interest to the Government, is jobs. I have already touched on the pressures to make greater use of contractors and to close showrooms. Up to half of the corporation's work force could face the sack. Although the new go-getting company may expand its business, it is unlikely that those jobs will ever be replaced. We are likely to see a takeover market boom rather than an expansion of the gas market.

We have had no assurance about the future, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, of the "Buy British" policy with British Gas. If this legislation is anything like the British Telecom legislation, there will be a sad future for many British jobs. If the denationalised body buys extensively overseas, it will put at risk up to 250,000 manufacturing jobs. What an achievement! It is in line with the Conservative party's achievement during its six years in office of massively increasing unemployment.

Privatisation is morally wrong. In this case, it is also logically wrong. The gas industry works well. We should keep it public.

6.36 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown). I would not for a moment doubt his sincerity, but a number of his points were extraordinary. I do not believe that any of his points—that British Gas will lose half its employees, that 250,000 jobs in the gas industry are at stake or that safety will be called into question — are credible or will carry any credibility outside the House. If that is the basis of the Labour party's attack on the Bill, I warn the party that it will not carry that attack far. It bordered on the insulting for an hon. Member who spoke proudly of representing the workers to imply that, just because industry moved from the public to the private sector, the same people in control would completely disregard the safety of the public. That was an extraordinary claim and did no credit to those workers.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: I was not suggesting that for one moment. The hon. Gentleman is grossly misrepresenting me. I said that if the industry were fully privatised and we did not have in gas distribution the number of employees that we have today, there would be a great danger of safety being disregarded.

Mr. Portillo: Whether or not I grossly misrepresented the hon. Gentleman, he will understand that I did not intend to do so. The *Official Report* will show whether I made a fair assessment of what he said.

I am a strong supporter of privatisation. It has provided a considerable stimulus to companies that have moved from the public to the private sector. On the whole, those companies have become more responsive to their customers, more efficient and more profitable. The fact that they are more efficient and more profitable means that they perform better in the economy. It adds to the economy's performance and is likely to be productive, not destructive, of jobs. Competition is generally improved, which means a better choice and better service for the customer.

Another aspect of privatisation is the creation of millions of new shareholders—people who have never invested before. I think here of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who spoke about common ownership. The people have no sensation of owning in common the British Gas Corporation, the NCB or any of the other nationalised industries. The first occasion on which these people felt that they might own some of these

[Mr. Portillo]

great British industrial giants was when the Government gave them a chance to buy shares, and in the case of British Telecom, 2 million people bought shares.

Mr. Lofthouse: What evidence has the hon. Gentleman of inefficiency, which has been referred to by him and other Tory Members, in the gas industry when that industry is compared to those in the private sector?

Mr. Portillo: I prefer to deal with the historical example and let the hon. Gentleman know what he knows perfectly well already, that in the case of British Telecom customers are extremely satisfied because they are getting a better service. If the hon. Gentleman is telling me that he has never had a letter from one of his constituents complaining about the gas industry, and if he is saying that there is no room for improvement, I should have to doubt that. I see every reason to believe that with the BGC, as there has been with British Telecom, there will be an improvement in the service to the customer after privatisation.

Privatising a monopoly presents difficulties for a Government. It is not as easy as privatising a company with direct competition in its product. Whatever one does when one privatises a monopoly, some natural monopoly sectors will remain, and the problem is how one deals with this problem, addresses it and improves the situation. However, the fact that a natural monopoly will remain is not a good reason for leaving this in the hands of the Government. I see no reason to believe that Ministers and civil servants are any good at running companies, and here I agree strongly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. There is no evidence that Government control has been good for customers, and it is demonstrable that Government control has been bad for the running of business and therefore for the whole economy.

With both British Telecom and the British gas industry, I should have preferred the new arrangement to be one of divided companies. That would allow for greater competition, transparency and comparison between one part of the industry and another. I am perhaps an idealist, but I know that I share those views with a number of my hon. Friends.

If I am asked whether I should like to see a company privatised, even without the opportunity of its being regionalised in the first place, the answer would be yes. The great change in employee attitudes, the freedom that management gains when freed from Government control over its investment policy, and the pressure that is established on management both from bankers and shareholders, all combine to make it a better company in all respects, including its services to its customers.

None the less, it is important that the Government leave the door ajar for the entry of new competition. They must be prepared to defend competitors from the anti-competitive practices of the monopolies, and they must press the monopolies to pass on to the customer any gains in efficiency in the form of lower prices.

The Government did quite a good job on all of those matters in the privatisation of BT. The Director General of Oftel was specifically charged with promoting effective competition within the industry. The fact that he has taken that duty seriously has recently been proved by his decision on inter-connection. This is important, because, however good one makes regulations in industry, the true friend of the customer is competition. Several important groups have agreed on that point when being interviewed by the Select Committee—the National Gas Consumers Council and National Consumer Council both agreed that that is so.

If anything, the British gas industry should face tighter regulation than does British Telecom. The BGC faces competition from other fuels, such as electricity, gasoil, and so on, but much of that competition is weak. On the other hand, with the privatisation of BT, we were dealing with a rapidly developing market where technological developments were coming along fast and establishing new markets in which the monopolies had no long-established monopoly. That is not the case with the British gas industry. The gas market will not change in its ways and a monopoly will continue to hold its monopoly. For that reason, the regulatory regime should be tighter in this case than in the case of British Telecom.

One thing missing from the Bill is the duty, present in the British Telecom Act, on the director general to promote effective competition. I was surprised by that. There used to be a cartoon character who stuck his head over a brick wall and said, "Wot, no Watneys?" When I stuck my nose into the Bill I said, "Wot, no duties to promote effective competition in the industry?"

I am also concerned about how the industrial customer, who gets no protection, will fare under the Bill. The reason advanced for that being the appropriate mechanism is that the British gas industry faces tough competition in the industrial market. That was not the case in all industrial markets. For example, in some markets gas competes with gas oil, which is about 50 per cent. more expensive than gas.

I have heard it said that the CBI has made no objection to the fact that there will be no reserve powers for the regulator. I venture to suggest that the CBI does not speak for all British industry. I am not the secretary of the CBI's fan club. I wonder whether all British industry has understood that there is no reserve power in the Bill for the regulator. It may be fair to argue that British Gas should be able to price up to what the market can take. But from the political point of view, some customers will have a problem if gas price rises to what the market can take, and their squeals could be rather loud.

I am concerned about two other points about pricing. The first is the obligation on the new British Gas company to "use its best endeavours" to keep down standing charges which is rather a weak phrase. The other provision is that it should publish the principles that underly the connection charges. As far as I can understand, there is no control over connection charges. That is important. The BGC has an obligation to supply customers with up to 25,000 therms if they live within 25 yards of a gas main, but if there is no control over what the new company can charge for connection, there will be a way round the statutory obligation, and some safeguard would be appropriate.

I should like to see further improvements in the competition for the supply of gas. The Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 opened the way for private suppliers to supply gas direct to customers, and the Government have rightly recognised in the Bill that one of the important failings of the previous legislation was that there was no provision for back-up supplies. I am pleased that the Government have suggested something in the Bill, but the important point is the price at which back-up supplies will be provided. Again, as far as I can tell, the Bill and the

draft licence leave the decision on what is a reasonable price in back-up supplies entirely to the new gas company, and that is not desirable.

I am aware that the new British Gas company will be able by predatory pricing policies, if it should choose to operate them, to pick on any competitors that may appear one by one. It can offer a good deal to industrial customers based on the fact that it has much cheap gas coming to it from old contracts. It can make an average price with which it can easily undercut any new product on the market, as the price of that must be based on up-to-date costs of new supplies from the North sea. Again, I should have thought that a specific prohibition on predatory pricing would be appropriate.

I am a little surprised that the Bill does not seem to extend to the sale of appliances. In some of the appliance markets, up to 80 per cent. of the market is controlled by the British Gas Corporation, and that is important. This contrasts with the British Telecommunications Act, because in that measure there is a provision that it shall be the duty of the director general to

"enable producers of telecommunications equipment to compete effectively."

An equivalent clause in this Bill would be appropriate.

I am also concerned that in the offshore sector the BGC should not be allowed to use its special position in an anti-competitive way. These days we talk much about Chinese walls, and one needs something like a Chinese wall between the two positions of the British Gas Corporation —as the most important, virtually monopoly buyer of gas from the North sea, and as an important producer. If it is both of those things, it can find itself competing for new licences with other oil companies and also being the only possible buyer of gas from those oil companies. It could put pressure on its competitors to discourage them from competing for licences. It is possible that such a practice might already be illegal under the Competition Act 1980. Perhaps my right hon. Friend can confirm that.

My hon. Friends have raised another important point —the desirability of a distinct prohibition of preference being shown towards one supplier. The most obvious example would be the BGC showing preference to itself as a supplier, but there could be other examples. That brings us to the complicated question of what is the correct regime for imports and exports. In the past, the BGC has shown a preference for foreign supplies. This is not simply an academic point, because in the 1970s the BGC contracted for Frigg supplies, the result of which was a tremendous slump in exploration and development on the United Kingdom continental shelf. This was serious both for our balance of payments and for employment, which is why we take such a serious view of the matter.

My right hon. Friend said that he intended to make a statement on imports and exports, and I look forward to that. I remind him of the conclusions of the Select Committee report on gas depletion—that imports of gas were likely to be necessary at some future time, perhaps in the 1990s, so it was desirable to move towards a regime in which both imports and exports would be allowed.

Privatisation of a monopoly has three important benefits — commercial freedom for the company, regulation to protect the customer, and competition. I believe the greatest benefit to be competition. I am not sure whether the Bill recognises competition as the most important aspect. I hope that the Government will carefully consider whether the balance is right, or whether there should be certain additions to the Bill to bring competition to the fore.

6.52 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I hope that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) will serve on the Standing Committee. However, he has outlined differences between his views and those of the Government that may lead to the Government not to look kindly upon any application from him.

Some of us have sympathy with a little of what the hon. Gentleman said—although only a little. His attachment to competition is genuine and sincere. I hope that he understands that some of us represent constituencies where the Government's lust to achieve competition has resulted in 200 or 300 people chasing one job. That has not generated any great achievement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) asked what we should call the new organisation. Perhaps it should be called, "Privatised Integrated Gas plc"—"PIG" for short. That is not an inappropriate title given the direction in which so many Conservative snouts have been pointing during the debate. However, at least we know where we stand with the majority of Conservative Members.

The alliance amendment would give us the worst of all worlds. At least the Secretary of State has managed to resist pressures to disintegrate the industry, to split it into many pieces. If the amendment was accepted, that would happen. We should be grateful that we have been spared that.

The Secretary of State's speech was condescending, especially when he implied that the BGC had not been successful. Had it performed as badly as the private sector companies that have given money to the Conservative party during the past five years, there might be a case for the Bill. Had it been only half as successful as it has been, however, that surely should have protected it from the Government's clutches. The BGC has out-performed every company that supports the Conservative party.

Our country is too short of success and achievement for the sort of success achieved by the BGC to be put at risk. For it to be put at risk for corrupt motives is deplorable, and for that corruption to be disguised is equally deplorable. The Bill is about raising money, but the Secretary of State did not once offer even the slightest glimpse of the Government's estimate of what they expect to gain. The Government are to spend £30 million promoting the sale of BGC. We know that the City of London will receive at least £300 million for arranging that sale—yet we do not know how much the Government hope to gain. We must be given that information. If we are not, the Committee stage may not proceed as quickly as the Government might wish.

We are concerned about priorities within the Department's expenditure. As I said, the Government will spend £30 million promoting the sale of the BGC. However, recently the Secretary of State and his colleagues expressed a burning commitment to the cause of energy conservation—indeed, 1986 is to be Energy Efficiency Year. When the Minister replies, will he confirm that the Government intend to spend £30 million promoting the sale of BGC, but only £5 million to £6 million supporting the promotion of Energy Efficiency

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Year? It appears that the interests of the Conservative party have been valued at five times higher than the interests of the nation.

The Secretary of State should have referred in more detail, and with a little less condescension, to the achievements of the BGC. In the foreword to the BGC accounts, Sir Denis Rooke painted an entirely different picture to the one painted by the Secretary of State. He referred to the BGC doing well to achieve a record level of gas sales, to the steady customer growth and to continuing healthy profits.

The BGC's profits during the lifetime of this Administration and that of the previous Administration elected in 1979 have provided receipts to the Treasury that will probably exceed the amount that will be obtained from its sale. The BGC has been forced to make those payments, but it will contribute no longer when it has been sold, and then the taxpayer will bear an even heavier burden.

One point that appears to have escaped Conservative Members is Sir Denis Rooke's reference to the willingness of all employees, at all levels, to adapt to change and to co-operate. The BGC's achievement has been that operating costs, in real terms, fell by 19 per cent. in five years. Few private companies have reached that level of efficiency — reached with the full co-operation of its employees.

The hon. Member for Southgate said how great it was for workers to have shares in their companies, because it would help them to identify with their enterprise. The hon. Gentleman would have to go far and wide before he could find any significant enterprise in which the employees identified with the success of that company in the way that employees of the BGC, at all levels, identify with their company's success. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that their efforts, their co-operation and their significant achievements will not be set at naught by the greedy snouts of those who form the current Administration?

Mr. Portillo: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously doubting that National Freight Corporation Limited has moved from loss to profit and success because many of those who are employed by it have had their attitudes affected by their ownership of shares in the company?

Mr. Hardy: It was about four or five years ago that I took part in a debate on the sale to the public of Amersham International. Conservative Member after Conservative Member said that the only real resources of Amersham International lay in the hands and brains of those who worked for the organisation. They went on to ask why ownership should continue to rest with the state. I suggested that the Government and Conservative Members should allow Amersham International to be owned by a co-operative. There were ribald remarks as Conservative Members sniffed the profits that they were going to make. That disposed of that argument.

If the hon. Member for Southgate tables an amendment in Committee that is designed to make British Gas a co-operative owned by the employees at all levels, from Sir Denis Rooke down to the apprentice gas fitters, I might vote for it. I do not think that such an amendment would be supported by his right hon. and hon. Friends. That is not what they are about. They realise how badly they have served Britain and how badly they have performed generally. They realise that the only way in which they can win power at the next election is by bribing the electorate.

I do not regard the Conservatives' bribery as an inevitably successful venture. The common sense of the British people has caused them to recognise that the country cannot afford the sort of Government that we have had here over the past five or six years. The Government's bribery will be a vain effort and the course on which the Secretary of State and his right hon. and hon. Friends are embarked will cause them to be regarded with greater distaste by the electorate than would otherwise be so.

That distaste will be emphasised and intensified by the complacent condescension of the Secretary of State, who disregarded the efforts made by those employed in the gas industry. He chose to minimise the achievements that they have secured. He forgot about the enormous income which the Government have derived from British Gas and which they plan to enjoy on privatisation. That is scarcely a responsible approach—it is certainly not a generous one —on the part of the Secretary of State. At the very least he could have paid proper tribute to those who work in the gas industry instead of insinuating failure throughout his speech — although British Gas may be rather relieved that there is to be an integrated organisation rather than the dismembered one which some Conservative Members have advocated.

Lastly, I shall refer to part of the document which was laid before the House last night. I trust that the Minister will be able to explain it fully, either this evening or in Committee. We have heard a great deal of jargon and gobbledegook in the House. It can be found in almost every published utterance. It is often ornate and sometimes it is a confusing and irritating use of language.

It seems that we have moved now to a form of numerate language which is completely bewildering. I do not regard myself as an idiot, but I find it extremely difficult to understand the formula which has been presented to the House. The Minister assured us that there would be clear price protection, but I wonder how many gas consumers in my constituency, the Minister's constituency or the constituency of anyone else here can be reassured by the formula of price protection:

$$M_t = \left(\frac{1+RPI_t - X}{100}\right) P_{t-1} + Y_t - K_t,$$

That is followed by some further embellishments that do not contribute to clarity.

I know that the Conservative party has frequently fought elections with the claim that the people are entitled to know. Surely they are entitled to know, even if they do not have a first-class honours degree in mathematics or statistical science. If the Minister thinks that the formula to which I have referred is a satisfactory piece of clarification, that will neither give reassurance to the 35 million who depend upon gas, nor make the 93,000 employees of British Gas confident of the sanity of those who have made the decision to put their jobs under threat. He is sadly mistaken. We are entitled to a better explanation than that.

The Secretary of State told us that the officials of the Department of the Environment had crawled all over British Gas and other energy industries. I do not know whether that is a fair description. If the result of that crawling is to inflict numeracy upon Britain of the sort that

is exemplified by the formula to which I have referred, perhaps the Department of Energy and its Ministers should be privatised and not the successful BGC.

7.6 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): It was predictable that the Opposition would spend their time today in another sterile argument about the marvels of nationalisation. It is regrettable but rather comforting that they have reaffirmed their commitment to grab back the millions of shares that will be taken by small savers, and especially workers in British Gas, following the enactment of the Bill. They have told us that they will do so if they get the chance to implement that policy. I have no doubt that one half of the Labour Opposition—again, this is comforting to know—intend to grab back the shares without paying compensation, while the other half will do so while paying some sort of compensation. We should welcome their decisive declaration to the voters for it means that the Labour party is even less likely than before to have the opportunity to form a Government and to carry out its policy.

I welcome the Bill. I want to see the spur of greater efficiency and the profit motive spread throughout British industry. I do not see why employees in British Gas should be denied the advantages and privileges that are already on offer and have proved to be beneficial to the employees of British Aerospace, Jaguar, National Freight Corporation Ltd, British Telecom and all the other industries and organisations that have been privatised. I wish to see the extension of privatisation.

However good a performance British Gas has put up—I am not one of its critics—I am modest enough to accept that under privatisation it might do even better. It might serve the economy better as well as the consumer. That in itself is a justifiable objective.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The hon. Gentleman has referred to the employees of British Aerospace and their shares. Does he realise that only 3·6 per cent. of British Aerospace's employees now own shares in the company?

Mr. Rost: That is 3·6 per cent. more than before. I have no doubt that many of those—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may have the opportunity to make his own contribution if he will allow me to continue. I have no doubt that those who no longer own shares in British Aerospace will regret having disposed of them when they reflect on the performance of the company as a result of the motivation that has been provided by privatisation. I am sure that that applies to all the truck drivers who took their trade union leaders' advice and failed to take shares when the National Freight Corporation was privatised. I have no doubt that they are regretting that decision.

I welcome the Bill, but I, too, have doubts. I feel that some of the provisions can be improved. I support the arguments that have been advanced by my hon. Friends the Members for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), for Rochford (Dr. Clark), for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). We must be careful not to fall into the trap of privatising a monopoly without creating the opportunity for genuine open competition of providing a system of firm regulation. Naturally, most of us would prefer to adopt the first option. If a major industry is privatised, we should try to provide within the transfer the opportunity for real competition. If that is not possible—I think that most of us understand that it is not practical—we must take the second best. It is a poor, but important, second best. Whether we like it or not, we must provide a sensible system of regulation. I am not entirely persuaded that we have followed either of those courses effectively enough to protect consumers and the national interest.

My colleagues on the Select Committee on Energy's inquiry into the regulatory process have made points that I can only confirm. Those points have come out during the inquiry in evidence from oil companies, the BGC and consumer organisations, and much of it has already been published. A pattern is emerging. We appear to be in danger of privatising a monopoly without providing a competitive framework or an adequate framework of protection through regulation.

I shall give an example of one area that has not been mentioned so far—consumer representation. I am not certain whether the loss of the regional structure of the National Gas Consumers Council will weaken consumer representation. I should like a firm assurance. I am not certain whether the Gas Users Council should have the right to take up consumer issues directly with the company instead of indirectly through the regulatory agency.

In view of the details that the Government have given on the licence and the legislation, I wonder whether we have done enough to protect ourselves against the risks. I do not want to accuse the company, because I am sure that it will act responsibly when it becomes a member of the great club of free enterprises. Nevertheless, I wonder whether we should have provided stronger safeguards against the cross-subsidisation that might prevent genuine competition in the tariff structure that we are entitled to expect. Perhaps the Director General of Gas Supply should have been given an overriding duty to encourage competition as a general guideline. My hon. Friends have already made that point. I want to know how the director general will ensure that costs are properly allocated and charges fairly based on those costs.

I want the further assurance that the director general will have those powers and that the company will have an obligation for its accountancy procedures to be more clearly laid out and defined than at present. They must be transparent, as they are in other areas of the private sector, for shareholders and the market. If the accounts are to be separated into only two categories—one covering gas supply and the other covering all the rest of the operations of the company—I can see the possibility of obscuring cross-subsidisation. That might work against whatever competition could be available and against the consumer.

I believe that in the licence there should be an obligation to safeguard the consumer and the national interest. I am not sure whether that is in the licence. For example, standing charges are of great concern to smaller consumers. It seems to show sloppy drafting of the legislation—I put it no stronger than that—that the successor company will have no obligation to keep standing charge increases below the rate of inflation, but will be obliged to use its "best endeavours". I am sure that the Minister of State is listening, and I hope that he will interpret that as sloppy drafting rather than a deliberate plan. There should be an obligation on the company to publish not just the maximum but the minimum prices. That is tremendously important, so that the smaller industrial consumers can see whether they are being asked

[Mr. Rost]

to pay a higher price than the large industrial consumers. Therefore, we want to see not just the maximum prices of industrial tariffs — that is already provided — but the minimum ones, too.

It is assumed that commercial and industrial customers can protect themselves against the privatised BGC. I hope so. It is right that the regulatory powers should be primarily concerned with the domestic consumer, but I believe that the larger industrial and commercial consumers can protect themselves only if there is genuine competition or if, for example, the common carrier provisions can be operated fairly. As my hon. Friends have said, there are serious doubts about the common carrier provisions. We know that they have not worked so far, because the BGC has not encouraged or wanted them. There is no evidence that it will encourage them in future. After all, the new company will have tremendous power in the market place. If anybody wants to transport gas direct from the North sea to industrial customers, it will have the power to offer the customer the average price, whereas the competitor, wanting to use the common carrier facilities, will have to offer the customer the marginal price.

We are still not clear whether the method for calculating the tariff for the use of the common carrier will be fairly judged. There must be genuine monitoring, even if there is good will from British Gas, and we hope that there will be. The Secretary of State has a responsibility to look again at that subject, to see whether the common carrier provision is a genuine attempt to provide some competition or just a bit of window dressing, which I am sure it is not.

Many points have been covered and I do not wish to hold up the House unduly. I shall summarise by suggesting that if we want to privatise British Gas, we should do so. However, it is a monopoly and we must provide particular safeguards—even more so than with British Telecom. I am not sure whether we have provided those safeguards, particularly upstream on production and competition. British Gas will now be encouraged and will want to go back into the exploration and production of gas. We must consider what effect that may have on the market place. I am not sure that we have provided competition where it could be provided, nor am I entirely satisfied that the regulator will have enough teeth.

We seem to be resting our case on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The commission and the Director of Fair Trading already exist and have a statutory duty. But is it satisfactory that we should leave the regulatory body relatively weak and then expect the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to crawl all over the new company on a monitoring basis? The director general should be given a little more power to prevent the commission being asked to come in the whole time.

The same applies to the Secretary of State. It seems that he is reserving his powers. He has ultimate power, through Parliament. We have ultimate power to renationalise, if necessary, and to change all the rules. If a great deal of the regulation and the assurance of competition and fair play is left to some extent to the discretion of the Secretary of State, using his reserve powers, particularly in upstream areas, one wonders whether that will be an undesirable form of political intervention, rather than getting away from that, which is the purpose of privatisation in the first place.

We want to make sure that we shall not continue, in a privatised form, the cosy relationship that appears to have been built up between a major oil sector and the larger companies in that sector, and the BGC. We also want to make sure that the prospectus looks attractive, so that the Revenue can get its money. We may be failing to accept that a tough form of regulation will not necessarily put investors off, nor will it mean getting a lower price for the shares. That is a misguided point of view. Investors might be more encouraged if there were a tougher regime and fairer regulation of the monopoly, in interests of the consumer and the nation. I think that investors would prefer that, and it would look better in the prospectus. It would be better than the continuing fear that the rules might have to be changed and the uncertainty that investors would have as to whether there would be a continuing public and political argument on whether we had done enough to regulate the monopoly. Such fear and uncertainty would be damaging to investors' confidence, and would affect the prospects of the prospectus more than if we built in from the beginning a slightly tougher regime.

I hope that the doubts that I have expressed have not given the impression that I am in any way unhappy about the Bill. On the contrary. Many of them may be too pessimistic points of view. I have great confidence in the management of BGC, which should have been privatised long ago. It would have shown some of the private sector Confederation of British Industry members a thing or two if the managers had been allowed to get going before. I believe that privatisation will be in the long-term national interest, and the short-term benefits to the Treasury are only secondary to that.

However, we must not forget that the credibility of the Government's privatisation programme is now on the line. It could be at risk if we do not get it right. Therefore, it is important that we scrutinise the legislation closely. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will examine the Select Committee's report when we have considered what we shall say ourselves, and that, if necessary, we shall still be flexible enough to make adjustments to make sure that we get it right.

7.33 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I think that all hon. Members will accept that the strength or weakness of any monopoly, certainly in the gas industry, lies in its exemption from the price discipline. Once the state disposes of its ownership of the British Gas Corporation, inevitably there will be a conflict between the owners, suppliers and customers unless suppliers and customers have a practicable and reasonable option. There is no option for the suppliers. The Secretary of State tried to say that there was, but he was not convincing. I do not think that he himself was convinced that there was an option. At the same time, there is an option for customers, but it costs a lot of money. The option is to install an oil-fired oil burner or a coal-fired coal burner in place of a gas one, in a domestic central heating system. In most households that option is not practicable, as it could cost anything up to £1,000.

We should consider the reaction of our constituents to privatisation, and the questions that they will ask. We shall be able to answer the questions that they are likely to ask

only when we have had a chance to study the draft licence, which was published only 25 hours ago. It was not fair to publish the draft licence less than 25 hours before the beginning of the debate. The National Gas Consumers Council and consumer councils in the regions have been the eyes and ears on many occasions of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, because they can scrutinise proposals in detail and on occasion they write to us to say exactly how they feel we should treat legislation. They have not had the opportunity to do so through the trick of printing the draft licence less than 25 hours before the debate. That is a great pity. There is representation for consumers in the Bill. I am sure that everyone involved with the present consumer councils will not like the idea of their being missed out because the draft licence was published such a short time ago.

This morning I received a letter from the North Eastern Gas consumers council about regional representation if the Bill is passed. It believes that there should be not just regional offices but people in the offices who know about the needs of the regions and can represent people there. I hope that the Minister and members of the Standing Committee will take that into account.

Prices are a major matter on people's minds. The formula that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) read out was a bit confusing, to say the least. I understand that the draft licence says that the percentage of increase will be below the rate of inflation. However, there is also a percentage for the rising cost of materials. It is vague on exactly how the new licensing authority, or regulatory body, will control prices. I should like the Minister to explain in more detail than in the draft licence what we can expect. Is it true that the price rises will be below the rate of inflation, or will they be above the rate of inflation, for other reasons?

Standing charges are another matter on people's minds. The words "best endeavours" are used in condition 4 of the draft licence. It would be difficult to make a valid judgment on the level of standing charges in the next 12 months or the next three or four years.

The Bill talks about different suppliers. Condition 11(3) in the draft licence says:

"Where an escape of gas reported to the Supplier relates to gas supplied by any other gas supplier authorised under the Act, the Supplier shall take all reasonable steps to notify that other gas supplier of the escape as soon as practicable after the escape is reported to the Supplier."

If a supplier is told of a gas leak, is it the case that that might not be acted upon straight away? If so, more clarification on the emergency services is needed than appears in condition 11(3).

I was fortunate enough to see a new service centre that opened in Rotherham during the summer recess. That centre can respond quickly to telephone calls from anybody who suspects that there is a gas leak on domestic premises or anywhere else. Will that no longer be the case? If so, that is a backward step for the community.

Condition 12(1)(b) of the draft licence talks about

"a Code of Practice concerning the payment of gas bills including guidance to domestic consumers if they have difficulty in paying".

I am sure that hon. Members will have had dealings with the BGC when people on low incomes or state benefits have been unable to pay their gas bills. However, they have been able to continue to use gas to keep warm and so on while overcoming the problems of immediate payments. How will that situation differ now? I am sure that the Minister will recognise that, because of Government in action, fuel poverty in Britain will not go away. It is a real problem, despite our great energy supplies.

Why are we discussing the privatisation of the BGC now? Nothing in the Bill will give much protection to consumers in my constituency. Little protection is being given to people who work in the industry. Indeed, if past privatisation programmes are anything to go by, the improved efficiency that some Conservative Members have talked about will be followed by massive redundancies. It falls on the Exchequer to pay for that in unemployment benefits and so on. The Government are taking this step for reasons which do not necessarily benefit the people who work within the British gas industry or use British gas.

This summer, British Telecom announced annual profits of £945 million after tax—the first profits since privatisation. Because of the sell-off of British Telecom, the British people lost half of that—£472 million. The same has happened in other sell-offs under the Government. British Aerospace shares were sold for 150p in 1981. Two weeks ago those shares fetched 481p, an increase of 331p a share.

Mr. Rost: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that a large proportion of the rise in value of British Aerospace shares since 1981 could be due to the success of privatisation?

Mr. Barron: I doubt that that could be substantiated when one considers other privatisations where the price of shares have sometimes doubled, or increased even more, within weeks of privatisation. It is more likely that the City is making a big killing than that the public interest is being looked after. British Aerospace shares have shown an increase of 331p, or £95 million.

Cable and Wireless shares were sold for 168p in 1981. Two weeks ago they fetched 635p a share, a gain of 467p or £534 million. The shares of Amersham International increased within a few weeks of being sold. In 1982 they were 142p and now they fetch 290p or £67 million. The same applies to Associated British Ports and Jaguar.

British Telecom shares were sold for 130p. Two weeks ago they were fetching 206p a share, a gain of 76p or £2,289 million. Those are the gains that are being made in this casino of privatisation deals that the Government have been putting through.

There is not necessarily any more real investment or jobs in those industries. In many cases, the opposite is true. Privatisation does not necessarily mean a greater or better use of new technology or lower prices. It does not mean that more people are making more things. It just means that a few people are making money.

The Government say that the sell-off has nothing to do with the base and tawdry business of helping the rich to get richer. When the subject rears its head in the Chamber we are told that their policy is all about creating truly public enterprise and a wider share ownership whereby workers have a stake in the companies in which they work. That is a con trick. The facts and figures of privatisation measures since the Government have been in power show that.

For example, when British Aerospace was privatised in 1981, there were 158,000 shareholders, 125,000 of whom had holdings of less than 500 shares. Last year that figure had dropped to 43,000 shareholders, with 35,200 of them

[Mr. Barron]

holding fewer than 500 shares. I can tell the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) that the employees' shareholding in British Aerospace is 3·6 per cent.—hardly the great stake in the employees' industry that was spoken about before privatisation. One half of 1 per cent. of shareholders—just 500 people or institutions—own 76 per cent. of the British Aerospace shares that have been sold off. That is a higher concentration of ownership than in Marks and Spencer or the Midland bank.

The number of shareholders in Cable and Wireless dropped from 151,000 to 50,000. Those with over 1 million shares rose from four to 54. Employees' holdings in Cable and Wireless are now 1·4 per cent. Where is the wider share-owning democracy that we have heard about so often from the Conservative Benches? Where do we find the people in the workplace getting the benefits of their labour, other than as salaries or wages?

In British Telecom, 500,000 shareholders with 400 shares or less sold their shares within six months of privatisation. At present less than 2 per cent. of employees hold shares in the company. Again I ask, where is the wider share-owning democracy that is talked about and the golden light that is held up to show the way forward for the British economy? Over 65 per cent. of the shares of privatised companies are owned by the top 0·5 per cent. of shareholders. So much for people's capitalism and for the spreading of share ownership.

The Government are now about to privatise the BGC. They say that they will raise over £5 billion. For what —to raise tax thresholds and cut income tax rates? Privatisation will do nothing for the 7 million people in this country who are living on state benefits. The Government hope that it will help them keep power in the House of Commons in 1987 or 1988. People should not ask me for an opinion; they should go to the City. They will be told that the BGC is now and will in years to come be worth more than £5 billion.

The measures contained in the Bill are not for the small investor; they are for the big money. The Bill is not for the 16 million gas consumers. It would be nice if we had had the opportunity to debate in greater detail whether there will be higher standing charges and how prices will be regulated. The Bill does not provide for competition in supply. If it did, it would keep down share prices. I am sure that those people who are sitting around like vultures waiting to buy into the BGC do not want that to happen. The Bill does not safeguard the consumer. Safeguards for the consumer would make the BGC less profitable for those waiting to buy.

The industry was nationalised in 1949. It had been a private shambles. There was under-investment, primitive technology and danger, as in the coal industry which was nationalised a few years earlier. The industry was rescued by public ownership and was made fit for modern needs by economic planning.

The BGC is now a high-employment, high-investment, high-technology and high-efficiency industry. It is responsive to national and industrial needs. It is sensitive to consumer and community interests. It is a public service in every sense. It is a profit-making public service. It provides income of £1 billion a year for the taxpayer. Will the Minister tell us how taxpayers will obtain the income that will disappear with the privatisation of the BGC? Will it be brought in through a further gas levy? Will the income go to those people who are sitting on the fence waiting to buy into the industry?

The gas industry that the Tories want to sell is a national asset. They will turn a public monopoly that has public duties and is publicly accountable into a private monopoly —a machine for making big money for big money. There will be no price or service advantage for the people.

The most ironic factor in this privatisation measure is the Morecambe bay project. It was rejected by private enterprise which did not feel that it was necessary. Private enterprise did not believe it necessary to develop or produce gas in Morecambe bay. The BGC decided to go into Morecambe bay. It ensured that in January this year Morecambe bay came on to cope with the winter gas demands. The Government will be asked over and over again why they are handing the BGC back to people whom gas consumers would regard as irresponsible.

7.44 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): A case for the privatisation of public holdings can be made much more easily than we sometimes think. As we are all aware, difficulties arise when we talk about public monopolies. In this case, the public monopoly is also a utility. Market theory argues that there need be no regulation if there is a competitive environment. However, where there is no competitive environment, but there is regulation, it is often difficult to determine the nature of the regulatory authority. Like a moving target, our appreciation of what we are looking at changes from time to time.

We saw that with British Telecom. The reservations that we had about Oftel when we discussed British Telecom's licence are now being expressed by the Director General of Oftel. We are sometimes slow to take on board where the force of an argument lies.

I find that there is something distinctly disappointing and worrying about the Bill. The arguments that we adduce for privatisation revolve, essentially, round efficiency. We say that greater efficiency accrues to the industry and to the national interest from competition. In this instance there is an absence of competition, whichever way one considers the Bill.

We are considering the structure of the industry. If we privatise the BCG in its present form and move it out of the public into the private sector, we beg the question why that, of itself, is beneficial. One argues and accepts the argument that it is beneficial to withdraw the industry from the claw of public sector interference, Treasury views and strictures, and the Department second guessing the professionals within. That is the one argument that I can appreciate and wholeheartedly support. What inducements have we tried to construct in the Bill that will enable us to be assured that the industry will seek out efficiency and manage its affairs efficiently in the public interest?

I found it disappointing to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say that he had considered the various forms in which the BCG could be privatised and had rejected the regional operating company argument. I considered that proposal carefully because it has some of the features—not all of them, by any means—which at least help one to assess whether an industry is more likely to work to the consumer's general benefit. That is my primary interest in the privatisation process.

With a regional operating company, we have the first thing that we are looking for—a benchmark by which to

judge whether one area is operating reasonably as against another. There is another benefit. We reduce the possibility of monopolistic tendencies through cross-subsidisation. My right hon. Friend said that one lost the economies of scale with the regional operating company. I am surprised at that observation. I have not seen enough of his background papers or work to give me sufficient confidence to accept his point. The argument in favour of breaking up the BGC's present structure into regional operating companies is that they would be handling the same distribution pattern as at present. There is no difference in scale. We are talking about 12 companies where there is one at present, all operating within the area of their natural monopoly. Where is the loss of economy of scale?

We shall probably have price differentials. I am not sure that the Bill, or the regulatory machinery that it envisages, will eliminate subsequent changes in pricing policy. We have national unitary pricing. I believe that that is counter-productive and against the national interests. It does not mean pricing at marginal costs. A social judgment is being taken that prices should be the same in one area as they are in another. That is a fair point to make, but it is not in the interests of efficiency or the good running of companies.

There is a benefit in terms of regional pride. I have seen a tremendous managerial drift to the centre over the years. I was born in Aberdeen, and I am sympathetic to the Scottish point of view. In the west midlands, I have again seen this drain towards the centre. To have 12 large regional operating companies with their headquarters in regional towns dealing direct with their local market and employees would give a flavour of entrepreneurial drive to these regions. There is merit in considering that. The national transmission system would be a 13th element, separate from them. There is no reason why it should not be a separate company, together with the 12 regional operating companies. I am looking for a benchmark and a test of efficiency. In that way we could ask why it is that region A manages its affairs more tightly than region B. Our interest in that would reflect the customers' interest. We do not want customers to be ill served.

In talking about the present corporation we are talking about a massive company. It is difficult to have windows into its activities without a regulatory regime that is pervasive and demanding in information. I know that that is not the British way. In the past I have watched our response to regulatory authorities. We are light regulators. Indeed, we have difficulty in regulating the City. In this vast business we are dealing with technologies, details of men management, and a huge tranche of information, and it is difficult to identify practices with which we may be unfamiliar.

I fear monopolies because of the rationale behind them and the incentive to maximise profits, not necessarily with the exertion of effort, but with the acceptance of the monopolicy position in the market. That is why I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not say more about the reasons which made him discount introducing a different structure for the privatisation of the BGC.

Mr. Rowlands: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely. At present, there is regional identification. Certainly Wales Gas has a certain pride. It would be wholly unfair to compare one region with another. The Welsh economy will determine the success or failure of the sale of gas in Wales. It would be wholly unfair to compare a Welsh regional gas corporation with one in the south-east. During the past five years, in particular, Welsh gas would have come out badly because of the collapse of the industrial market. The hon. Gentleman's argument for regional comparisons would lead to unfairness.

Mr. Shepherd: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He may be over-anxious about the ability of people to judge efficiency in areas between one set of circumstances and another. Obviously every circumstance is not identical, but in that way we could see the management of a national scarce resource on a comparative basis. The hon. Gentleman has put forward an argument to show why, for a period, Wales may not seem to have performed as efficiently for example as Midland gas or South-East gas. Nevertheless, through comparison one gets closer to identification, and so to adding an incentive to efficiency, which I should like. Obviously, we differ on this.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will probably have read the report on fiscal studies by Hammond, Helm and Thompsons, and I certainly commend it to the House. The report concludes:

> "We find it difficult to see any significant benefits from the Government's proposals to privatise BGC in its present structure. The consequences may even be adverse. And privatisation on this basis is likely to make the task of introducing competitive incentives in the future more, rather than less, difficult to put into practice."

I am inclined to agree with that. I am disturbed by the closure of options by this form of privatisation.

I urge upon my right hon. and hon. Friends the need to reconsider their route to privatising BGC, with all its implications of a massive significant market force. There will be no market discipline. Such a huge combine will mean that stockbrokers and the finance industry will not be able to exercise the detailed determination of its arrangements, which should provide one of the benefits of privatisation. That would work much better with smaller regional companies. If there is an opportunity to do so, I should be grateful if the Government would reconsider that point.

7.54 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): It is a happy coincidence that I follow the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) after his thoughtful remarks. He put trenchant criticisms of the Bill to the Government, and I should like to follow his example, but perhaps less delicately.

The Gas Bill is completely misguided. It is both daft and dangerous. It is daft because it is not necessary to privatise the gas industry in the first place, and dangerous because it creates a large powerful private monopoly. We must consider one matter which did not necessarily follow previous privatisation legislation — the British Gas Corporation is a monster company, and straddles a huge market. If all monopolies are insensitive to public needs, and if it is difficult enough to control our public monopolies, as the Government have found in times past in dealing with Sir Denis Rooke as chairman of the BGC, what will happen when the BGC becomes a private monopoly and Sir Denis is freed from the fetters of having to pay some attention to the Government's views?

[Mr. Gordon Wilson]

The BGC has a total monopoly of gas collection, distribution and sales. It is a monopoly buyer of methane, has a monopoly of trunk pipelines, and a monopoly of sales to domestic, industrial and commercial suppliers. In practical terms, even if it were possible for other companies to catch up, it would take decades for any company to match the BGC in the open market. It would be virtually impossible for the Shells and Essos of this world to shoulder the BGC from its customer base. There is nothing in the license arrangements announced by the Government precipitately before the debate which allows for adequate competition, and care of consumers.

One can consider the legislation in a broader light. At present we are in the middle of a merger mania where large companies either come together voluntarily or are forced into shotgun marriages. The Government are introducing legislation to spread the powers and functions of building societies, yet the building societies, huge as they are, continue to merge. We see more and more financial power coming into the hands of fewer people.

Yesterday we debated the Channel tunnel. Again, with a Government directive, without adequate consultation, a huge investment could be made without considering the impact which it might have in other areas. The Government seem to be following a dictatorial path. During the past year I have detected a whiff of the corporate state coming from the Government. One of the problems of the development of mega-corporations in the financial and industrial world is that eventually they may be able to challenge the Government, and dare the Government to do things which the Government could have resisted if the corporations had been more and smaller.

Privatisation of the BGC does not make sense. The BGC is over the golden years. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) dished out great dollops of praise to the BGC, but he neglected to mention that latterly the BGC came into a huge windfall through the discovery of natural gas in the North sea.

On that basis, it has managed to expand what was previously a declining market and to build up its organisation. Speaking as a consumer, at various stages in its development I have considered it to be one of the most inefficient of the public corporations because it never seemed to get its workmen out to put right some of the equipment that it had sold to suppliers such as myself. That is why I do not entirely accept the view that everything British Gas has done over the years is perfect.

The Government should read into the whole question of the supply of gas a considerable warning, as should future investors in the company. The gas supply forecasts covering the period 1985 to the year 2000, issued by British Gas in November 1984, stated:

"The amount of gas produced from fields now under contract will fall steeply in the late 1980s and early 1990s . . . But United Kingdom supplies will not be enough. This leaves a gap between the supplies from the UK fields which British Gas can rely on for the 1990s and the demand it predicts from its customers. This gap will have to be filled by imports continuing at about their present levels."

British Gas intended that it should be able to fill that supply and demand situation by entering into an arrangement with the Norwegians for the development of the Sleipner field, but the Government turned that down and at present everything depends on which sector forecasts one believes. Either way, by the mid-1990s we could be running out of gas. It is certain that, should we move into such a restricted supply situation, the price of gas would climb steeply for the consumer, yet there would still be a profit element levied for British Gas plc.

I see the future market as being sticky. Any investor who takes shares in British Gas based on the company's previous success should be wary. In that connection, the Government should explain what will be the position of the gas levy. So far, British Gas has increased its prices in response to demand by central Government and the surplus has been whisked off by the gas levy.

If the price of gas begins to rise and the increase must be borne by the consumer, will the Government surrender part of the gas levy so that the price rise will be braked? It is clear from the criticisms of the licence that insufficient information will be provided about the profit levels of the new public limited company. Despite that, we still have a public tax—the gas levy—involved in the matter. The Government should come clean on that.

I have argued so far that the privatisation we are considering is bad in United Kingdom terms. I am even more worried about the position in Scotland, which has not done all that well out of the gas industry. By a circumstance of history, gas was first discovered in the southern basin of the North sea and it was six or seven years before the gas pipelines began marching northwards. In the meantime, much of Scottish industry was deprived of supplies of gas at a time when the price of gas was extremely cheap. Indeed, to this day Scottish industry consumes a smaller proportion of gas than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

It is interesting to record that, as soon as gas was discovered in Scottish waters, in the early 1970s, the then Conservative Government intervened and abolished the then autonomous Scottish gas board. That cannot be regarded as entirely coincidental, in the same way as, all of a sudden, in 1975-76, the then Labour Government decided that mineral resources which had previously been attached to the Scottish region should come under a different regime. They transferred all the offshore oil resources from the Scottish account into a new offshore account. Government financial trickery of that kind is prevalent.

When I asked the Secretary of State whether he thought that a new Scottish company should be set up, I got an unconvincing reply. We cannot assume, either, that the existing company in Scotland—I will call it the regional company — Scottish Gas, will remain even with the autonomy that it now has.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it was recently made clear that under the Bill the boundaries of Wales Gas — presumably the same applies to the company in Scotland —were not protected? Does he agree that it is time the Minister came clean on that issue?

Mr. Wilson: That is true, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising it. Information leaked from Scottish Gas suggests that the British Gas Corporation, in preparation for its changing role, intends to change the identity of Scottish Gas. Quietly, without a fanfare of trumpets, the term "Scottish Gas" is likely to be dropped and "British Gas (Scotland)" put in its place. Scottish Gas will decrease in importance in the new structure. It would

not surprise me if, once British Gas got going, the Scottish area management—the same may be true of Wales and of local managements in other parts of Britain — disappeared. In other words, there is a danger of further centralisation.

I read in the *Petroleum Economist* for November that the Bow Group, with the members of which I am not always in agreement, had made clear its preferred solution, which was that British Gas should be split up like the Bell Telephone Company in the United States and sold off separately.

Although I am completely against the privatisation of British Gas, I believe that if it came to the bit, it would be more effective in United Kingdom and Scottish terms for there to be an independent Scottish company. Let us remember that such an organisation would not be small. At present, Scottish Gas has 6,700 employees and 1 million customers. It has sales of £403 million a year and it is one of the top 10 Scottish companies, judged on sales. Last year, Scottish Gas invested £20 million and paid £57 million in wages.

It is also more than self-sufficient in supplies of gas, because, although Scotland consumes 6·2 per cent. of British Gas Corporation sales, 20 per cent. of the gas produced comes from gas fields off the Scottish coast, excluding Norwegian gas from the Frigg and Statfjord fields.

I call on the Government to review their policy in that respect. According to leading articles that I have read, the investment market in Scotland would be interested in having the opportunity to invest in a company of that sort, so that we could keep the management and policy firmly in my country.

I was flabbergasted to hear that Labour party policy was completely against any regional control of Scottish Gas, yet it is supposed to be the party of devolution, the party that claims it wants a Scottish assembly, that believes that industrial development should go to a Scottish assembly and that such a policy should be binding even on north of England Labour Members — or so I am informed by Scottish Labour Members. Being a naive soul, I am willing sometimes to believe that.

When I heard, however, that the right hon. Member for Salford East (Mr. Orme) had firmly committed the Labour party against any form of Scottish involvement, and when he said that the official Opposition were in favour of this big private monopoly operating from a London base, I felt that the Labour party's devolution policy did not amount to much. I shall make some effort to let people in Scotland know that the Labour party is still the party of centralisation and believes in London control.

The Government should beware of making some of the same mistakes that they made in relation to the Trustee Savings bank, when they assumed that they could float off a company with assets that did not even belong to the state. Apart from the legal action, the House of Lords excluded Scotland from that Bill. One can never tell what the House of Lords will do, but we know what the House of Commons will do because of the Government's huge majority. In this case, I would like to encourage their Lordships to dismember this Bill and to ensure that if it goes through, adequate care is taken to retain as much financial and managerial power as possible within the areas in which British Gas operates.

Even with their present free market philosophy, I cannot understand why the Government should go out of their way to create such a huge private monopoly which, given what has happened with British Telecom, will undoubtedly lead to massive increases in gas prices for the consumer. If they do privatise this company, I serve notice that any Scottish Government will have to take steps to return this important industry to Scotland.

8.11 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I welcome the Bill because there is every reason for returning the gas industry to private ownership. The conditions that existed in 1948, which first led to nationalisation, no longer apply. Then there was a general recognition that a major reorganisation was needed. The industry had grown up piecemeal over 100 years and was extremely diverse and unco-ordinated. Thanks to the differing qualities and specifications of its products, as well as the varying efficiency and stability of producer companies, there was considerable doubt whether consumers or industry were being served as well as they could be.

It was not clear that the necessary reorganisation could even be achieved under private ownership. There was also a reforming Socialist Government for whom it was an article of faith that production could be better harnessed under state ownership for the greater benefit of consumer and employee alike.

Given the lack of any real example up to then of a major nationalised manufacturing concern by which the likely success of failure of the new enterprise could be judged, it was relatively easy to sell the idea of nationalisation to people of all political persuasions. But the conditions are now very different. Nationalisation has not brought the great economic and social benefits assumed by Socialists of the day. Indeed, it is alarming how little their successors on the Opposition Benches have learnt from the intervening years. They still have a touching faith in the principle of state ownership that is not given substance by industrial experience either here or anywhere else. That faith is not shared by many people outside the immediate world of politics, and I suspect that it is not shared by even a majority of those who normally vote Labour at the polls —or used to.

The situation today is also quite different from 1948 in that the co-ordination and modernisation of the industry is now complete. The task for which the Government were brought in has now been fulfilled.

Many long-term benefits will stem from this Bill. One of the most significant is the opportunity it gives to encourage enterprising private sector management into a large and vital British commercial concern. That is in no way a criticism of the present management of British Gas, and I pay tribute to the entire work force of North-West Gas, 500 of whom work in my constituency in Bolton.

It would be profoundly unhealthy to perpetuate the current situtation in British industry of two distinct sectors —the private and the nationalised. In practice, the result is that nearly all the go, go modern image concerts are in the private sector, whereas large and important corporations, such as British Gas, do not have complete access to all the managerial talent that is at present available. That is particularly true at senior management level, because many of the most able and creative managers in British industry are simply not prepared to put up with the arbitrary interference of politicians in investment, pricing and other routine management decisions.

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

The effect of this failure to maximise managerial efficiency in the gas industry is potentially very serious. It threatens the interests of employment in the industry through lack of competitiveness with other sources of energy, with a consequent fall in market share. It also threatens consumers, and, thanks to the role of gas as one of the major elements in industry's source of energy, it threatens to raise costs. We are all aware that for years large sections of British industry have suffered as a result of high energy costs compared with overseas competition. That fact has undoubtedly contributed to the decline of many sectors of our industry. The Bill will ensure that those dangers are minimised.

The Opposition have given no good reasons for keeping British Gas in state ownership. They have said nothing to dissuade me from the ideal that if politicians were any good at running major energy or other commercial concerns, they would have gone into industry. The running of British Gas is to be returned to those best qualified to do the job. For that and many other reasons, I unreservedly welcome the Bill.

8.17 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford). A few moments ago I glanced at the Bill and noticed that it was entitled "Gas Bill". It should have really been called the Representation of the People (Purchase of Seats) Bill, because that is what it is.

In my view, the Bill and the licence have been brought to the House with indecent haste. There has been no real chance to digest the contents of the licence, and only this morning that problem was encountered by the Select Committee. Although the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) tried to show some enthusiasm for the Bill, he found it exceedingly difficult.

The management and employees of British Gas will be surprised to learn how inefficient Conservative Members feel the British Gas Corporation has been over the past 20 years. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that it had been 20 years of success, and I support that view.

Why do the Government want to privatise BGC without any evidence of inefficiency and with no evidence at all of non-profit making sectors within the corporation? Many Labour Members and, I guess, many Conservative Members and people in the country know why the Government are pushing the Bill forward with indecent haste. It will provide them with income for tax cuts for their friends. That is no secret. The whole country is aware of it. They are selling the family silver, as has been said often since a speech in another place, and they are selling the bricks and mortar, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East said today.

I understand that British Gas is valued at anything from £6 billion to £10 billion. If it is worth £8 billion, it represents a 7p cut in income tax, but that same £8 billion could keep another 100,000 people on the dole and still provide tax cuts. The Bill represents the biggest present to the Government's friends and relations in the City of London. The British gas industry is to be handed to them on a gilded plate. It is a good deal for City financiers who will be on a nice little earner with commission for handling the sale. Moreover, the City will be able to buy the industry at half price and pocket the profits which currently pay for community services. The Bill represents profit for the people who can afford to buy and for the Government's friends, but it is rotten for consumers. As has been said time and again today, there will be no competition. There will be a private monopoly keen to push up its prices to increase profits still further.

The right of British Gas to force entry into a consumer's home is also to be transferred. That is deeply worrying. I appreciate that that right must be retained for safety reasons, but it is dangerous to give that right to a private company that is not answerable to Parliament. It endangers civil liberties.

What arrangements will be made for pensioners and others with little money? Private companies exist to make money. I do not believe that any hon. Member disagrees with that. I do not believe that a private company will concern itself with keeping the old, the disabled and the low-paid warm. The area that I represent is now feeling the full force of the Government's policies through the Department of Energy. They have created mass unemployment and poverty in the coal industry. My constituents will have great difficulty in meeting their gas bills, and they do not expect the new company to be as sympathetic towards them as British Gas.

Who will be the regulator? The Secretary of State, a politician, a politician's hack? Will the regulator be independent and part of the Office of Fair Trading? Listening to the Secretary of State, I got the impression that he wants to conceal the Bill's purpose, because he gave little information about what it will do. For example, will the regulator act as an arbitrator on price fixing? Will he fix prices? Can there be a fully competitive market with the regulator fixing prices? Such questions must be answered.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State and his Department have considered such matters in their indecent haste to produce the Bill. How much political interference will there be from Government? Will it be the same as with British Gas? Will the regulator have control? Nobody knows. I suggest that the Secretary of State does not know. I hope that the Minister will give the matter some thought before giving an answer later.

Will the privatised gas company be free to import, or will it be controlled by the Government? What will happen to the gas levy? Will the Government continue to control price increases, which has enabled them to put money into the Treasury's coffers? What will happen when the Government receive the first flood of money after the sale of British Gas, which they will need to fulfil their electoral commitment to cut taxes? What will they use after that money is gone? What will they use to replace the income from the profits of British Gas? Such questions need to be answered. We believe that we know the answers.

If the Government were to be re-elected, they would have to increase taxes to fill the revenue vacuum. What information is to be available to the regulator? Will he get the same information as that to which the public are entitled, or will he get more? Could British Gas run its accounts together? Could there be cross-subsidy? Could domestic and industrial tariffs be joined? Nobody will know where the profits and losses come from.

I understand that the Bill lays down no obligation to keep increases in standing charges down to the rate of inflation. this business of "best endeavour" has been put into the Bill. Somebody has thought it up. It has not been put there because it looks nice. Why has it been included

if the Government genuinely intend that standing charges shall not increase above the rate of inflation? I suggest that it is a get-out, so that, if "best endeavours" prove not to be good enough, it can be argued that standing charges must increase above the rate of inflation.

The Secretary of State referred to other nationalised industries. As he mentioned them, we are entitled to more information. He said that the Government would consider all nationalised industries with a view to privatisation. Was he referring to the coal mining industry? Did he have an eye to the future, when massive sums of taxpayers' money have been used to buy men's jobs through redundancy payments? When all that money has been used, will the Government hive off the profitable parts of the mining industry to their friends? Is that what he meant when he said that other industries will be considered?

This is a continuation of the Government's policy of denationalising and selling off to their friends anything and everything that is profitable. No case whatever has been made for hiving off British Gas to the private sector. There is no evidence that British Gas has been inefficient. The Bill arises purely out of Government dogma. I hope that Conservative Members, who know in their hearts that the Bill cannot be good for the nation, will join us in opposing it today and in Committee.

8.30 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) is so worried about the Bill, because employees in the industry support it. Like many other people throughout the country, they look forward to legislation which will not merely privatise a major industry but will allow all those prepared to come forward the opportunity to share in a highly successful industry. What is wrong with reducing state influence and introducing free private enterprise?

I welcome the Bill and I pay tribute to the people in the gas industry, especially in East Midlands Gas — the board, the engineers, the technicians, the salesmen and women, accountants, clerks, telephonists and all the other people who have made the industry in Leicestershire and throughout the country the great success that it has become.

In 1984-85 the industry's turnover was £6,913 million, and it is to be congratulated on the way in which it conducts its business, its undoubted professionalism and its good service. If the time has come for it to go into the private sector, what is wrong with that? Its success is not a vindication of the principle of state ownership. It is due to the high standards of technical expertise, good management and perceptive planning. I suggest to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford that we should wait and see—I hope that I shall be proved right and that he will be proved wrong.

In 1950, after the first year of state ownership, 213·5 million therms of gas were distributed in the east midlands region. Last year, the figure was 1,746 million therms —an increase of more than 800 per cent. and evidence that the customer is getting what he wants and needs. In 1950, the region had 1,055,000 customers. It now has 1,700,000. That represents a vote of confidence by the people of the east midlands in the industry and in the service that it provides so efficiently and well. In the same period, the output of therms per employee has increased tenfold — a measure of productivity of which any industry could be proud. East Midlands gas is run like a small public company in which customers and consumers are treated like shareholders, favourably and with care.

I am pleased to welcome the assurances given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that he intends to encourage all employees to take up shares in the industry, as I know that my constituents who work in the industry are keen to take up that important concession. Since its inception in the early 1820s, the gas industry has been a family industry, with intense loyalty not just to the company but to the consumers on whom the industry has always depended, and the Conservative party has never forgotten the consumer. I am sure that that loyalty will be confirmed by the willingness of employees to take up a stake in their industry, as I pointed out to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State following his statement earlier this year.

I want an end to high costs and prices once and for all, I want a reliable and universal service no matter where one lives, and I want a much better return on capital. I believe that that will be the result of the Bill.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman has paid a well-deserved tribute to the staff of East Midlands gas, which serves my constituency. I confirm his assessment, but does he accept that that splendid record has been achieved by people who believe that they are providing a service and who are sustained in their efforts by consultative committees, the members of which ensure that that high standard is met and recognise the contribution of the workers? If the hon. Gentleman is on the Standing Committee, will he vote with us to ensure that the qualities that have made that success possible are maintained?

Mr. Bruinvels: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. The employees of East Midlands Gas are a credit to their industry. Indeed, I believe that we are better served than are many other parts of the country, but I do not believe that there is any need to revert to the old system of area and regional councils, because I do not believe that it is principally they who have made East Midlands Gas so successful, although they have certainly contributed to it. In any case, those people are keen for the Bill to go forward.

Mr. Hardy: No, they are not.

Mr. Bruinvels: For a long time I was national accounts manager for an excellent energy cost analysis company specialising in tariff analysis. We worked out the best possible deals for gas consumers throughout the country. I agree with my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) that maximum tariffs and costs for particular firms must be published under clause 36, but I want the minimum tariffs available to be published as well. In fact, I want far more information to be given. I hope that, in replying to the debate my right hon. Friend the Minister will refer to the tariff structure. There is no reason for tariffs to be kept as private property by any gas board so that companies such as the one to which I have referred require enormous amounts of money to be put up to achieve savings. All companies are keen to make savings on heat and energy. This country is now a cost and energy efficiency organisation, and the whole tariff structure needs to be re-examined.

I believe entirely in fair competition, and I believe that the effects will be good. I do not share the Opposition's

[Mr. Bruinvels]

view about a monoploy, and so on, because it is not a closed market. There will still be electricity, and oil will be available on the open market. I want at least and at last an efficient service at a price to suit the customer. The customer must come first. Local negotiations with local companies should continue, but agreements reached in one part of the country should be published for the benefit of others elsewhere. In other words, the tariff structure must be published. Controversially, I have never accepted the need for standing charges. I believe that the charge should be included in the price per therm supplied to each customer.

Everyone is concerned about allegations that safety will suffer because so many people will be involved in putting in new equipment, but I do not accept that claim. I believe that even greater efficiency will make for even greater safety. Clearly public confidence must be retained at all times, and it is important that a free emergency service will be available at all times, but we must also demand standard equipment and standard repairs throughout the entire network and watch that aspect carefully. There is no justification for spreading fears, because safety will be better. The Health and Safety Commission will be observing developments, there will be close liaison with local engineers and any sub-contracted work will have to be approved.

I realise that this is a sad day for the Labour party, which has long been committed to further nationalisation and has already pledged its commitment to the renationalisation of this great industry. I am sorry that the Opposition wish to take away power from the people, to disregard their views and to bring back more state control and the resultant faceless bureaucrat. I think that the people of this country want local people to look after local industry. Do the Opposition not realise that people want a stake in their future? They do not want to be denied that stake. Hundreds of thousands of people wanted a stake in British Telecom. They got it, and they have done very well out of it. The Opposition should not be worried about this measure. It will give more say to the people of this country. Democracy will be seen to work in this industry.

It has been alleged that the employees are worried about their future. The gas industry's employees have nothing to fear. They have the expertise and a role to perform. They will be called upon regularly to perform that role. The industry will always, of course, look after its consumers, but it needs the confidence of its employees. It will get that confidence.

Finally, I pay tribute to the safety standards of the industry in the east midlands. I deprecate the suggestion by trade union spokesmen that when the Bill becomes law the industry's employees are likely to compromise the safety standards. I know that this is untrue. As usual, the trade union representatives are wrong.

The proposed sale of the British Gas Corporation will result in many benefits. Privatisation will work slowly, but it will work. It will make the industry much more accountable to the consumer and to the shareholder. Many thousands of people will have a real voice and a real stake in the gas industry. They will have a say in how it is to be run successfully. This is a partnership agreement from which both consumer and employee alike will benefit, and I have no hesitation in supporting the Bill.

8.41 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): When the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) began, it sounded as though he was making a case for the industry remaining in the public sector. He referred to the industry's glowing record. However, he then said that he would loyally troop through the Government Lobby tonight and vote for the privatisation of the industry. His reasons for voting for the Bill, however, were weak. They did not take the matter any further than the Secretary of State for Energy's statement this afternoon.

The hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) referred to the conditions in 1948 when the industry was taken into public ownership. He said that they were very different from the conditions that appertain now. He used the phrase, "there will be a return to private ownership", but forgot to mention that large sectors of the gas industry were already in the public sector before it was nationalised in 1949. They had been developed by the foresight of local government over a long period, so it is not just a question of the industry being returned to the private sector; it did not belong completely to the private sector in the first place.

When the Bill was debated in Parliament in 1948, in preparation for nationalisation in 1949, many people said that the industry was not worth nationalising because it was dead and finished, and that the demand for gas would fall. During the war, very little money had been spent upon the industry. It was in an appalling state. The Labour Government of that time did the right thing. Ever since then, the gas industry has repaid the confidence that was placed in it by the growth that was so well illustrated by the hon. Member for Leicester, East and by its development since it was taken into public ownership.

The Secretary of State made no case for taking this industry out of the public sector and putting it into the private sector. One has to assume that there are three reasons why the Government are privatising the industry. The first is political dogma; anything that is successful and is under public control must be returned to the private sector, whether by means of privatisation Bills or by means of the creeping privatisation of local government. I refer to hospitals, the Health Service and similar services. The Government are so opposed to anything being under public control that if it is successful they must take it away and put it into the hands of private owners.

Secondly, the Government are adamant that, if money is to be made out of any industry, it should go into the pockets of their allies and wealthy supporters. Conservative Members have said on several occasions this afternoon that the Gas Bill will widen share ownership, but this is nonsense and a fallacy. The percentage of shares that will be offered to the public will be very small. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) illustrated just how rapidly the widespread shareholding in British Aerospace and in other industries has diminished.

The third reason for the Government's pursuit of privatisation is their need for cash—to pay for tax cuts, whether by reducing the rates of tax or by a change in the tax threshold, and to meet the cost of public expenditure. However, the Government have failed to say what they will do when they have no more assets to sell. Once they have sold all the country's assets, they cannot be sold again.

The profits of nationalised industries are very important to the economy. I refer to a gas industry profit of well over £1 billion. That excludes the £500 million special gas levy. British Telecom made a similar profit of well over £1 billion. As soon as that money is in the hands of the private sector, the Government will have to raise it from other sources if they wish to maintain their programme. They ought to tell the people of this country where that money will come from and what they will do when there are no more industries to sell off.

This is a very important debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to the British Gas Corporation's annual report. Any company would be proud to produce a report of that kind. It shows an increase in markets, profits and productivity. The industry has a turnover of £6·913 billion. It has over 93,000 employees and over 16·5 million customers. It has a tremendous record, of which the industry can rightly be proud. Last year its profit was £1·6485 billion. That included the £504 million gas levy. The industry's report makes a good case for this industry not being put into the hands of the private sector.

Is there any good reason why a successful industry that is in public ownership should not be used to support an industry that can be run only as a service and that will never make a profit? There is no good reason why that should not be so. If the gas industry can make a profit which enables the Government to meet the costs of other necessary services that cannot be run at a profit, it is right and justifiable for the money to be used for that purpose. If one looks at the gas industry's improvement in productivity and takes as its base year 1978-79 with a factor of 100, the productivity of the gas industry has improved to 112, that of the electricity supply industry has improved to 111·5 and that of all other United Kingdom industries has improved to 108·7. This shows that the gas industry's record is very good.

During the last 15 years a tremendous amount of work has been undertaken towards integrating the previous 12 area boards and developing the national grid. This has resulted in scale economies, national research and development programmes, centrally controlled product management, integrated purchasing and the planning of supplies. By achieving these objectives efficiently and effectively, the British Gas Corporation has become an even more highly effective national energy supplier. This progress and success will be better maintained under public control rather than under private enterprise. Gas is such a major source of national energy that it is vital, in the interests of the nation, for it to remain under public control.

Major decisions are needed in the near future in the electricity and gas industries to ensure that our energy supplies are adequately safeguarded. Although there are various forecasts on the reserves of natural gas in the North sea and Morecambe bay gas fields, the one certain fact is that they are both finite. At the same time, gas demand continues to grow. In the national energy interest, decisions must be taken speedily to develop a means of producing substitute natural gas from coal. Even if the need for this coincides with the most optimistic forecasts of natural gas reserves and the ability to meet demand from existing sources, I am firmly convinced that it would be in Britain's best interests to embark upon such a programme of substitution. Natural gas on a phased basis should be introduced sooner rather than later.

Page 15 of the BGC's annual report refers to the developments that the BGC has made and the £21 million it has spent in the past year on research and development of substitute natural gas. British Gas can be proud of this programme in which it leads the world. If the Government and a publicly owned industry were to go full ahead with that programme, we could seize the export market and fulfil our tremendous potential. If the BGC is put into the private sector, one must accept that issues such as supplies from the Norwegian Sleipner field are of such strategic and national importance that they should be determined by the Government and not a publicly owned industry.

I am extremely worried about the possible closure of gas showrooms. There are two showrooms in my constituency — in Padiham and in Burnley. The one at Padiham is open part time, and I am sure that, once the BGC is privatised, it will not be considered economically viable. It is a matter of not only sales but the point of contact for customers. If that showroom closes, many customers will face difficulties in going to the main centre in Burnley, especially when the bus services end because of the transport legislation—the Transport Act that the Government have forced through.

The Bill poses a threat not only to people in the industry but to the 250,000 people employed by British suppliers who supply the goods that British Gas needs. This is a vital matter. The Royal ordnance factory legislation was debated two years ago, but staff issues have still not been resolved. There are still disputes about pensions for the employees. As I said repeatedly in Committee and in the House, if the Transport Bill was passed, employees' conditions would deteriorate. We are already seeing signs of that, with bus operators withdrawing from the National Joint Omnibus Council. In rural areas London Transport is asking drivers to take a massive wage cut. That is a sign of the times which is likely to be seen again from that the the Transport Act has been passed.

The National Gas Consumers Council is extremely worried about some aspects of the Bill. Because one of my colleagues wishes to speak, I shall refer only to the TUC submission to the Select Committee on Energy entitled, "The real cost of privatisation." The two small squares at the bottom of the front page state, "Public, it's yours" and "Private, it's theirs". This summarises the effect of the legislation. It is vital that the Bill should be defeated.

Advertising for British Telecom shares stated, "Buy a share in British Telecom". Millions of pounds were spent on trying to convince people to do so, but the people already owned British Telecom.

The TUC's submission states:

> "The TUC can see no evidence that privatisation as such will make British Gas more efficient, more competitive, or more publicly accountable; nor that its service to customers or its support for UK manufacturers will improve. The TUC does not believe that its sale will benefit the British Exchequer in the long run and it fears a marked worsening of employees' job prospects and terms and conditions. Perhaps most important of all, the TUC judges that the sale will seriously weaken national energy policy at a time when most countries recognise its importance to future economic recovery."

Those are good reasons to reject the Bill, which is not in the nation's interest.

8.55 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I have a confession to make — none of my constituents own Canalettos, to the best of my knowledge, but they have a

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

distinct interest in the public sector, especially energy. I know that the Minister of State is conscious of public interference in the energy sector. He presides over the Offshore Supplies Office which proudly tells us the percentage that British contractors receive from our offshore activities. That is public interference. It is not allowing the market to hold sway.

Why do the Government dislike the British Gas Corporation? Is it because it has been technologically inefficient? This nation took an industry that was technologically backward — in terms of converting gas from coal and antiquated appliances — and brought it into the last decades of the 20th century. The BGC pioneered the shipment of natural gas for Britain and the world. Ships were converted. The British Princess and British Pioneer were pioneers in the importation and exportation of natural gas. In converting the whole nation to the use of natural gas, a public corporation has been and continues to be a technological innovator.

The BGC went into partnership with international oil companies to develop North sea oil. Some are well known to the Minister of State. Is there any evidence that the BGC was backward in terms of technological development in the North sea and elsewhere? In the so-called Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 — what a misnomer — the Government took away the possibility of continuing to drill for oil in the North sea. They imperilled the innovator centres for geology and drilling that the BGC had set up.

Now, we see a conversion. What is bad for a public corporation when it is used for development is good in a private sector company when the doctrinaire Tories so determine. There is nothing to show any backwardness in the BGC. Is it the Government's view that the BGC has failed to make profits and serve the nation? My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) showed how profitable the BGC is, and this fact should go echoing from the Chamber. The profits that accrue to the nation will not be lost for one year. They are lost from 1986 for as long as Tory Government remain in power.

The Government are not selling Canalettos. It is a falsehood to say that the industry will be transferred to the people. Few people in High Valleyfield, Dunfermline, Kincardine and Oakley in my constituency will have shares in the new company, but they know that this industry has served them well. The Government are using a doctrinaire approach that shows their profligacy. The Minister knows that we are producing 2·7 million barrels of oil a day from the North sea. I warned time and again that the retaliation of the OPEC countries would come, and so it has, because the Government have used the nation's assets to furnish bribery.

If there is any indictment of corruption, it should be levelled at the Government, not for selling Canalettos but for misusing the vital assets that the nation has built up under Governments of both parties. In the past we had the middle way, but now we see profligacy and a wasting of the nation's assets. The foolish virgins did not put oil in their lamps. This Government are so foolish that they are wasting the oil and gas assets of the nation. When the next election comes, I am sure that they will get their come-uppance.

9.1 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) reminded the House of the remarkable achievements of the BGC in the past 20 years. First, there was the technical achievement of laying and developing a national gas transmission system that has turned out to be not only one of the safest but one of the most extensive, in terms of size of country and population, in the western world. It has turned a sad, downtrodden and declining industry into one of the great success stories of the past 20 years. This success story and these achievements were carried out by a public enterprise, by people with a sense of service rather than of profit, who believed in the industry and invested their lives and skills in it. In return, the industry invested in Britain. As many of my hon. and right hon. Friends have said many times, the BGC has invested in British manufacturing, and has contributed to the creation of up to 250,000 jobs as a result of its "Buy British" policy.

The Labour party sees no need to have to justify the continuation of the BGC as it stands. We are committed supporters of the concept of public enterprise, of which we see the BGC as an excellent illustration. When the Government, who wanted to find things desperately wrong with the corporation, sent in their people to check the corporation, there was a problem. Deloitte Haskins and Sells went into the BGC, went through it and came up with this conclusion:

> "We consider that the management and employees of any commercial organisation could be proud of such a record, and also that it reflects well on the sponsoring Department of Energy".

The Secretary of State should take note of that second point. The company endorsed our belief not only in the success of public enterprise but in the relationships between the Department, Ministers and civil servants and that between the Government and the corporation. We do not have to justify the continuation of the BGC, because of what it has achieved and could still achieve for our national energy requirement.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East also reminded us of another important point. Those achievements have been obtained by bestowing on that corporation massive powers, and with it huge resources. No one could deny that they are extraordinary powers. Successive Governments have given the BGC, and then endorsed such a policy, the power of first purchase of all gas, of sole supplier of gas, and exclusive access to the North sea gas. Thereby, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) reminded us, they enabled the BGC to drive a good bargain on behalf of consumers with the multinational oil companies developing gas in the North sea.

Those powers were, and are, justified to achieve national energy objectives and to provide consumers with safe supplies of gas at a reasonable price. We are unashamed supporters of public enterprise, and especially the success of the BGC. When Governments gave the BGC such powers, they rightly believed that the corporation would be directly accountable to the Secretary of State. Therefore, I cannot understand the right hon. Gentleman's argument in that respect. The 1972 Act endorsed and supported the role and the relationship between the Secretary of State and the BGC. The right

hon. Gentleman was certainly part and parcel of the Department and the industry when that Act passed through Parliament.

We must be squeamish and conscientious when handing over such powers to a corporation. Therefore, in the past we have imposed upon the corporation a degree of parliamentary, public and governmental accountability. Such control is well justified. Without it, Parliament should not bestow such powers on a public enterprise.

In selling the assets of the BGC, we shall also be transferring its powers to the new independent company. We must discover the Secretary of State's policy on that. Enormous powers now reside in a public enterprise and will be transferred to a private sector gas monopoly. Wherever one stands on privatisation, whatever the ideological, philosophical or economic divide, the concept that we should invest in a private company the powers that we invested in a public enterprise, without any safeguards, is a major concern that should divide not only the two main parties in the House, but Conservative Members in their attitude to the Government's proposals.

The Secretary of State's defence of the Bill is that it will remove ministerial and Whitehall interference in the BGC. In their place, he wants competition and regulation. We must ask whether there will be that competition and whether the regulations will be adequate. It is interesting to note that coded messages — some rather less coded than others — have been sent from Conservative Members to the Secretary of State during the debate. For example, the hon. Members for Erewash (Mr. Rost) for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), after a few comments in support of the Government, quite rightly then turned on the Government and said, "We do not believe that there will be competition or that there will be proper and effective regulation."

If those Conservative Members do not believe that, and we certainly do not believe that, it is obvious that those two alternatives to proper public accountability will fall. Unless the Government can prove that there will be competition and effective regulation, their case cannot be accepted, because it is too weak. There is no justification for the sale of the BGC's assets or the transfer of its powers to the private sector.

The Secretary of State's case is that there will be more competition and effective regulation. We cannot know whether there will be more competition, because the right hon. Gentleman has not told us about the vital decisions that must be made.

The right hon. Gentleman came to the Dispatch Box to justify the Bill and the Government's policy, and it was astonishing that he made no statement on whether he would allow exports of gas. Indeed, he said nothing about gas imports. I understand the battles that he might be fighting on that score, but if he is not so engaged, we hope that the Minister of State will announce that the Government will not allow gas exports and that they will retain power to deal with Sleipner-type cases. If the Secretary of State decides to allow gas exports—many Conservative Back Benchers want that to happen, as do many outside, who are demanding that that should happen on behalf of the private sector—he will make nonsense of the case that he and his Department have advanced on the Sleipner contract.

The case that was put before the Select Committee on Energy, and before the House generally, on the Sleipner contract was that there would be a sufficient amount of gas from the United Kingdom's part of the North sea. It was said that that could be guaranteed because we could control North sea resources. It was explained that the resources would be brought to our shores to provide gas for British consumers, be they industrial, commercial or domestic. It was said that we did not need a Sleipner import contract because we had sufficient gas in the North sea, that we had control of it and that it would be brought home to British consumers.

The issue was fundamental to our depletion policy and the provision of gas in the 1990s. Against that background, we ask the Minister of State to tell us where the Government stand on exports of gas. If it is an area in which there will be competition, we must be told of the consequences. It is an area of competition of which we still have no understanding or appreciation.

The Secretary of State says, "There will be competition. I shall breathe some new life into the powers and effects of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982. I have done it in the Bill and in the licence." Let us remind ourselves of the common carrier provisions in the 1982 Act. There are two or three Members in the Chamber, apart from myself, who are veterans of that measure, in that we considered it with our colleagues in Committee. We remember the arguments. We remember the then Secretary of State for Energy, the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, claiming that the gasless folk of Blaby would be supplied with gas by means of private contracts and private common carrier provisions. He told us that British Gas had never reached his constituency and that a private supply would reach out to consumers who had been thwarted and disappointed by public enterprise.

What has been the result of the 1982 Act? Its provisions allow applications for and approval of common carrier provisions, but there has not been one approval, nor has there been an application since 1982. That has been the result of one of the famous privatisation Acts. That is the consequence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's policy when he was Secretary of State for Energy. The pipe dreams of alternative supplies are not being converted into reality.

The Secretary of State's response to that charge turns on the provisions in clause 19. I have read the clause, and I ask the Minister of State to tell us where we can find any meaningful or significant improvement in the so-called common carrier provisions. The bulk of clause 19 has been taken from section 17 of the 1982 Act. There are a couple of different subsections, and they appear to be modest concessions that reflect what British Gas wanted us to do in 1982. There is not much in the clause that brings anything new to the common carrier provisions currently on the statute book.

We were told by the Secretary of State this afternoon that there are new common carrier provisions in the licence. He explained that these are to be found in the 10th condition, which deals with the supply of back-up gas. It appears that the BGC will provide some general information on policy and that it will have to stand ready to supply back-up gas. At best, that can be described as a marginal improvement on the common carrier provisions. We were expecting a further condition in the licence which——

Mr. Robert C. Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am trying hard to follow the arguments of my

[Mr. Robert C. Brown]

hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) but it is difficult to do so while two Scottish sub-committee meetings are taking place simultaneously behind me as well as a Chesterfield and Merseyside committee meeting.

Mr. Rowlands: We Welsh have survived the Scots for long enough.

Where is the condition in the licence that British Gas will have to buy the residual gas from privately contracted oilfields? Where in the licence is the solemn and binding declaration of intent by British Gas? It is not in the conditions of the licence where we would expect to see it. Where is the famous new leap forward in the private common carriership of gas? The truth is that there will be no competition. The very day on which the Secretary of State talks about that he produces a draft licence for a 25-year public gas monopoly.

The extra conditions will not create a common carrier provision. Anyone who has been sitting at the back of the room during the Select Committee on Energy's considerations will have heard oil company after oil company, having been presented with the propositions, saying that they will not make any difference at all and that it is scarcely worth the bother. That has been the sum total of the advice given to the Select Committee by the oil companies, and hon. Members on the Committee know that to be true.

As there is no proper accountability or control over a monopoly of that sort with such enormous powers, the question of competition falls. There may not be much competition. There has not been any so far, and there is little likelihood of it.

The Secretary of State also referred to regulation. How effective will the regulation be in protecting the industrial and commercial consumer, with a privatised monopoly power of the type that will be created under the Bill? There is a great deal of scepticism about that argument. Many hon. Members—the Secretary of State did not listen to many of them—such as the hon. Members for Erewash, for Enfield, Southgate and for Rochford (Dr. Clark), have said that the regulatory powers and the provisions in the draft licence are scarcely effective in defending or providing sufficient safeguards to industrial, commercial and domestic consumers.

When one starts to look at the regulations, it is little wonder that there is scepticism and disbelief at the effectiveness of the regulatory system that is being introduced. We were told of the great advance in controlling prices. There will be control over one part of the gas cost, the non-gas cost—the RPI minus X. We do not know what X will be, and we ask the Minister to tell us what the Government's thinking is in that respect.

There will be another wide ingredient in the gas cost, called "allowable cost". That is the cost of gas from the North sea. The Secretary of State did not tell the House or remind everybody that that portion of the total price is a growing proportion. The non-gas cost used to be a larger proportion, but it is now a little over 50 per cent. By the time the new company gets going, the major portion of any price of gas could be totally allowable and uncontrolled by any formula.

Mr. Rost: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if British Gas is allowed automatically to pass on all the extra costs of higher prices from the North sea, there will not be an adequate incentive for it to shop around for the most economic gas price? Should not the shareholder, rather than the consumer, carry the can for any mistakes?

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman should put that point to the Minister of State, because it is reasonable. I am saying that the Secretary of State promised some sort of price formula that would control the price of gas for the domestic consumer. Up to half, if not more, of that gas price will be wide, which is just allowable gas costs. Therefore, it is not an adequate protection.

That is not the only area where the consumer is not protected under the arrangement. We have all the weasel words about standing charges. Why is it just "best endeavours"? Why is it not RPI minus Z? Why should there be a case for just making the best endeavours to hold standing charges at about the rate of inflation?

The Secretary of State derided the role that the House plays in influencing, controlling, supervising and making British Gas accountable. It is as a result of pressure from both sides of the House that we have a rebate system on standing charges. It was not volunteered by the gas industry, but extracted from it as a result of that pressure. Now we shall have the regulatory power, under which the new company will have to do nothing more than use its best endeavours to hold down the standing charges.

There is a list of other conditions in the licence about publishing tariffs, and publishing maximum prices. The hon. Member for Erewash said that there was not much point in that. How does publishing maximum prices protect the consumer? It is not a form of consumer protection. The Director General of Gas Supply will not be able to control the tariffs. British Gas will just publish its maximum prices, which is not consumer protection. As my hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East said, it is cut-price consumer protection.

Mr. Peter Walker: What control has there been over contract gas during nationalisation?

Mr. Rowlands: I listened with interest to the right hon. Gentleman when he was talking about that in his speech. He was not Secretary of State when, for the best part of 12 months, there was a growing and justifiable chorus in the House against the imposition of unnecessary price increases for industrial and commercial consumers.

Mr. Peter Walker: Who did it?

Mr. Rowlands: The right hon. Gentleman did it. There was a change as a result of pressure from both sides of the House.

Ninety five per cent. of industrial consumers will be excluded from the regulations. Only 5 per cent. buy gas on a tariff basis, so the rest will have to take their chances. We were told that ICI and the chemical companies had gone to the Secretary of State and said that they did not want any regulation. We understand that ICI can take care of itself. The big boys in the chemical industry can take care of themselves. A large number of industrial consumers who will need protection will want to be covered by the regulations. They will have no protection, as they are denied that right under the Bill and the licence.

Mr. Peter Walker: Why does the hon. Gentleman think that the main competitors of British Gas want regulation?

Mr. Rowlands: They feel that British Gas will use its monopolistic power in the private sector to scoop up additional markets. What will the Secretary of State say to them about that? The licence and the Bill will not do anything effective on behalf of the consumer, whether industrial, commercial or domestic.

Genuine questions have been raised by supporters of public enterprise and people outside, who have said that, as a result of the weak and loose form of regulation, there will be no effective regulation of what will be a large privatised monopoly. A Conservative Member asked what control there would be over the right of British Gas to go out and acquire significant oil companies. Unless some tax dividend is taken out of the corporation we shall be left with a minimum of £3 billion to acquire an oil company or two. Sir Denis Rooke, the chairman of the British Gas Corporation, has never concealed his intention in that regard. Therefore, understandably, there are worries and complaints that there will be the break-up of some independent British oil operations.

We do not believe that there is any effective consumer protection. We do not believe that there will be an effective form of regulation or competition. Yet the Bill will transfer these enormous powers to a private monopoly. Why will there not be any effective form of regulation? It is because the City and those who advise on the sale of the shares say that an effective and tough form of regulation will depress the price of the shares and make it more difficult for people to take them up. It will not help the so-called sale of the century.

We know who will be the beneficiaries of the sale. First, it will be those who advise the Government—the bankers, the stockbrokers, the consultants. Who is the chief adviser on the sale? It is none other than Rothschilds. This will be its second privatisation exercise. Hon. Members will remember the first one — Amersham International. It managed to get it wrong by only a third on that occasion. It managed to sell a marvellous company at a knockdown price. That was the first major scandal to be created by the sale of assets at discount or knock-down prices. The very organisation that was in charge of the sale of Amersham International—one of the great disgraces —will now be in charge of a larger sale of public assets.

If the Bill and the draft licence are anything to go by, consumers will not be protected. The Bill has nothing to do with a better service, a cheaper form of gas for consumers or the rights of industrial or commercial consumers. It has everything to do with the financial greed of the Government and the way in which they are trying to plan a victory at the next election. They are using public assets, nationally developed, to pay for tax cuts. That is what is behind the proposals. That is why we shall oppose the Bill and why a future Labour Government will restore not only the assets but the powers to the nation, where they belong.

9.27 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): As long as the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) was dealing with the Bill, he had difficulty in making his case. That changed only when he came to the end of his speech and endeavoured to raise his pure political prejudices in describing what the Labour party would do if Britain were ever unlucky enough to see that party re-elected to power.

It was interesting that in those closing moments the hon. Gentleman did not say on what terms a Labour Government would renationalise if that eventually ever arose. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) says that I should wait and see. An interesting altercation took place on the Opposition Benches earlier when it was suggested that perhaps re-nationalisation should take place without compensation——

Mr. Heffer: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will read what I said. I did not say "without compensation". I said that I trusted that we would renationalise without massive compensation. I have checked my speech. The point is that these are the assets of the nation, paid for by the ordinary people through their taxes, and those assets are being handed over to rich people to make rich pickings.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us the view of one member of the Labour party. I recall that the phrase used earlier was "at the price that had been paid for it".

Mr. Hannam: That is right.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I noticed that the Front Bench was careful not to follow up that point, and not to say what it would do. I agreed with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) only when he said that that eventuality would not arise. Even if it did, it would be interesting to see what view a Labour Government took of an industry whose ownership was spread widely not just among its employees but through the rest of the economy.

The Government's privatisation proposals have given people throughout the country a greater opportunity to share in British industry. The Labour party is completely wrong and out of touch when it wants to deny people the opportunity to share the assets of British industry and to have a direct stake in the country's future prosperity.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Government are taking away something that belongs to all the people to pay for tax cuts for a few of the people.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I should be interested to know what the hon. Gentleman feels he owns in the BGC at the moment. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained, ownership of the BGC is vested in the Government. The corporation is administered by Ministers and civil servants. The British people do not own it.

Mr. Douglas: The other day, there was an article in *The Times* by the Attorney-General. He said clearly that the National Health Service belonged to the nation and that he was proud of it. There is a valid analogy with the BGC. People are proud of the public sector, and the Tories cannot stomach that pride.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: One is interested in one's health in relation to the National Health Service. One's interest in this proposal is in the benefits that it can bring and the opportunity it gives to share in a prosperous, expanding and healthy gas industry. It will bring back benefits to the country and to those individuals who will have a stake in the industry after the Bill's passage. I am delighted that the Government are giving that opportunity to the public.

We heard some prejudices at the end of the debate. There were one or two interesting interventions. One of the most interesting came from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). He said that he had been a

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

Member of the House for 35 years. When I listened to him, I began to wonder what he had learnt during those 35 years, not in the sense of experience, because I know that he has a great deal of experience of these matters, but about the real world of energy and the gas industry, and what the position was when he was responsible for those matters.

The right hon. Gentleman made the extraordinary statement that if we were to privatise the BGC it would, in some strange way, give the European Community control over the resources of the United Kingdom continental shelf. Does he not realise that the vast majority of those resources belong to the nation? They are national resources which the Government are committed to ensuring are shared more widely throughout the nation. Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that the exploration and production of those resources is already almost entirely in the hands of companies that are not in the public sector? If one removes one company—that is a small part—in the gas sector, or even if one removes a small proportion of reserves which are not at present being exploited, it will make absolutely no difference in terms of the European Community. The right hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman said that in some strange way by privatising BGC we would reduce the demand for British equipment. I would be the first to pay tribute, as one who has responsibilities for the policies of procurement, to the good record of British Gas in using British contractors and suppliers—the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) made that point—but so do other companies. All companies are treated equally, whether they are British, American, French or Italian. They are all treated the same. There is no difference regarding procurement. I have little doubt that the management of BGC will continue the same policies in compliance with the Government's requirements and buy British where it is the right and proper thing to do.

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I shall give way in a moment.

The way in which the right hon. Members for Salford, East and for Chesterfield say that the commercial policies followed by BGC will change as a result of privatisation shows an extraordinary lack of confidence in its present management. We are privatising British Gas with the same management in control, and I have little doubt that the same sensible policies will continue in support of British industry.

Mr. Benn: Could I advise the Minister to look at the records of his Department, because he will find two things? First, the Commissioner for competition made representations when the Labour party was in government that it was contrary to the Treaty of Rome to insist that the gas be landed in Britain. Secondly, when we continued a scheme introduced by the Conservative Government to encourage the purchase of British equipment by American companies, we were taken to the European Court, and the present Government abandoned the matter in the summer of 1979 because the court case was launched on polling day 1979. If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the records, he will find that he is wholly misleading the House by implying that there is no connection between this matter and Common Market controls.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am delighted that I gave way to the right hon. Gentleman, who demonstrates everything that I have said about his being completely out of touch. I ask him to look at the most recent publication of the Department, the Brown Book, which shows that more than 70 per cent. of the procurement regarding the United Kingdom continental shelf is from British companies. I also invite him to look at the 1985 Brown Book. He will undoubtedly not look forward to its publication. Although there are still two weeks before the end of this year, I happily predict that we shall see an even better record on British procurement. It will certainly be better than when the right hon. Gentleman was in charge.

The right hon. Gentleman's fantasies reached their peak when he asked for more accountability to Parliament, and spoke of the lack of control of Ministers under current legislation over nationalised industries. Is he not aware that under the nationalised industries legislation the Secretary of State in the responsible Department has the power to give directions to that industry?

Mr. Benn: They are general.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: They are not so general. I know that the right hon. Gentleman did not like it, when the Government gave directions to BGC, for example, regarding Wytch Farm. That could scarcely be more specific. Yet again, the right hon. Gentleman is simply talking through his hat. It is not a good account of his stewardship if it is only now, many years later, that he tries to regret not using powers which were available for him to use, if only he had chosen to do so.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: We were discussing procurement. Is the Minister aware that if the denationalised British Gas adopts the same attitude as British Telecom since its denationalisation, countless thousands of jobs of British workers will be put at risk?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No, their jobs will not be put at risk, because British Gas will be subject after privatisation, as it has been all along, to the same policies as is every oil and gas company. It must agree to the memorandum of understanding when applying for licences and to the full and fair opportunity concept.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that a privatised British Gas will be treated in exactly the same way by my offshore supplies office after privatisation as it is treated now. I have confidence in the management of British Gas and I have confidence — unlike Opposition Members; it is clear from the points that they have made that they do not have the same confidence—in the way British Gas will act, and I am sure that it will continue its record.

After the hon. Member for Gordon moved the alliance amendment, I was left, as were many hon. Members—that was clear from the comments that were made subsequently — confused about what he and his hon. friends wanted. He spoke in general terms about competition, said that the Government were being irresponsible and at one point urged the break-up of British Gas into separate parts, saying that he would separate the production from the other functions of the company.

What does the hon. Gentleman think all that would do for the morale and strength of British Gas as a British company, remembering that the corporation — throughout the period of nationalisation and not just since the development of our offshore gas resources—has had

a stake in the manufacture of the product which it supplies and sells? The hon. Gentleman seeks to turn back British Gas not just to pre-North sea oil days but to the time of pre-nationalisation.

The hon. Gentleman was most confused when he dealt with the kind of regulator he wanted. I am delighted that more hon. Members are now in their places because they will be interested to learn that the alliance parties recommend not one regulator but six or seven regulators.

At Question Time recently the hon. Member for Gordon chipped me by saying that all I wanted was extra bureaucracy. From his own mouth tonight he told us that he was seeking precisely that. It is clear that that is what the alliance wishes to achieve. As I say, one is left confused.

The hon. Gentleman was against privatisation as we are proposing it, and when answering an intervention from the right hon. Member for Salford, East, he said that he was against renationalisation. One was left wondering where he was. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) summed it up by saying that the hon. Member for Gordon was really saying, "I would if I could but I can't because I don't know what I want to do." On that basis, I ask the House to reject the alliance amendment, especially as, if by chance it were agreed to, we should have no idea of the direction in which we were going.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and several hon. Members mentioned the possibility of breaking up British Gas into regions. That would not make sense. Nor would it make sense for Scottish consumers. After all, consumers would still be facing a single monopoly supplier. We should simply be putting at risk the economies of scale from which Scottish consumers, like all consumers, will benefit as the result of having a highly integrated industry with an integrated transmission and distribution system and all the advantages that co-ordination allows countrywide.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East must remember that gas has been built up as an integrated industry, particularly since nationalisation in 1948. He may argue the case from the point of view of narrow nationalism, but I am interested in looking after the Scottish consumers to ensure that they get the best deal, pay the cheapest price for gas, and enjoy the benefits of efficiency. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if we followed his course and that of his party, the Scottish consumers would suffer. I certainly cannot recommend that.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the Minister, although not for that exposition, with which I totally disagree. If he wishes to help the consumer, he should perhaps leave the privatisation scheme alone in its entirety. He is arguing that on the benefits of scale it is far better to have one United Kingdom company rather than a company in Scotland. Would not Scotland's economic health be improved if we had as many autonomous companies as possible operating in our country, because every time power is taken away, Scotland loses out. Scottish Gas now intends to change its name to British Gas (Scotland), and that shows just how the Scottish element will diminish once we have a United Kingdom private company.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am not aware of any such intention. Secondly, on no occasion have I, on behalf of a constituent, had to go beyond the Scottish area manager of Scottish Gas in order to get matters resolved. The way in which Scottish Gas and British Gas have devolved their administration means that the Scottish consumer is getting the benefits of scale as well as a recognition of a well-devolved administration from British Gas. I hope that they will continue to enjoy those benefits.

My hon. Friends the Members for Erewash (Mr. Rost), for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Rochford spoke of competition and the powers of the regulator. I agree that there is a balance, and that where there is a risk of monopoly power we want the regulator to be strong. But equally, where there is scope for competition it would be foolish and wrong to extend the power of the regulator into those areas where adequate competition already exists. That certainly applies to the contract market.

As my right hon. Friend said earlier, gas has only a 35 per cent. share of that market and there is already considerable competition from other fields. That market is unregulated at present, and to regulate it now would turn the clock back instead of forward. That is something which a Conservative party and Government should not do.

The regulator has real powers under the Bill. A number of points were raised about the area within which the regulator would be working, and concern was expressed about discrimination between consumers—particularly the small industrial consumer—in the tariff market or discrimination between the industrial market, the contract market which is not regulated, and the domestic market.

Under clause 9, suppliers will continue to be obliged not to discriminate in supply to tariff customers, and tariffs must be framed to avoid such discrimination. That is enshrined in the legislation. Equally, under condition 2 of the licence, there must be separate accounting. That will make clear the profits in the gas supply and will prevent hidden subsidy of other activities such as the appliance retailing and exploration sectors.

We must remember that the regulator has considerable power. In the event of a supplier not complying with the conditions of the licence, he can make a direction to the supplier and, if the supplier does not comply with that, the Bill empowers him to obtain damages and the rest. If there is abuse in the industrial contract market, which is under the control of the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, there is always a possibility of the regulator's powers being extended if that is recommended to the Secretary of State.

The Bill helps to improve safety. I pay tribute to the role that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) has played in the gas industry. I understand that he was an apprentice in the Newcastle gas company some years ago. The Bill provides the independent oversight of the Health and Safety Commission. I agree that the industry handles substances that can be dangerous in certain circumstances, but it is in the industry's interests to ensure that safety is a top priority. It has done that for many years. Its record of safety is second to none in the world. It will remain in its interests, if it is to be commercially successful, to ensure that that safety record continues.

There is to be a reduction in the response time when an emergency arises and an extension of emergency provision to the consumer side of the gas meter. That is another advantage for the consumer. We also have new arrangements which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment is working out with the Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers to

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

promote better self-regulation and safety. A new code of practice is being drawn up and I believe that standards will rise.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East mentioned the safety of appliances. Those standards are the responsibility of the British Standards Institution, but most important is the supervision of the Department of Trade and Industry, which is considering a Bill to cover the safety of goods — especially imported goods — about which I get the most complaints. There will be better safety as a result of the Bill and it is scaremongering to suggest that privatisation will lower safety standards. Safety is the prime responsibility of the nationalised industry and it will remain the prime responsibility of the new private industry. In several respects, safety matters are being tightened up.

Concern has properly been expressed in relation to the Gas Users Council. The right hon. Member for Salford, East and other Opposition Members assume that its power will extend only to the regulated area—that is, the tariff market area — but clause 32(2) gives much broader powers, allowing it to cover any area covered by the Office of Fair Trading, including industrial contracts as well as appliances. At present, the National Gas Consumers Council can take up consumer problems with suppliers such as Comet. The Gas Users Council will have the same ability.

I am anxious that there should be no doubt about the powers and I shall be happy to return to the subject in Committee if the Opposition wish. The Government intend the Gas Users Council to operate widely in the best interests of all consumers. Here again, however, the powers will be greater. At present, the National Gas Consumers Council can make reports. The Gas Users Council will be able to do the same. The Gas Users Council will be able to go to the new privatised company just as the National Gas Consumers Council can now go to the corporation, but the Bill gives extra power especially in the area of the tariff market, allowing the Gas Users Council to go directly to the regulator — the director general of Ofgas — and ask for action to be taken. The powers will thus be greater and more specific than at present.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash was not trying to mislead the House—I may have got it wrong—when he expressed concern about the structure of consumer councils. It is perfectly possible for the new Gas Users Council to set up a regional structure to deal with consumer questions in all parts of the country. It will be able to set up whatever structure is appropriate in the regions and in Scotland. It will also be able to set up an advice structure in any area in relation to the various industrial and consumer interests or to ensure that widely scattered consumers are properly represented.

We have had a good and useful debate, but I have been surprised at the lack of enthusiasm from the Opposition. When the measure was announced in May they said that they would fight it the whole way. Yet when the right hon. Member for Salford, East was speaking, I counted only 15 Members on the Labour Back Benches. If that is the strength of their defence against privatisation, any other nationalised industry had better look to the Conservative party for support in ensuring an exciting commercial future.

The Bill gives a privatised British gas industry the opportunity to be more efficient and to act commercially. That opportunity will benefit consumers, as they will realise, through better service, better prices and better safety. There is also the important opportunity — at which the real opposition from the Labour party is directed — for wider share ownership and a greater opportunity for the people of Britain to own a stake in one of our greatest industries. The Government are prepared to give the people of Britain that stake. The Labour party wishes to deny it to them.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 23, Noes 302.

Division No. 20] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Meadowcroft, Michael
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wilson, Gordon
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. James Wallace.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil

Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 213.

Divison No. 21] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman

Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Francis Maude

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John

Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day' sitting, the Ways and Means Motion and the European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Boscawen.]*

GAS BILL [MONEY]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Gas Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) the remuneration of, and any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to, the Director General of Gas Supply and any staff of the Director, any sums payable under the Act to or in respect of the Director and any expenses duly incurred by the Director or by any of his staff in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) any sums required by the Secretary of State for defraying or contributing towards the expenses of the Gas Users' Council established under the Act;

(c) the remuneration of, and any allowances or pensions payable under the Act to or in respect of, persons appointed—

(i) to carry out tests of apparatus and equipment provided and maintained by persons supplying gas through pipes;

(ii) to carry out tests of gas supplied through pipes; or

(iii) to examine and stamp, or authorise the stamping of, meters used for ascertaining the quantity of gas so supplied;

(d) any sums payable by the Secretary of State to the chairman and officers of the National Gas Consumers' Council and the chairmen and officers of the Regional Gas Consumers' Councils by way of compensation for loss of office or employment or loss or diminution of remuneration or pension rights;

(e) any expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of the successor company (within the meaning of the Act) or rights to subscribe for any such securities;

(f) any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(g) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the charging on and payment out of the National Loans fund of any sums which, by virtue of the Act—

(a) are payable under section 12 of the National Loans Act 1968 in respect of interest or redemption money on British Gas Stock; or

(b) are payable under section 5 of the Miscellaneous Financial Provisions Act 1955 in respect of unclaimed interest or redemption money on such Stock;

(3) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of that Fund under any other Act.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 202.

Division No. 22] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter

Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'ah)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan

Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS

GAS BILL

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Gas bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the inclusion in authorisation granted under that Act of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Secretary of State or the Director General of Gas Supply;

(2) the making of new provision with respect to the incidence of gas levey;

(3) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Moore.]*

European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill [Lords]

Considered in Committee.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

EXTENDED MEANING OF THE TREATIES" AND THE COMMUNITY TREATIES"

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

10.40 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): We took the opportunity on Second Reading of this important measure to examine properly, as we should, the principles of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community. I believe that this is now our opportunity to examine with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State the detailed implications of Spain and Portugal joining the Community, if we approve the Bill in all its stages.

I should like to draw an analogy, in the most European of senses, with something called the environmental impact assessment, with which I am sure Members on both sides of the House who take an interest in European affairs will be familiar. I should like to ask for an EIA of a different kind—an enlargement impact assessment.

On Second Reading, we were concerned with principles and not details. I hope that tonight we shall receive from the Government and my hon. and learned Friend a detailed examination of the impact on the United Kingdom and the Community and some facts and figures about what is proposed by the Government.

To help the Committee, I should like to suggest to my hon. and learned Friend some headings under which he might give us details. I can see that he is already warming to this theme in anticipation of giving the Committee the details so that we can mull them over before deciding whether to approve clause 1.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Would it not have been fairer to ask the Community to make some environmental impact assessment of our entry and that of the Irish and the Danes? Will my hon. Friend speculate as to the assessment that the Community made in 1973 of the impact of our arrival, and whether it was right?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an interesting and valid point. During my modest contribution on Second Reading, I tried to point that out in the context of Greek entry into the Community, which I think is a more recent and, in a sense, a more valid example. During the arguments about Greek entry into the Community we were told many matters of principle, but we were short on detail. In the four years since Greek entry, it has emerged that that has been an unmitigated disaster not just for the Greeks but for the EEC.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Certainly not for the Greeks.

Mr. Forth: It has been for the Greeks. If my hon. Friend wishes to argue that point I shall be delighted to go into detail on it.

Let us not be diverted from our main purpose, which is to consider in detail the impact of the proposed entry to the Community of Spain and Portugal under a number of important heads. The first must be agriculture. We must be told what is Her Majesty's Government's estimate of the effect Spanish and Portuguese entry into the Community will have on the common agricultural policy. That can be considered under a number of different heads. There are the estimated costs in terms of wine, olive oil and tomato production. They should be fairly predictable and I hope that we shall have some figures from my hon. and learned Friend.

It is more difficult to estimate — I hope that the Government will make an attempt — the draining away of resources from the traditional northern type of products —dairy produce, cereals, beef and lamb — which must inevitably take place when the voting power of the new southern states gets itself together and starts to deny resources to the farmers of the northern states.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): With respect, I think that the hon. Gentleman's argument is a little misleading. It is not a case of draining resources away from temperate zone products to Mediterranean products but rather of continuing with the present vast level of resources devoted to temperate zone products and increasing the amount going to Mediterranean products. There will be an increase in the total size of the CAP not just a change in the distribution of resources within it.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because I am sure that that is as likely a possibility within the context of the CAP. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend will want to help the Committee and will give us his view of which of those alternatives he thinks will be the more likely. Either way, we must be allowed to make the assessment. It is vital to us as a country with consumers and agricultural producers to know which way matters will go.

Mr. Fallon: Is it my hon. Friend's view that those resources should remain to be squandered on over-production of the various temperate products that he mentioned without being reformed, or should they be diversified in equal misallocation among the new applicant states?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is tempting me greatly, but I shall resist the temptation. In agreeing with him, I must say that we must be told whether the Government believe that the accession of two new members to the Community is likely to cause a realistic reform of the CAP or whether it will simply make the CAP problems worse? I have long been in favour of radical reform of the CAP, and reform must be on the basis of an assessment of the needs of the people of the Community year by year, and a preparedness to fund production to that level, but not beyond. That is a relatively simple and effective way of beginning to control agricultural expenditure. I expect that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will tell us how far he believes that that will take place in the context of the enlargement of the Community.

10.45 pm

My second question concerns our horticultural sector. We shall be told that there is a built-in protection for

horticulturists for a period of years. I am much more interested in hearing the Government's view on what will happen to our horticulturists after the transition period has ended. One thing is sure—we cannot wish away the inherent climatic advantage of Spain and Portugal over our horticulturists. It is less than honest——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): What about a common sunshine policy?

Mr. Forth: Indeed. It is less than honest for anyone to pretend that the effects on horticulture in the long-term can be less than disastrous. I hope that we shall hear the Government's view of what will happen after the transition period.

The third heading that I would suggest for the detail is the impact on our claims on the regional and social funds when two less well-off countries become claimants on them, if they may join the Community after 1 January 1986. Again, either the funds will be enlarged so that we may retain the same absolute claim on them or, if they remain at roughly the same level, our claim on them must be less. Logic and, indeed, political fairness would say that. We have yet to hear from my hon. and learned Friend what the impact on the United Kingdom would be of a lessening of our claims on the social and regional funds. Many Opposition Members will be interested in that as they come from areas which for a long time have benefited from both funds.

Fourthly, at present Spanish industry achieves productivity of about 60 per cent. of that of the Community as a whole. Presumably, it is hoped that both Spanish agriculture and industry will be enormously improved in their effectiveness and productivity. Can we have some estimate of the impact of Spanish industry, improved perhaps with technology from the existing member states, financial aid and in many other ways, on our industrial sector? Those of us who represent west midlands' constituencies are extremely interested in the effect on the automobile sector, drop forgings and many other areas in which the Spaniards have shown great potential. Why should we assume that we shall benefit from an ability to export to Spain in competition with other member states, but somehow be immune to the increasing productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of Spanish industry with its advantages of lower unit costs and so on?

Mr. Fallon: I am listening with great interest to my hon. Friend's argument. Why should we be immune?

Mr. Forth: I am not suggesting that we should be immune. I am asking the Government to give some assessment of the impact of the entry of Spain and Portugal to the Community on our country, industry and consumers. If we are to make a balanced judgment of the claimed benefits of the entry of Spain and Portugal to the Community—benefits which I would dispute—we must be given much more detail of the likely cost to us in terms of the budget, agriculture and so on.

What assessment has been made of the cost of the measure in terms of the bureaucratic elements of the Community? Two more languages will be added, and we know the enormous costs of language interpretation and translation within the Community's institutions. The European Parliament's membership will be increased and much extra travel will be involved by members of the Commission, Council and Parliament to Madrid and Lisbon. In many respects I envy those who will be involved in that, but I hope that we shall be told the likely cost in institutional terms and the burden on the Community.

I hope that the Committee will be given all the details necessary to enable hon. Members to make a balanced judgment of the costs and benefits of clause 1 to the people of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I shall bring to the attention of the Committee some aspects of the Bill that were not adequately dealt with on Second Reading; the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to some of them. I shall refer to three areas—the nature of the clause, the terms of accession and the implications for the democracies of Portugal and Spain of becoming members of the Community.

First, the nature of the clause. Clause 1 is the effective provision of the measure because, by two paragraphs, it adds two treaties to the European Communities Act 1972. They attach the whole of the accession treaty in each case to the terms of that basic Act.

This mechanism means, in effect, that we are attaching a train to the engine of the 1972 Act. In other words, this measure couples the whole train to that locomotive. But it is outwith the choice of the House that we add the whole train. Everything in the accession treaties is added to the legislation by virtue of the Bill.

That might not be of note but for the fact that the House has not had much, if any, participation in the terms of those accession treaties. We are being asked to endorse all or nothing; there has been no deliberation by the House, other than by way of written questions and answers—I am not sure that there have been any of those—about the nature of the treaties.

I recall an incident, Mr. Armstrong, when one of your predecessors in the Chair, Mr. Grant-Ferris, heard points of order from 4 o'clock one afternoon to 7 o'clock the following morning, when we were in Committee on what was then the European Communities Bill. The points of order that were then raised arose because the Chair ruled out all amendments to the treaty on the grounds that they were contrary to the treaty of accession to which that measure gave effect.

The similar situation that arises tonight with this Bill may not be of great consequence, although, as the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire reminded the Committee, it remains to be seen what the consequences are.

Mr. Deakins: Will my hon. Friend agree that by clause 1 we are not being asked to approve the treaty of accession either with Portugal or Spain? If we were, they would be listed separately, and the Chair has ruled out any amendments that would separate the two. We are not being asked to approve either treaty or both treaties. We are merely being asked to agree to those two treaties being added to the list of treaties in the European Communities Act 1972. We are not even being given an opportunity to discuss the content of those treaties. On Second Reading and Third Reading we can vote only on the general principle of the admission of Spain and Portugal. We cannot vote on the details of the arrangements by which they are admitted to membership of the EEC.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting into better words what I was trying to explain. He was referring to

"the treaty relating to the accession of the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic",

yet there is no reference at all to the name of the treaty which does not even have a capital letter. My hon. Friend is quite right, and is adding to the point that I have already made. Time will tell whether or not it would have been advisable for the House to be more aware of the negotiations that led to the creation of this treaty.

It is possible that future treaties will come before us in the same way, with wagons and carriages whose contents we do not know. They may not be concerned with any future accession, but no doubt any future treaty could well relate to the internal constitutional nature of the Community itself.

When those treaties arrive—there is talk about them—we will probably be confronted with a similar one-clause Bill containing additional subsections and a description of the treaty. A Bill in that form is now almost inevitable because it flows from the nature of the European Communities Act. On this occasion I shall not venture into the advantages and disadvantages of this procedure, because I would be ruled out of order, but I am drawing attention to the nature of the coupling, to the fact that it is all or nothing, and to the fact that up to now the House has been unable to enter into negotiations on the nature of the carriages or wagons, still less what they carry as cargo. We would therefore be wise to keep an eye on those who will be deciding those matters.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): It seems that the hon. Gentleman is making some points of principle. If so, will he explain why he and others did not seek to divide the House on Second Reading? From now on, will it always be the Conservative side of the House that will have to carry the internationalist banner into Europe and beyond?

Mr. Spearing: The reasons why there was no Division were made very clear by those who spoke on Second Reading, and it is all in *Hansard*. As to the banner of international feeling, I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is a full student of international constitutions, but if he looks at the European Communities Act 1972, he might come to a different conclusion, if only because the word "federalism"—which is often used inaccurately—is better termed "unitarism". If he looks at the 1972 Act, on which this Bill is based, I think that he will come to the same conclusion.

The terms of accession have been highlighted by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire. Industrial tariffs will be dismantled at a substantial speed—certainly at a much greater rate than the agricultural changes that will come.

The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that there is a great concentration of Spanish industry, particularly around the Barcelona area, and we do not know whether there will be investment from various parts of the Community into that area or whether the reverse will happen and the rapid reduction in tariff barriers will mean that that area becomes less active industrially. I do not know whether it is possible to predict which way it will go or whether there will be a mixture of trades and skills, but any such change will have an impact in Spain and some areas outside it.

11 pm

I, and I believe other hon. Members, have learnt that the Spaniards are expecting to be net recipients as a result of joining the EEC. That was part of the bargain from their point of view. They may not expect to be net recipients to a great extent in the first year because of the period over which accession takes place, but they will expect to receive more and more. If that does not happen, or if resources are not available or if their calculations of net receipts are disappointed, I suspect that our colleagues—I want to be very international in this respect—in Spain might not think so much of the EEC as they do at present. I understand that there were no abstentions in the Cortes and that every member voted in favour of accession. Perhaps they will not take that view if Spain is not a net recipient as is expected.

Mention has been made of Mediterranean products and the fact that there will now be a much greater emphasis on the Mediterranean. I believe that not all the Mediterranean countries need to vote to produce a blocking minority when the qualified majority rule applies.

I should like to concentrate on the impact of accession on Spain and Portugal's newly fledged and welcome democratic procedures. The matter has been mentioned often and it has been assumed, certainly in Spain, that joining the EEC will assist those welcome institutions. We must be careful about that. There is a difference of opinion in this House about the impact on our democratic institutions of accession to the treaty. Some hon. Members feel strongly that there has been an impact. If there has been an impact in the United Kingdom, can there not also be an impact on Spain and Portugal? The answer must be yes. The impact could be strengthening, but it could be weakening. We all know that Spain's stability depends on a delicate balance of central and peripheral forces in the nation and in each political grouping.

I must be careful, but I have been told on good authority that local taxes, which are a great feature of Spanish local democracy, will be changed by accession to the EEC because VAT will mean that Madrid, by virtue of being the central recipient of the tax to hand over the 10 or 11 per cent. to the EEC, will have a much stronger financial position. That might be confirmed or denied, but if it is true I do not need to emphasise how much a change in the powers of collecting money from the highly patriotic regions to the centre might have on internal Spanish politics. That is not necessarily to the benefit of the growth and strengthening of Spanish democracy.

Portugal, unlike Spain, entered the Community without unanimity. There was already internal dissent, as there was here when this country joined. Portugal is a much poorer country. It will be the least prosperous member in terms of GNP per head—about 25 per cent. of the average in the Community of 12, the figure being about 100 per cent. for the United Kingdom and 130 per cent. for some of the smaller countries. If that is so, there will be enormous implications not just for the EEC but for Portugal.

A very high proportion of the Portuguese population is engaged in agriculture and a significant proportion in semi-subsistence agriculture. For many years the Portuguese Government have seen to it that they look after the interests of people on the land, especially in the northern part of the country.

Mr. Baldry: Surely the purpose of the European Community is, among other things, for the British Labour party and the Portuguese Socialist party to join together to raise that country's GNP and to ensure a better standard of living for everyone in Portugal as much as for everyone in this country.

Mr. Spearing: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman fully understands these matters. As we are in Committee, I will explain the fallacy in his assumption. Socialists in this House are very international. One cannot be a Socialist for one's own country alone. One must have a world view.

Mr. Fallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spearing: No, I am replying to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) is quite right. I wish to see a strong Socialist party and a strong Socialist Government in Madrid and in Lisbon doing for their populations the things that the Government of the United Kingdom ought to be but are not doing. I am not convinced, however, that accession to the EEC will assist or enable a Socialist Government in either of those countries to achieve that aim. I shall not go into the matter any further, as it would not be appropriate in this debate to go into why we and some Conservative Members take that view.

Portuguese agriculture is in almost every respect dissimilar to the type of agriculture practised and encouraged by the common agricultural policy around the coast of northern France and the wide open fields of East Anglia and I do not believe that the CAP will necessarily be suitable to keep people of Portugal on the land. I understand that one of the policies of my Socialist colleagues in Portugal is to ensure that unemployment is limited, that people are secure in their holdings, that they have reasonable markets for their products and that they can live a reasonably balanced life in reasonably balanced communities. I believe that those are the aspirations of Portugal, but I am not convinced that it will be possible to do all those things under the Procrustean imposition of a common agricultural policy decided in Brussels and not in Lisbon.

Mr. Fallon: I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument, but I am still very puzzled why he thinks from Newham that Socialists in Spain will be disadvantaged by entry to the Community when every Socialist in the Spanish Parliament believes otherwise.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman cannot have listened very carefully, or perhaps I did not speak at sufficient length. When I gave the central taxation example and referred to the ability of any Government in Madrid to determine their own policy, I said that it was subject to confirmation. I received that information on good authority. That is the answer to the question of the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon).

If the extent to which a regional Government can raise their own revenues and determine their own priorities is weakened it will reduce in strength the kind of democracy that we hope will develop in Spain. If the hon. Member for Darlington does not understand this, he should have a word with his hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who I am quite sure will tell him what it is all about.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): One of the interesting features of the speeches of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is that he always adopts the most gloomy line on the relationship between this country and the existing members or new members of the European Community. Conservative Members extend a very warm welcome to Spain and Portugal. I wish to make just a few remarks about Spain, partly because the Select Committee, of which the hon. Member for Newham, South is its distinguished Chairman, recently visited that country.

Why do Opposition Members not express their misgivings honestly and straightforwardly? We know that Members of the Labour party believe that foreigners cannot work these things out in the way that the British can: that they do not have the rounded constitutional experience and the centuries of distinguished history that enable this country to reach wise and statesmanlike judgments. They are foreigners. If the people in Transport House know this, why does the hon. Member for Newham, South not say so, rather than wrapping it all up in Spanish anxieties about the effect of membership on its agriculture and industry?

One of my colleagues—I shall not say who it was because it would be embarrassing if I mentioned his name—was guilty of the same mistake. That is partly the cause of the relative decline of Britain, and that is why I want this country to be an enthusiastic and fullhearted member of the European Community.

A few months ago at a private meeting—I shall deliberately not reveal the name—one of my colleagues said something similar: that we in the United Kingdom are very practical, rational and sensible, whereas all the member states of the European Community indulge in theories, political and philosophical fantasies and ideological nostrums. I intervened and said, "Do you mean like the Germans, who, philosophically and impractically, are producing 3·8 million motor cars a year, albeit during a recession, while the British, practically and rationally, are producing 1 million motor cars a year?" He said, "That has nothing to do with it. We won the war."

I hope that those who are particularly interested in Portugal will forgive me if I do not say anything about that country, partly for reasons of time. It will be an economic challenge to this fascinating and interesting new member of the European Community, Spain, to see what happens. Nobody can quantify that and provide a sensible assessment. By definition the future cannot be ascertained. —*[Interruption.]* That is bound to be so. Before entry, Britain had only a rough idea that it would make a significant net contribution. The original estimates were not exceeded. Far from it. The outturn understated by a very significant margin the figures in the original pre-entry White Paper on the cost of British entry.

We can never be sure about these aspects. It is atmosphere, philosophy and attitude that are important in developing the Community. Our first modest step was taken in the Luxembourg agreement and at the intergovernmental conference. At long last, there is a tiny role at the margin for the European Parliament. How daring. How rash and reckless. But at least it is a first small step in the right direction.

Along comes an interesting new member, Spain. That country produces 1.4 million cars. The Spanish "Carmada" is about to begin. Spanish cars are starting to arrive in Britain. Admittedly Spain has a protected market,

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

but we shall soon see the effects as that protection is removed. What will be the opportunities and advantages for us?

11.15 pm

Why can we not approach this matter enthusiastically, and not just see it as a challenge? It is a chance to develop the Community for the good of this country. I want that above all else. Our exports to the Community have increased from 45 per cent. to 60 per cent. Opportunities have already been created, but our economy is still too weak in many significant manufacturing sectors, partly because of the recession and monetarist policy. I am not an enthusiastic exponent of aspects of the monetarist policy.

The enlargement of the Community is a opportunity for us as well as a danger for the new member states. They are behind in some economic terms, and they know it. However, they do not show the pessimism and dread that characterise the British Labour party in our relationship with the EEC.

The Chairman of the European Legislation Committee the hon. Member for Newham, South, will know about our discussions with our Spanish counterparts in the Cortes Generales. Of course that is not a real Parliament like the House of Commons. It is just a pretend Parliament. It does not have that democratic feel that we have. We should pay tribute to the remarkable achievement in Spain in recent years. We should remember the difficulties caused for democracy in the days of the Franco regime and the chaos that was predicted in British and other newspapers after Franco went. Of course, that did not take place, and the Spanish have impressed everyone by the way in which they have handled matters through their constitutional mechanisms and the Cortes Generales.

Mr. Forth: With high unemployment.

Mr. Dykes: They have contended impressively with those problems. Spain is welcome in the Community for that reason as well.

During the discussions in the Spanish Parliament, one of my colleagues — again I shall not name the hon. Member, but it is a different one this time — said that the mechanism for scrutiny had been established in Britain to keep the Community at bay and to ensure that it did not have too great an effect on the British body politic. He said that because the Labour party had had an especially hostile attitude, we had had to establish that machinery in the House of Commons. It was a political device as well as a controlling mechanism.

The Spaniards seemed rather bemused by my colleague's comments. They said, "That is interesting. We shall not comment on that, because it is a matter for you. We are still considering whether to have an elaborate scrutiny system. It may not be necessary. We are happy to have the creation of this additional political layer — the Community layer — of endeavour and decision making over and above the national layer." The Minister of State for EEC Affairs said, "The scrutiny system will be designed to ensure that Spanish laws, rules and regulations will be harmonised as quickly as possible in line with Community laws, rules and regulations."

Mr. Forth *rose——*

Mr. Dykes: I shall resist the strong temptation to give way. My hon. Friend made an interesting speech in introducing his non-amendment. If he will forgive me I shall not give way, because I wish to conclude soon.

Spain is not yet in the Community. There is a danger that the Spanish will be disillusioned later after their experiences on the economic rather than the political front. However, I doubt that they will be, because I think that their attitude will be similar to that of the Italians. Incidentally, according to the latest statistics, Italy's GDP has overtaken that of the United Kingdom. The Opposition will say, "We cannot believe these statistics. They must be made up, or they must be inflated." These warning signs for the United Kingdom cannot be ignored by those of us who wish to engineer — in the legitimate sense of that verb — the recrudescence of the original enthusiasm for our membership of the community.

The Italian attitudes to the EEC are so different from that. I know that hon. Members will say that they get away with certain things, but we also get away with certain things. The budget rebate system is a spectacular sign of how the British succeed in getting away with something, and we should express gratitude to our Community colleagues for that system, which is almost unique, and in its size has a unique effect.

I think that the Spanish attitude will be similar to that of Italy. France is a halfway house, and Germany is a traditional enthusiast for the Community, partly because of its esoteric and bitter historical experiences. We need such enthusiasm, because all the time we are losing. Inevitably, I have made a speech rather like a Second Reading speech, and I hope, Mr. Armstrong, that you will forgive me for saying that. This is an opportunity once again to welcome Spain to the Community, as I think most hon. Members do, even Labour Members, who did not divide against the Bill on Second Reading. This enlargement will increase majority voting, which is the only way to keep the Community going forward. Britain will benefit far more from the incidence and usage of majority voting than from the exercise of the unanimous voting system or, in the reverse arrangement, the Luxembourg arrangement on national vetoes.

These factors should be seen in perspective. If we ever succeed in making the Labour party truly internationalist again, the Conservative party will be content.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I simply want to ask about tomatoes. The Minister knows well, as he represents parts of the lowland, that there is the problem of the glasshouse owners. I have rather more owners in my constituency than he does, and my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale and Milngavie (Mr. McCartney) has even more. The Minister will be familiar with the problem of the Dutch tomatoes. Given the entry of Portugal, what advice would he give to those of our constituents who want to continue investments in glasshouses, given the costs of electricity and oil, and the likelihood of the influx of even cheaper Portugese tomatoes? This is a Committee point, but it matters to quite a number of the people whom the Minister and I represent.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I had said earlier, Mr. Armstrong, that I would like to catch your eye on Third Reading, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for

Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has already posed some questions to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, it might be useful if I put my points to him now.

I do not apologise for detaining the Committee at this late hour. This is important business, and it is not my decision that it is being held now; but that of the Whips. Any hon. Members who do not wish to be detained by me should be aware that there is very little doubt that the Government will get their business through.

Debates such as these sort out the men from the boys —the statesmen, like my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), and I suspect my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who have advanced knowledge of where the currents of world history are about to flow, and those such as myself, the non-statesmen whose knowledge of history lies only in the past. I am afraid that my views are those of a humble Back Bencher, concerned not with the momentous inevitability of future European history but merely, and I suppose that the statesmen around would say pettily, with the interests of my country and the concern for the well-being of my constituents. An example of the narrowness of my vision is that I am not really concerned as to what entry into the European Community will do to the durability of the democracy in Spain and Portugal. I do not know what will happen, but I do know that the entry of Greece has not made its democracy any more advanced than it was before.

Perhaps we should ask why Spain and Portugal are seeking to join the community. As the saying goes, one wonders. Surely they must have heard of the madness of the common agricultural policy, of which the central flaw is that he who spends is not he who pays, a policy of profligacy rewarded. We have been told that this problem has been gripped, but I dare say that the Spanish and the Portuguese can see through the issue as well as we can, and know that the financial mechanism about which we have heard so much will not effectively apply and will dissolve in a shower of rain.

Could it be that those countries are, instead, seeking to join the EEC because they see a massive opportunity for their irrigated and sunblessed acres to be urged into unrestricted expansion, financed by unstaunchable largesse from the remainder of the Community? One wonders why they seek membership and why they wish to subject their industries to the rigours of European competition. Do they not believe what we have said in this House a thousand times? Are they not terrified at the prospect of their home markets being laid bare by the thrusting, rampant reborn British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Fallon: No.

Mr. Marlow: Quite. Could it just be that those countries believe that their supply of cheap, skilled labour will be a magnet for capital from inside Spain, inside the Community and outside the Community, and that that investment, together with their existing favourable tariff barriers and the artful exploitation of non-tariff barriers —which is always allowed within the Community to those who are perceived to be the underdogs — will enable their industries to wipe the floor with our industries?

Like other hon. Members, I have been asked questions about the entry of Spain and Portugal to the Community —questions that should be answered. If that entry takes place, how will it affect the United Kingdom, both bilaterally and through the EEC itself? How will it affect the CAP — that bloated, financially incontinent, substantially unreformed CAP? Spain, alone, will add 30 per cent. to the acreage of the Community, and all those acres will have a massive potential for irrigation and improvement and hence a massive potential for increased production.

How will the CAP be affected by the fact that Spain alone will add 25 per cent. to the agricultural work force, balanced by a mere 14 per cent. increase in the consumers of the Community? The surpluses will not simply increase, they will accelerate. There will be a vociferous, dubloon-demanding lobby, a massive reinforcement for the most powerful vested interest in western Europe, to plunder the European coffers. As European budget succeeds European budget, the cost of agricultural support will explode. Financial mechanism or no financial mechanism, it will be impossible to resist. Some people do not seem to worry about that—it will not be for the temperate products; it will not be for the north European products; it will be for the Mediterranean products, as Spain, Italy, Portugal, France and Greece gain the balance of power in the European Councils.

I am glad that I have no farmers in my constituency. I feel sorry for my colleagues who, if this measure is passed, will soon feel the cold chill of their farmers' wrath breathing down their necks — *[Interruption.]* What is wrong—it is quite poetic.

What will be the effect on our industries? When we joined the EEC, we were told that the mass markets of Continental Europe would be lying there, waiting to be taken by the virile and dominant British manufacturing industry. The reality is that from a position of balance we now have a massive deficit in manufacture with the European Community—£7 billion, £8 billion, £9 billion, it has all gone wrong.

Why should this new accession be any different? Many colleagues feel that it will increase jobs, but how can we be confident that, this time, our jobs will increase? How can we be confident that, this time, we are not kidding our constituents and ourselves as we did 15 years ago? Northampton is renowned for the footwear that it manufactures. Probably many hon. Members wear footwear that was made in Northampton. We import from Italy twice as much footwear as we export to the entire world. In part, that is because of the quality of Italian footwear, but in part it is because of the structure of business. Some Italian businesses pay no taxes and are not subject to the overheads that are borne by British firms. We import a quarter of the amount of footwear from Spain than we import from Italy, and that importation has doubled between 1982 and 1984. What impact will Spanish footwear have on the footwear industry in the United Kingdom?

11.30 pm

Britain is the major recipient of regional fund moneys. Will the regional fund increase? Will our share of its moneys increase, or will the sustained and uncontrollable pressure of agriculture support reduce it? Will the pleas of poverty from Iberia reduce our share of the fund's moneys?

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I hope that I intervene in a natural break in the hon. Gentleman's script. I ask him to take on board the fact that one of the reasons why Britain will lose out on moneys from the regional

[Mr. George Robertson]

development fund is the redrawn regional boundaries, which stemmed from a decision of the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supports. Did he vote against the proposals to redraw the boundaries, which in one stroke reduced the amount of aid from the regional development fund that Britain received?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is making a point which is contentious, which is not agreed and which is wrong. What will the cost of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the United Kingdom? There are many who think that it is undignified to talk about money in these circumstances when we are discussing such a great statesmanlike issue. There is the view that we should not concern ourselves with the cost. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office has said on previous occasions, when Spain finally comes into the Community it is estimated that there will be a 0·1 per cent. in the VAT take, which will cost the United Kingdom about £75 million a year. I doubt whether that is an overestimate. We shall lose money that is paid out from the regional fund. There will be additional complexities with the CAP that will cost us money. There will be additional policies.

We have been told on many occasions that, whatever happens in Europe, the cost to Britain will not be more than 7 per cent. That means that if there are new policies, additional policies or additional expenditure in Europe, which take effect in countries entirely outside the United Kingdom, we shall have to pay only 7 per cent. of the bill. If the cost of the existing policies are spread equally throughout the Community, we shall be liable to pay our full share, which is 21 per cent.

If we pass the Bill, we shall trigger the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling. That will be a signal of our preparedness to meet other cost increases later. There will be an increase in the cost of funding Europe of 25 per cent. for no additional European policies and no additional European responsibilities. There will be nothing extra. At a stroke, there will be inflation of one quarter for the same product, and an opportunity for radical reform will be discarded.

I have a vision of Europe and the European Community which, I dare say, is shared by a number of my hon. Friends. I have a vision of a Europe that is united and free, a Europe with different cultures and different traditions combining increasingly on defence and foreign policy where we have common interests. I see an area of free trade without frontiers and an area which has a common agricultural policy where the interests of consumers are more highly thought of than at present. I do not believe in a unified Europe that is bullied into petty harmonisation by the centralising bureaucrats of Brussels with their powers of policy initiation. We can and should expand Europe at some time, but how can we expand it before we have reformed it? If hon. Members want to destroy the Community, they should vote for the Bill. The costs, the complexities of agricultural policy, and the predominance of Socialist centralising bureaucratic policies will increase if Socialist Spain and Portugal, with their previous history of centralised Government, join the Community. The sensible management of European policies and the method of decision making will deteriorate as responsibilities are illogically redivided to satisfy the needs of an expanded Community. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire says, two more languages will be added to the cacophonous babble that already exists.

If the Bill succeeds, Europe will drown in a rising tide of its own problems. Perhaps the cynics are right when they say that the difference between a statesman and a politician is that statesmen make big mistakes. If as a politician, I make a small one as I vote against the Bill, it is nothing compared with the potentially monumental error that the statesman will make if he supports it.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has missed his calling. He should write a melodrama that could perhaps be put on widely around the Community. Indeed, he delivered a wonderful melodrama of a Community run by foreigners, even more foreign than the French, German and Italians who he thinks are running it now, from countries that are even more alien. If the foreigners get control, they will pursue their own interests. That is something that the British people would never contemplate within the Community. If that happened the Community would be brought into total chaos, so I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is not supporting the proposal with enthusiasm. If his amazing picture were to be realised, such disaster would overtake the Community that the very thing that he wishes—that the Community would fall apart and Britain would no longer be a member of it—would come about more quickly.

As the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said, all those foreigners insist on speaking their own languages instead of English. Of course, if we spoke to them loudly enough they would be able to understand.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Beith: Please allow me to develop my argument a little further.

The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire assumes that, because people choose to speak their own languages, that is a further reason why we should not associate with them or make any provision to translate the various languages of the Community. That displays an extraordinary flight from the internationalism in various parts of the House.

Mr. Forth: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking deliberately to mislead the Committee. Perhaps he can help me if my hon. and learned Friend the Minister cannot. Has the Liberal party made an estimate of the cost of the necessary translation and interpretation that will be caused by the two additional languages? I did not say at any stage that it was undesirable for two new countries to join. I did say that I should like to hear an estimate of the cost so that we can make an assessment of it.

Mr. Beith: I am happy to let the Minister give an estimate of the cost. If every one of the questions asked by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire was answered to his satisfaction, he would still not be in favour of the entry of Spain and Portugal to the Community. If every question was answered to his dissatisfaction he would also oppose their entry. His view would not be changed one iota by the answer to the questions. I do not challenge his right to raise them. It is perfectly reasonable.

That applies with even greater force to the hon. Member for Northampton, North, whose views will not be changed by anything that the Minister will say tonight

because, for some reason, which seems to be slightly illogical in view of the picture that he paints of the consequences of Spain and Portugal's entry, he does not want the extension of the Community. That places him, as so often before, in the company of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and other hon. Members on the Labour Benches who lecture the Socialists of Europe on how damaging it will be to their countries and their principles if they allow themselves to be drawn into the Community.

Mr. Marlow: Of course, it is unreasonable and unfair to expect the hon, Gentleman to listen to me or any other hon. Member. However, as he is listening to me now, I shall make my point again. I am against the Bill because I believe that it will be damaging to the Community.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman must pull the other one. I listened with much enjoyment to his remarks. Nothing in them at any stage convinced me for a moment that he wanted to further the interests of the European Community. He has distinguished himself by his opposition to the European Community—its existence, its activities and everything about it. He must not pretend otherwise. He would do a disservice to his reputation for pugnacious awkwardness if he did so.

The hon. Member for Newham, South lectures the Socialists of Europe on the great damage that they are doing to their principles and countries. The trouble is that he is getting more and more lonely. He is feeling increasingly that there is nobody left in Europe to oppose the existence or extension of the European Community. If all the Socialists in other countries are misled into supporting it, he will find himself absolutely on his own. It is even becoming a lonely cause in the Labour party, not because of a change of principle, but because of general departures since the general election from the Labour party's traditional hostility to British membership of the Community. A whiff of old battles drifts over the debate from time to time.

Those of us who believe that the Community is a great and immensely valuable institution and who wish to maintain and continue it welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal to it from both the Community's and their own point of view. It is striking how strong the support for membership of the Community has been in those countries, particularly by statesmen—I will not have the term thrown into disrepute by the hon. Member for Northampton, North — whose claim to that title is distinguished by the fact that they have advocated democracy in adverse circumstances.

In Spain, great predictions were made that chaos would result at the end of the Franco regime. Many of those who now so strongly advocate Spain's membership suffered under that regime, and have struggled to establish democracy in Spain in its aftermath. Several of them had a spectacle that none of us had to face, of the guns pointing at them in the legislature of their country. Anyone who saw the television pictures or talked to any of the people involved will realise what a dramatic demonstration it was of the initial dangers to democracy in Spain, as well as of the resilience that it showed, when that extremely unpleasant episode passed quickly into Spanish history.

Portugal has been through great trials and difficulties with the arrival of democracy. The Portuguese Government have not consistently advanced the interests of their own agriculture. Some of the early agricultural measures of Portuguese Governments were disastrous. Portuguese agriculture is struggling to recover from the ludicrous neo-Marxist policies that were attempted in the early stages of the Portuguese revolution. Many of those who are now earnestly advocating Portuguese membership of the Community fought to maintain democracy and pluralism at times when there seemed to be a real threat to those concepts from some of those who initially came to power in the aftermath of the Portuguese revolution.

It is not for us to dismiss the value of democracy in Spain and Portugal when those who are most concerned with the establishment of democracy, and most seeking to enhance it from within those countries, attach such great importance to it. If they believe that the economic interests of their countries will be advanced by accession, who are we to criticise them for taking that view? Who are we to challenge them for making that a political priority?

Hon. Members who have been so critical of the clause and the Bill in general have neglected the opportunities in those two countries, poorer as they are than the European average — particularly Portugal — for future expanding trade with this country. There is potentially a much larger market if wage levels in Spain, and particularly Portugal, increase, and the spending power of the people in those countries increases. I wish to see that, and I hope that it will lead to a great deal more trade in the Community, much of it to the benefit of Britain.

Essentially the clause and the Bill are about a political question—the future of the Community and the future of democracy in Spain and Portugal. I believe that the vast majority of hon. Members believe that the passing of the Bill will greatly enhance those things.

Mr. Fallon: When listening to debates on the Community, it has always struck me how dated is the approach of the House to the Community. Hon. Members seem to continue a debate from the early 1970s, and to start at a point far before that, when the House was the centre of the world or the Community. That simply is not so.

11.45 pm

I have great respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who has drawn attention on numerous occasions in the House and, I understand, in the European Parliament, to the various issues involved in the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EC, and he is right to do so. However, I also believe that he is fundamentally mistaken in his analysis of that impact. First, he suggests that the impact on the Community will be damaging. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has effectively demolished that argument, because those who oppose the accession have no real interest in the future survival, expansion or enlargement of the Community.

Secondly, my hon. Friend suggests that accession will have an adverse impact on Britain. I simply cannot understand that argument. It amazes me that there are such enclaves of Spanish and Portuguese interests in Northampton, Newham or Worcestershire who are better judges of Iberia's imports and exports than are those countries themselves.

Mr. Marlow: What are the magnificent benefits that our constituents and Britain will get from the accession of

[Mr. Marlow]

Spain and Portugal to the Community? Perhaps my hon. Friend could quantify them for us. We have been waiting for such a quantification for a long time.

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend has already drawn attention to the considerable benefits to the shoe industry in his constituency from the increased competition from Iberia and from the force of comparative advantage that should be improving his shoe industry and the prospects of those of his constituents who happen to work in that industry.

There is a wholly beneficial impact on Britain. There are enormous opportunities for the west and south-west of Britain in increased links and trade with the Iberian peninsula. There are enormous other opportunities for our industries generally in exploring such an increased market.

Thirdly, there is the impact on Spain and Portugal. That is why I am all the more puzzled why the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) should seek to speak for the Spanish or Portuguese Socialist parties in opposing this accession.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I had hoped that I would not need to intervene in his speech. May I assure him that I was wishing to do no such thing? I was commenting only on the possible impact of the EC's policies and institutions on those countries. That is rather different.

Mr. Fallon: It is not all that different from the assessment of the Spanish and Portuguese Parliaments, and of the Spanish and Portuguese Socialist parties, of the impact of accession on their countries, which they completely support and which they regard as likely to be beneficial. I still do not understand why the hon. Gentleman happens to have a much better understanding of that impact on Spanish industry and agriculture than do the Socialists in those countries. He might like to brood on that and return to the point.

Mr. Forth: I should like to try to help my hon. Friend. I invite him to consider the example of Greece, which was enthusiastic to enter the Community, but which some four year on has found itself obliged to introduce import and currency controls and to defer yet again the introduction of VAT, which had been agreed as part of entering the Community. If my hon. Friend accepts Greece as a reasonable precedent to observe as a relatively poor and undeveloped country joining the Community, the example is not encouraging. It is on the basis of such an example that those of us who make a pessimistic analysis rest our case. I would be interested in his observations on that.

Mr. Fallon: My observation is simply that my hon. Friend is making my point and not his, because the impact on Greece has been substantial in the form of special funds and emergency aid. When he says on behalf of the Spanish community of Worcestershire that the impact on Spain and Portugal will not be as the Spanish Government and Portuguese Government believe that it will, I am dubious.

Let us take the three areas that my hon. Friends think will be so harmful to Spain and Portugal. First, let us consider agriculture. It has been argued tonight that the extension of the agricultural policy to Spain and Portugal will merely divert resources from the enormous subsidy of northern states' surpluses of temperate products. Anything that diverts resources away from constant oversubsidy of products in surplus in northern countries and increases the need to reform and adjust that policy is to be welcomed and not criticised.

It was further suggested that the Community, as it is, should insulate itself from further market forces or resist the force of comparative advantage from Spanish and Portguese industries. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) implied that his domestic shoe industry should be completely protected from any qualitative and quantitative advantages that the Spanish and Portuguese shoe industries happen to obtain.

Mr. Marlow: The point that I was making—I am sorry if I was labouring it when I was making it—is that there are benefits to be found in Italian footwear. It has style and people like to buy it. The Italians have unfair trading advantages which they should not have if the Community is working properly. I am concerned that the Spaniards will have the same unfair trading advantages. We are all in favour of fair and free trade, but we do not want unfair competition.

Mr. Fallon: I am afraid that my hon. Friend disappoints me again. Of course those unfair trading practices exist in Spain and Portugal, but if Spain and Portugal are not admitted into the Community they will continue. There will be no mechanism for tackling them. My hon. Friend will have to go to GATT and the OECD and beg in vain for those practices to be tackled. Only by having those two countries in the Community, those two Ministers around the table at the Council of Ministers, those two commissioners in the Commission, and representatives of those two countries in the European Parliament, will my hon. Friend be able to prosecute that unfair trading. He will never be able to extend the various policies of DG4 and the supervision and the policing of the competition policy to Spain and Portugal unless he has those countries inside the Community.

My hon. Friend for Mid-Worcestershire said that if we admit Spain and Portugal there will be added linguistic disadvantages. Two more languages will need to be added to the Community's official languages. It is to some extent a reflection on my hon. Friend and his former colleagues in the European Parliament that they have not resolved that problem. If the addition of two languages to the existing seven makes the Community's linguistic costs intolerable, I welcome it. We shall then proceed to a more rational community, such as the United Nations, where only two languages are translated.

To oppose the accession of Portugal and Spain to the Community merely on the ground that it adds two more languages when our accession and that of Ireland and Denmark added a linguistic burden is a thin argument.

We did not invite Spain and Portugal to join the Community. They applied to join it. I regard that as a compliment to the Community, and I regard the accession as a strengthening of the Community and as a step towards a wider and freer European market.

Mr. Deakins: This is the Committee stage and we are discussing clause 1. I have three questions to put to the Minister about costs. They were not dealt with by his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on Second Reading. In his speech, only two paragraphs of a fairly long speech were devoted to costs. We have already heard what the figures are. Will the Minister confirm that the net

figure of £75 million, given by the Foreign Secretary as our additional net contribution at the end of the transition period, takes account of any possible change in our receipts from the regional and social funds? I am not sure that I understand the new financial mechanism that was agreed in the past year, but I assume that if there is any variation in our receipts from those funds, they are taken into account in the financial calculations. Therefore, the £75 million should be a true figure, even if, for example, our receipts were halved as a result of the admission of Spain and Portugal.

Secondly, will the Minister confirm that the Commission's estimate of 0·1 per cent. of the Community VAT base as being its best estimate of the total cost of the entry of Spain and Portugal at the end of the transition period takes account of all the other additional costs, such as that of translation? I assume that the Commission's estimate makes provision for those additional costs. If not, it would be helpful to know what other costs there might be in addition to the 0·1 per cent.

Finally, would it not be helpful in future if the House of Commons—even if the Community is not bothered about this—were given an economic assessment of the entry of new members, and not merely a financial assessment? Obviously, that cannot be done now because the Bill will presumably get its Third Reading tonight, but, if this occurs again, I hope that when Ministers negotiate these matters in Brussels or elsewhere, they will ask whether the Commission can prepare an economic assessment on the impact of new members for the benefit of existing member states.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): Before the House sanctions clause 1, it should reconsider the relationship of Gibraltar with both the United Kingdom and Spain because on 1 January all three will be partners in the same enterprise, albeit with the dependent territory having to take the junior desk. Therefore, it is surely essential that Gibraltar's particular circumstances should be recognised and safeguarded.

Gibraltar, having suffered the trials and tribulations, through no fault of its own, of a closed border with Spain, is hoping now to return to some semblance of normality. However, it would certainly be wrong to assume that an open border will solve all problems. Some will remain and, indeed, more may be created now that the siege economy must change. Many questions need to be asked about Gibraltar in the light of Spain's accession to the European Community. They relate to the pension rights of former Spanish workers and the necessary funding, the potential use of the airport facilities by Spanish aircraft, the impact of Spanish tourists on the resources available, the planned development of the ship repair yard and Spanish competition. Other matters which also pose questions, such as the continuation of NATO's use of the rock and the determination of Britain to protect its sovereignty, may be outside the scope of the clause. Nevertheless, all the topics are vital to Gibraltarians who will stand fast in their loyalty to the Crown and who look to Parliament for support on occasions such as this.

Membership of the European Community can be seen in many lights, as this debate has illustrated. But Gibraltar's status of being effectively both in and out is somewhat double edged. The advantages of not having to conform on taxation such as VAT are clear, but the disadvantages of the application of company and financial directives are equally obvious.

A gold key has long been symbolic of Gibraltar, hanging, as it does, from the gateway to its castle on the armorial bearings. With such a key, a great future for this small but vibrant dependent territory can be unlocked, but only so long as we remain, in its interests, as firm as the rock of Gibraltar itself.

12 midnight

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I give a lukewarm welcome to the accession of Spain to the European Community, partly because when people want to join a club I suggest that they abide by the existing rules of the club. When another country seeks to join the Community, all too often the existing members bend over backwards to accommodate the new member.

I have no doubt that in the long-term Spain and Portugal will bring much benefit to the Community, and I hold dear the concept of a Europe that is united on trade. But we who come from the centre of the country, from the west midlands—still the workshop of the nation—tend to look at the bottom line of any arrangements such as those we are considering tonight to see what is in it for us, and I make no apology for saying that I cannot see much in it in the short term.

I refer of course to the car industry, and I shall delay the Committee briefly to have a whinge about what is happening to that industry. I have had a regular whinge about it since coming to this place, though not much has happened as a result. Even at this late hour another whinge may move the Government a few degrees further along the road that the motor industry would like to travel.

We have heard how Spain's industry has developed and continues to develop. However, it has the advantage of sheltering behind artificial tariffs. They were put up not necessarily by Spain but by the Community, which agreed a special arrangement with Spain in 1970.

Mr. Fallon: Is my hon. Friend aware that that agreement was specifically negotiated because it was then thought by the Community that Spain would quickly be entering? The fact that the Community has taken so long to agree to Spanish accession has accentuated the unfairness to which my hon. Friend refers. The sooner we get Spain into the Community the sooner we can deal with the unfair comparative advantage of which he speaks.

Mr. King: That may have been the case and the Community's idea may have been that eventually Spain would come in. On the other hand, in 1970 Spain was vastly different. It was a peasant economy and I suggest that the EEC looked benevolently on that country with a view to improving its people's living standards, and applied concessionary tariff rates.

In the interim, the Spanish car industry has developed substantially, until it is now bigger than ours, and those in the motor industry and in many of Britain's industrial areas find it hard to accept the present position. About 100,000 Spanish-derived cars come into this country at a low, 4 per cent., import tariff. About 3,500 cars go in the opposite direction. That 100,000 total is expanding dramatically, and some are forecasting a figure in the next year or so of well over 120,000, if not 130,000 cars a year.

Only one British company exports to the Iberian peninsula—Austin Rover—because Ford imports cars

[Mr. King]

from its plant in Spain, as does General Motors. I accept that we shall never get parity of trade in the car industry. We are not likely to send 100,000 of our cars over there and to import 100,000 Spanish-derived cars. But I do not accept that when we negotiate for a country to come into the Community, we should give it concessionary terms that allows it seven years to reduce its tariff barrier for our products so that it is not until the early 1990s that we start trading fairly in this one commodity.

That is grossly unfair to the British car worker, who in my constituency has indulged in the luxury of two weeks of lay-offs at a time when the Spanish factories are busy churning out ever greater quantities of cars for sale in this country. That was recently reinforced with the addition of Seat cars, which forecasts 20,000 sales in Britain within the next two years.

When we negotiated the arrangements with Spain we should have stood up for the right of the British car industry to have a larger quota into the Spanish market. Currently, that quota is about 3,800 cars a year, yet we could sell between 8,000 and 10,000 cars if we were given the opportunity. Next year's quota is now being arranged, and there is some some hope that it will go up to 7,000 or 8,000 units. Austin Rover certainly hopes so. But the Spanish Government have given indications that it may be only 5,000.

If we want Britain's wholehearted support for Spain's accession to the Community, we should not have to wait seven years before gaining parity with her. Our industry cannot afford to wait that long while we are bamboozled by an ever-rising torrent of Spanish cars into this country. There must be a fair and equitable status with that country, and, if we cannot have the equivalent in tariff rates, let our Government seek to endorse the British car industry's determination to up its quota into the Spanish market by much more than the Spanish Government will seemingly allow.

When we get parity to trade and fair and suitable treatment for our own industry, we shall get the wholehearted support of the Community generally for Spain to come into the EEC.

Mr. Baldry: I entirely endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). What shall we tell our children and the children of Spain and Portugal—[HON. MEMBERS: "Don't talk to strangers."] We shall tell them that the overwhelming majority of the British Conservative party wanted to write history whereas the overwhelming majority of the British Labour party was content only to read history. We shall tell them that we on the Conservative Benches saw democracy emerging in Spain and Portugal and gripped it and hugged it, while the Labour party, like a load of old housewives, balanced the price of one pound of tomatoes as against another.

The Conservative party in this decade, as in the last, has been the truly internationalist party in this House, whereas the Labour party has constantly carped at the small print, while pretending that it was in favour of greater internationalism and of showing solidarity with Socialists in Spain and Portugal.

I hope that tonight we will give a resounding endorsement to the Bill and its clauses. We should show that the Conservative and Liberal parties are determined to build a stronger and more democratic Europe, and that at no stage will we be distracted by the small print carping of the petty bourgeois Poujadists who seek continually to look back when we in this country, more than anyone else, should look forward.

Mr. George Robertson: This has been a fascinating debate. It has confounded all the pessimists—and the Whips—with its length and breadth. Several fascinating speeches have been made, including a remarkable one prepared by who knows who for the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—a farmer who has that same ritualistic and obsessive interest in the common agricultural policy and, no doubt, its benefits as many others on the continent.

The hon. Gentleman's speech was reminiscent of some crackling Pathé newsreel. It was a political version of Gilbert and Sullivan which kept us better amused than most of his previous speeches, although it did not take us much further than most of them. Some of the arguments advanced on both sides of this great Conservative argument are interesting. I am sure that, as the groans that must have greeted each new name on the annunciator went up from the deep leather armchairs of the Library, they thought how elevated the debate must be.

The elegant and lonely speech of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and the speeches laden with irony will look remarkable in the cold print of *Hansard* tomorrow morning. The hon. Member for Harrow, East directed his remarks, as he must, against those behind him where he finds most of his opposition. He said that Italy's gross national product has only recently overtaken that of Great Britain. Italy is led by a Socialist Prime Minister and, for the past six years, a Conservative Government have presided over the decline of the British economy, ensuring that our GNP would fall behind that of Italy. Pretty soon we shall be behind everyone else as well.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is putting forward the same misinformation as the Social Democratic party—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"]—whoever they may be. He is saying that the Italian GNP is greater than that of the United Kingdom. Why do the Italians then pay only two thirds as much VAT as us?

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps there are even more accountants in the Italian Parliament than here. I was simply reflecting on the encyclopaedic statistical knowledge of the hon. Member for Harrow, East and giving the most reasonable and obvious explanation of the phenomenon that he described.

The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) now finds that his main vocation is speaking on behalf of the Spanish and Portuguese Socialist parties—remarkable for the hon. Gentleman, bearing in mind his background. I assure him that if they could choose any hon. Member to speak for them in the House, he, with his peculiar views on economic policy, would not be their chosen champion.

The Labour party has never disguised the fact that we support and welcome Spain and Portugal's accession. That view was made crystal clear on Second Reading and again tonight.

Great progress has been made in Spain and Portugal. In a few years they have come from the depths of dictatorship into the mainstream of Europe. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has said, great courage and resource have been shown by those who

have led those countries through that difficult period. All were motivated by the wish to join the main stream of Europe. The fulfilment of part of that vision comes with accession to the European Community on 1 January.

12.15 am

Those long and difficult negotiations were accomplished under the supervision in Spain of Socialist Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez and in Portugal mainly by Socialist Prime Minister Mario Suarez. Those two statesmen took Spain and Portugal from dictatorship to accession to the European Community and they should be congratulated on that achievement. I am glad that Conservative Members recognise that.

Mr. Fallon: The hon. Gentleman welcomes the struggle of those two countries to join the Community during the period since 1975 and 1979 but at exactly the same time the Labour party in Britain was trying to leave the Community. How does the hon. Gentleman explain that?

Mr. Robertson: The policy of the Labour party has been quite clear. The Conservative party allies itself with some pretty peculiar people on the continent and especially in the European Parliament, so why should Conservative Members imagine that there must be a monolithic view among the Socialist and social democratic parties in the European Community? The fact is that we are in the Community, we remain in the Community for the present moment and we welcome Spain and Portugal to it.

Mr. Dykes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No, I should like to make some progress.

We believe that those long and difficult negotiations will strengthen democracy and its institutions in both Spain and Portugal and make the European Community more complete. That achievement lies principally at the door of the two individuals who led the Socialist parties in those two countries.

There is, however, no contradiction in Labour Members pointing out the problems and challenges that will come with the accession of Spain and Portugal when the Community faces major struggles to overcome the financing problems that it already has. Hon. Members on both sides have asked awkward questions about the present financial crisis and the greater crisis that is likely to befall the Community. The erudite Minister who is to answer the debate always speaks without notes and will doubtless provide the information and detail to be expected from that practice, so we shall be no wiser at the end of a speech of characteristic elegance than we were at the beginning of the debate, however long the debate may continue.

The European Community faces problems that will not go away and some of them will be exacerbated by the accession of two new nations, because the characteristics of those nations' economies and especially their agriculture will in many ways make the Community's financial crisis worse. As my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) have pointed out so admirably, the financial crisis with which we live will not be easily resolved.

It could be resolved in two ways. First, it could be resolved by increasing European Community funds. That would be the simple solution for a number of right hon. and hon. Members and for a number of people in European Community countries. An increase in the value added tax level from 1·4 per cent. to 1·6 per cent. would result immediately in a tranche of money that might solve the problem. However, that solution would be unacceptable to this Parliament and to nearly every other Parliament in the European Community. We remember the difficulty that the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), experienced in pushing through, against vigorous opposition from his own supporters, the increase in the VAT contribution.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), but is it in order for the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) to be reading a newspaper.

The First Deputy Chairman: No, not if it is a newspaper. I think that the hon. Member for Linlithgow realises that it is not in order.

Mr. Robertson: The fact is that the European Community's immediate financial crisis could be resolved by an increase in the funds, but that option is not available either to the European Community or to the British Government.

Secondly, the crisis could be resolved through the reform, reorganisation and revamping of the European Community's existing expenditure. All hon. Members know that reform of the Community's financial institutions is essential if the crisis is not entirely to threaten the basis of the European Community. The European Parliament is considering this week the European Community's budget and it has substantial views about it, only some of which are connected with the outcome of the Luxembourg summit.

The statement of fact that is contained in the explanatory memorandum—

"that Spain's contribution to, and receipts from the European Communities Budget should roughly balance and that Portugal should be a modest net beneficiary"—

is threatened by the fact that the Community's draft budget makes inadequate provision for discharging the promise that was made to Spain and Portugal during the negotiations. That is the tip of the very large iceberg of financial irresponsibility that faces the European Community this year. I do not undermine the general belief that Community membership should expand from 10 to 12 if I point out the contradictions in the way in which the European Community finances itself.

At the bottom of the crisis lies the common agricultural policy. It takes up between 70 and 74 per cent. of the European Community's budget and threatens to devour even more of it in future years. The crisis will inevitably be made worse by the accession of Spain and Portugal, on account of the agricultural surpluses.

The European Community is under threat. If the budget does not balance, Ministers will be forced to adopt short-term expedients. In the long term this country's status as a net beneficiary of the regional and social fund will be threatened by the accession of Spain and Portugal, which will have a share of the existing cake. The shift in the European Community's balance from the industrial to the agricultural countries—that is, from the north to the south of Europe—will ultimately threaten the coherence and credibility of European Community policies.

Mr. Marlow: This is a simple question. The hon. Gentleman has referred to the problem, but what are the

[Mr. Marlow]

benefits to the United Kingdom, which he represents, from the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Common Market?

Mr. Robertson: I represent a section of the Parliament in the same way as the hon. Gentleman does. He is in a beleaguered, although vocal, minority in his party. I have already identified the benefits to the United Kingdom of an enlarged European Community. It makes Europe a more complete entity. It gives us opportunities, but it also challenges, and that fact must be taken on board. The majority of hon. Members believe that a wider Community is in the interests of all members of the European Community, but that does not make us shy away from the challenges, problems and crises that face the Community.

We welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal. It is the right move for the Community and for Spain and Portugal. We welcome it because we recognise the merits of those two new democracies joining the rest of Europe and facing Europe's problems with us. The Opposition do not welcome accession blindly, ignorantly or oblivious of the difficulties and anxieties. It is up to all 12 member states to ensure that the heady historic atmosphere of Spanish and Portuguese accession is accompanied by cold brutal action to make it all worth while.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Like the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and most of my colleagues, I welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community. The hon. Member for Hamilton reminded the Committee that the Labour party has supported the membership of Spain and Portugal during the long seven years of negotiations, but he did not respond to the fair point put by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) that it is curious that, for the first five of those seven years, the Labour party was calling for the United Kingdom to leave the same Community that it wanted Spain and Portugal to join. At the very least, the Spanish and Portuguese Socialists found it difficult to understand why the Labour party felt that their membership of the Community was desirable but Britain's membership was not. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hamilton will enlighten hon. Members and his fraternal comrades in Spain and Portugal as to what their proper interests might dictate if, having joined the Community, some future Labour Government decided to take us out again.

These are not purely theoretical problems. The hon. Member for Hamilton will be aware that the Spanish and Portuguese Socialist parties listen carefully to what the British Labour party says. There seems to be an enormous identity of interest in these matters. Clearly, any views that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues wish to put forward would be helpful.

Mr. Foulkes: What about tomatoes?

Mr. Rifkind: I can understand the hon. Gentleman being more interested in the debate turning to the subject of tomatoes rather than Labour party's policy, and I would happily turn to that matter.

My hon. Friends the Members for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), for Darlington and for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) enthusiastically welcomed Spanish and Portuguese accession. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) correctly emphasised the political importance of Spanish and Portuguese membership. I do not believe that it is necessary for anyone to give a particular reason why Spain and Portugal should join the Community. There are a multitude of reasons, but they boil down to a simple proposition — Spain and Portugal are now democratic societies; they are European countries; they wish to join the Community; and under the terms of the Treaty of Rome, they are entitled to make such an application. As long as the terms of that application are properly negotiated with the existing member states, it would be unthinkable for such an application to be refused.

The fact that the negotiations have taken seven years shows that there was on both sides a realisation, as the hon. Member for Hamilton said, that difficulties would accrue, not just to existing members of the community, but to Spain and Portugal. Those two countries perceive that, as countries that are not nearly as industrialised as most of western Europe, their competitiveness can by no means be properly assumed. Existing member states will have substantial opportunities to increase industrial exports.

Mr. Forth: My hon. and learned Friend says that it would be unthinkable for an application to be refused. Is he suggesting that there are no grounds whatsoever on which existing member states could decide that the joining of a new member was damaging to the interests either of that new member, of the Community as a whole, or of a particular country? Many people who have followed this case all the way through think that if there is a proven disadvantage to the United Kingdom or to the Community as a whole, it would be legitimate to say, "We are not yet convinced that it would be a benefit for you to join."

12.30 am

Mr. Rifkind: If a democratic European country applies to join, it must in principle be given an opportunity for the negotiations to succeed. There must be a desire on both sides to see that accession negotiations reach a successful conclusion, but at the end of the day there is no guarantee either on the part of the Community or on the part of the applicant state. For example, when the terms of the proposed accession of Norway were put to the Norwegian people through a referendum, they declined to accept them. Equally, the Community must have such a right, if the negotiations do not prove successful. However, when a democratic European country applies, there is a desire to give a favourable response if at all possible and realistic.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to the implications for the common agricultural policy and asked for a whole series of statistics to show the precise figures of the costs that would be involved in the accession of Spain and Portugal. My hon. Friend knows that it is simply not possible to respond with such details. He may be expressing surprise, but I do not think that his shock is likely to alarm the House. One must be conscious of the fact that Spanish and Portuguese membership, particularly with regard to Mediterranean products, will increase the availability of these products in the Community. It has implications not only for the existing members of the Community, but for Mediterranean countries, and that is why negotiations are going on with these countries as to how the access of their products to the Community can be safeguarded once Spanish and Portuguese membership takes place.

My hon. Friend will also be aware that one of the reasons why the negotiations took so long was that strict

terms were put to the Spanish and Portuguese, and one of the sectors about which the Community was most concerned was the cost implications. For example, olive oil is likely to be in substantial surplus in years to come, and the Spanish have had to accept the fact that their entitlement to full intervention prices will not be available even after they have joined the Community. Only when a system of guaranteed thresholds has been introduced, and the Community is in surplus, or likely to be in surplus, will Spain be able to participate in that crucial sector.

This also applies to wine, where again there is a likelihood of Spanish produce adding to existing surpluses. Severe constrictions on Spain have had to be accepted, including compulsory distillation of a substantial proportion of its produce. These matters have been taken into account. They do not give an assurance that there will be no problems, and my hon. Friend was right to say that the accent within the Community will increasingly change from the years when the Community first came into operation.

A significant number of Mediterranean countries, with a common interest in that area's agricultural produce, will be in the Community at the same time as Germany and the United Kingdom are joined by France as a significant net contributor to the costs of the Community. These countries, as well as other northern countries, will have a significant interest in ensuring that the mistakes that were made at first,—which are still being experienced with regard to northern agriculture, through the operation of some aspects of the CAP—will not be repeated with equally extravagant consequences in the southern states. That is why the negotiations on fruit and vegetables, olive oil and wine were some of the most difficult and complicated and on which it took years to reach an acceptable conclusion.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend said that the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community would allow extra new markets to our exporters.

When we joined the Community we were told that Europe was there waiting for our exports. It did not happen that way, but the other way round. The European exports came here. What makes my hon. and learned Friend so confident that the accession will be of benefit to Britain rather than the other way round and the Iberians will have our market?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall answer that point in a moment, because I want to deal with the industrial side, which is extremely relevant to my hon. Friend's point. If he would allow me to reach it in my own time, I should be grateful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised the subject of horticulture and the problems of tomatoes, on which the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has expressed an interest. Here, too, there was a realisation that it was a sensitive area, which is why an exceptionally long transitional period of 10 years has been provided. That is a significantly longer transition period than that provided for other areas in the treaty.

However, there will be problems after that period. Special rates of assistance under capital grant schemes will be available to growers in the United Kingdom wanting to change to more efficient forms of glasshouse that will make them more competitive in the longer term. The Canary Islands will be entitled to export some of its tomato produce to the United Kingdom when Spain joins the Community, but under protocol 2 of the treaty that will remain subject to the reference price system, even after the end of the transitional period. That will protect the interests of United Kingdom tomato growers. That part of the protocol was negotiated at the instigation of the United Kingdom because of the realisation that there was a legitimate United Kingdom interest.

The hon. Member for Hamilton referred to the regional and social fund. Over the past few years the United Kingdom has been a net beneficiary of the regional fund. There is no question but that we will continue to receive major payments. The hon. Gentleman was wrong to imply that our entitlement to funds is affected by the designation of which areas of the United Kingdom come under regional funds status. He entirely misunderstands the way in which the system operates. Each country in the Community has a quota range that determines its entitlement, and it is for the country concerned to determine which parts of its national territory will benefit. Whether it is 10 per cent. or 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom does not affect that. The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand that point, although he should, given his interest in these matters.

Mr. George Robertson: We must clarify this point. It may not affect the totality of the resources that can be received by this country, but it deliberately excludes a large number of areas from obtaining assistance under the fund. Significant areas were cut off from such assistance as a direct consequence of the changes in boundaries.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows, first, that that has nothing to do with the Community; secondly, that it has nothing to do with the enlargement negotiations; and, thirdly, that it was not the point that he made earlier in the debate. That is sufficient comment on that matter.

Spain and Portugal, whose gross domestic produce per capita is lower than the Community average, will be significant beneficiaries of the regional fund. Because they are likely to have generous quota arrangements, by definition that means that the entitlement of other member states must be reduced. That is unavoidable.

The European Council stated that the regional fund should grow in real terms. While it is not possible to calculate the implications for the United Kingdom, the ultimate effect will depend on whether the increase will be lesser or greater than the reduced quotas which the United Kingdom and other member states will have in the fund.

There are no quotas for the social fund. The enlargement will not affect the designation of priority areas within the United Kingdom. However, it is not possible to predict with any certainty what the effect will be.

Mr. Forth: My hon. and learned Friend will recall that some time ago the Government placed great stress on the effectiveness of the budgetary discipline introduced after Fontainebleau. He now says, with some pride, that he expects the regional fund to grow in real terms. He conceded that the accession of Spain and Portugal would add to the agricultural commitments, although he said that there would be an element of restraint on olive oil. How does he square those apparently contradictory elements where individual parts of the budget will grow with the fact that the budget itself will be discipline contrained?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend will be the first to accept that if Spain and Portugal join the Community, it is not unreasonable that the total expenditure of the Community should increase without that having any implications for whether budgetary discipline is working or is not. A Community of 12 can properly contemplate higher spending than one of 10.

My hon. Friend must appreciate also that Spain and Portugal will be contributing to the Community as well as receiving from it. A substantial proportion of any additional gross expenditure by the Community will be covered by Spanish and Portuguese contributions. It is proposed that during the transitional period Spain should be in the position of broad financial neutrality. In other words, its contributions to the Community should not be less than the benefits that it receives from it. It is proposed that Portugal should be a modest net beneficiary. My hon. Friend should accept that any increase in the total spending of the Community will be covered properly and to a substantial extent by the contributions through the VAT system and customs and levies by Spain and Portugal over the years to come.

Mr. Fallon: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that there is something rather curious about Socialists on the Opposition Benches opposing increased spending on disadvantaged areas in Portugal and Spain, while supporting Community expenditure on about 30 per cent. of the United Kingdom, to which the regional fund currently applies?

Mr. Rifkind: It has always been a phenomenon of the Socialist world that Socialists are so in love with the concept of internationalism that they have no time left for any individual international Socialists. That is a phenomenon which we have observed in the House and elsewhere.

My hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Worcestershire and for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) spoke about industrial matters. My latter hon. Friend asked what the prospects were for the United Kingdom, given the disappointments that have been experienced over previous years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington rightly said, there is no guarantee that the United Kingdom will use the opportunity that enlargement will present.

One of the problems over the past 10 years is that the tariffs that British exporters have had to face in selling their goods in Spain have been far higher than those that Spanish exporters have had to face in Britain and elsewhere in the Community. Where tariffs are to be removed completely, there will be far more potential problems for Spain than for the United Kingdom. Spanish exports which come to Britain attract relatively modest tariffs, while British exports to Spain face high ones. If British industry cannot take advantage of the improved market, it will have only itself to blame. I cannot guarantee that it will be able to take advantage of the opportunity, but I hope that it will. The artificial barrier that has inhibited British trade in Spain will be removed in the way that I have described.

In the course of the negotiations we have achieved substantial and quick reductions in the tariffs that are applied by Spain. It is proposed that in the first three years some of the high tariffs will be reduced by no less than 52·5 per cent., and removed completely a few years thereafter. That will provide attractive opportunities for British exports as well as those from elsewhere in the Community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North asked about the footwear industry, and I understand his concern for it. Her Majesty's Government are concerned about the recently introduced restrictions on British footwear exports to Spain. We have already made representations to the Spanish Government and the Commission. It is our view that after accession these restrictions will constitute quantitative restrictions on trade and will be in clear breach of the Treaty of Rome. The Commission has undertaken to examine the matter. It is a legal matter that will be pursued, for the reasons to which my hon. Friend properly drew attention.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) asked whether the £75 million that has been estimated as being the ultimate British net contribution will take into account the effect on the regional and social fund. The figures are based on Commission estimates. The Commission has not explained in detail the basis on which it reached the figures, but we understand that it takes into account what are believed to be the likely implications for the regional and social fund, but does not take into account any administrative costs for the Community as a whole. That was the second question asked by the hon. Gentleman. He suggested that in future there might be an economic assessment for new members. I think he will appreciate that such an assessment, although it might be of some academic interest, would be unlikely to be more than speculative.

12.45 am

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) referred to Gibraltar. I appreciate his concern. We are currently engaged in discussions with the Government of Gibraltar about pensions. However, Spanish entitlements to pensions from the Government of Gibraltar will arise only where Spanish workers have made contributions to the social fund of the Gibraltarian Government. Where they have made such contributions, their entitlement will be the same as that of Gibraltarians who have made identical contributions to that fund.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was concerned because he believed that if people want to join a club they should adhere to its rules, irrespective of the implications for them. I am hesitant about agreeing with him on that. He will appreciate that the United Kingdom spent the first part of its membership of the European Community with the task and objective of seeking to change some of the original criteria where we believed that they were basically unsound and unfair. I believe that it was to the satisfaction of the United Kingdom and in the interests of the Community as a whole that the matter was properly resolved. It is always difficult to join any organisation where the rules were formed at a time when one was not a member. I recall that during the accession negotiations the remarks of King Alfonso of Castille in the middle ages were quoted. He apparently said that if he had been present at the creation he would have had some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe. Many of the 20th century advocates of the Community could also have identified with that view.

I believe that the debate has been valuable in dealing with some of the detailed points in which my hon. Friends

and other hon. Members are interested. It is clear that there is wide and enthusiastic support for Spanish and Portuguese membership of the Community, on both sides of the House. I believe that that represents the whole spectrum of political thought in the House, and shows the good will of the people of the United Kingdom towards Spain and Portugal. Their membership is a prospect that we can all endorse with enthusiasm and pleasure.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 60, Noes Nil.

Division No. 23] **[12.50 am**

AYES

Amess, David
Baldry, Tony
Beith, A. J.
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brooke, Hon Peter
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hirst, Michael
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rifkind, Malcolm
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Sumberg, David
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wilkinson, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Marlow and
Mr. Eric Forth

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

SHORT TITLE

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Beith: I am beginning to think that the Bill should not be cited as the European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Act but the European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Act that the Labour party did not vote for. Cited any other way it gives the misleading impression that the Labour party, having spoken so enthusiastically in favour of clause 1, were in favour of the Bill when, so far as I can establish, not one Labour Member brought himself to vote in favour of the key clause ensuring that Spain and Portugal can accede to membership of the Community. That being the case, the Socialists of Spain and Portugal should be made aware of that extraordinary thing.

Therefore, although it may be late to put forward a manuscript amendment, we cannot let clause 2 pass without saying that in the citation of the Bill in the clause we are ignoring the extraordinary retreat of the Labour party. Faced with having to say that it wants somebody else to be a member of the Community that it does not want to be a member of itself, it fled in disarray.

1 am

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) seems rather perturbed for some reaaon. He seems to have joined the ranting tendency in the House of which, from time to time, I have been accused of being a member. The vote was not notable for the non-participation of the Labour party because the responsibility for getting legislztion through the House does not rest with the Opposition; it rests with the Government. When we voted on clause one stand part, we were not voting on the principle of the Bill. The House was unanimous about the principle contained in the Bill. What was notable was that the Government, who have the responsibility to get the Bill through the House, were only able, with the help of the alliance, to muster 60 votes.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I know that the hon. Member was provoked, but I am finding it a little difficult to relate his comments to this short clause which deals with the short title. I assume that the hon. Member has now made his point.

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, Sir Paul.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said that as the vote was merely on clause stand part there was no necessity for the Labour party to vote. How will it react to a vote on Third Reading?

The Second Deputy Chairman: We cannot anticipate subsequent stages.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third Time.

1.2 am

Mr. Fallon: I am sure that the House would not wish the Bill to be read the Third time without giving the Opposition the chance to reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Minister of State (Mr. Rifkind) which is relevant not just to the Third Reading but to clause 2. Why have they encouraged the Socialist parties of Spain and Portugal for five long years to apply for membership of the Community while at the same time they were seeking to withdraw from it?

Mr. Marlow: The Bill despite, or even perhaps because of, the vote on clause 1 stand part is contentious. It has disadvantages not just for the United Kingdom but for the European Community.

Mr. Baldry: When did my hon. Friend think about that?

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend was not listening to my speech earlier. I do not blame him for that. It is his

[Mr. Marlow]

privilege. That there is not wholehearted support for the Bill in this country has been signified by the fact that fewer than 10 per cent. of the Members of the House voted for it. Not only that, but the Opposition sat on their hands and abstained when they were given the opportunity to support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

LANDLORD AND TENANT

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the Agricultural Holdings Act 1948 (Variation of Fourth Schedule) Order 1985, dated 28th October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

British Rail Engineering Limited (Springburn)

1.5 am

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I have a petition to present compiled by the people of Scotland which contains 54,000 signatures and which the Serjeant at Arms has been good enough to keep safely for me.

The history of the petition is that recently British Rail Engineering Limited, Springburn has proposed to run down the only railway workshop left in Scotland. There used to be four such workshops in my constituency, and at one time it was the railway engineering centre of the world. Now the work force is reduced to 1,500 workers, and if BREL gets its way, it will run down the work force to 400. In some parts of my constituency unemployment is running at about 40 per cent., and it is high among young people under the age of 21. Therefore, the Scottish people feel that something should be done to persuade British Rail, which is the core owner of BREL, to reverse the decision.

I abhor the attitude of Mr. Robert Reid, chairman of British Rail, who wrote to me saying that he is not prepared to meet me and my colleagues to discuss redundancies but only to discuss new ways to attract industries into Springburn after the redundancies take place. It is ridiculous that the chairman of a nationalised industry should deny an hon. Member the right to represent his constituents. It is traditional for people to turn to a Member for Parliament when redundancies are announced. Every facility is provided by Ministers; and, indeed, the Prime Minister is on record as saying that she is willing to meet hon. Members regarding closures and that she has put her Ministers at their disposal. It is scandalous that a servant of the nation should rebuff a Member of Parliament in this way. I hope that the Secretary of State for Transport reads my words in *Hansard* and takes action to help me do what I am entitled to do—to represent my community.

The petition reads

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the People of Scotland showeth

That the present run down of British Rail Engineering Ltd., Glasgow Works in the constituency of Glasgow Springburn would lead to the closure of the only main workshop in Scotland.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do all in its power to urge the management of British Rail to retain this very valuable asset in Scotland.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Basildon Hospital

1.10 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I beg to ask leave to present part of a petition which has been signed by thousands of my constituents, the sentiments of which I fully support. The prayer of the petition is as follows:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of residents of Basildon showeth that the proposals of the Basildon and Thurrock District Health Authority to remove from Basildon Hospital its maternity, gynaecological, paediatric and special baby care services and centralise at Orsett

would be in the very worst possible interests of the people of Basildon. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will take all such measures as lie within your power to persuade the Basildon and Thurrock District Health Authority to abandon these proposals for reorganisation, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table

Garw Colliery

1.12 am

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): With the proceedings of the House having continued until a late hour, and petitions then having been presented, I wondered whether we would ever reach this point. I should have liked to raise this Adjournment a week ago, because in the intervening time certain developments have occurred in the Garw valley and at the Garw colliery, where the men, by a majority decision, have agreed to the colliery closing without going through the new review procedure.

The last debate of this type that I conducted with the Minister was about the St. John's colliery in Maesteg in my constituency. That was on 23 April last, when the Minister pointed out that he had been born in Wales, in Glyn Ceiriog near Llangollen in north Wales. North Wales is not all that different from south Wales, with the exception of the accent. The Minister will appreciate that it is still necessary for me to put on record, on behalf of the community of the Garw valley and the constituents of Ogmore, the main objections to the conditions that applied to the St. John's lodge members regarding the restriction on the retention of the colliery.

The Minister will recall that when I was fighting for the St. John's colliery, which had a work force of 840, he promised to ensure that the matter went to the new review procedure. I am pleased to say that eventually he carried out that promise, and I thank him for that. Nevertheless, the colliery closed, and it may interest the Minister to know that the director of the coal board in south Wales sent me a letter the day after the miners in Maesteg had taken their decision to permit the colliery to close without going through the new review procedure.

A number of collieries have closed in my constituency, but never before have I received a letter so quickly from the director as I did on this occasion. It was more instant than instant coffee. The closure was agreed by the men at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and the director was able to get a communication to me by the following day.

In Ogmore there have been a number of closures since 1979, including the Caerau, Coegnant and St. John's colliery in the Llynfir valley, the Wyndham Western colliery in the Ogmore valley and the Ffaldau colliery in the Garw valley. Now, the very last colliery left in the Ogwr borough area, the Garw colliery, is to go. These closures have caused the loss of 2,900 jobs in the mining industry in my constituency since 1979. Indeed, the Garw valley—the No. 4 area of the south Wales coalfield—once supported 12 productive pits.

I compliment the lodge committee and the work force, who were given a raw deal by the NCB. They were asked to prepare a plan to break even, which had to be operative by March 1986. They were told that from the one coal face in operation they had to produce 7,500 tonnes a week rather than the existing 4,350 tonnes. They prepared a plan last week, and I have with me maps, drawings, estimates and figures that were presented to the NCB in Cardiff, with the backing of the south Wales NUM officials. Mr. Cliff Davies refused to accept that plan, rejected it totally and said that it did not comply with the NCB's criteria. Why was that criterion used for pits in Wales when it was not used in other NCB areas?

[Mr. Ray Powell]

When the NCB announced its new Strategy for Coal, which wiped out the Plan for Coal, the key factor was production at a price that the market would bear. The NCB says that this means producing at a cost of less than £42 per tonne. Of the 156 pits, approximately 110 cannot meet that criterion, but more significant is the picture in the areas where the NCB is helping the breakaway union to reduce NUM influence.

Equally significant is the fact that the officials of the breakaway union have not commented on the NCB strategy of drawing a line at £42 per tonne production cost —a policy that will be devastating for NUM members in Nottingham, south Derbyshire, Leicestershire and the midlands.

I have with me a list of collieries showing production costs per tonne for the last six months under the NCB's criteria, and this is relevant to the collieries that have closed in the Ogmore constituency in the last 12 months.

The production cost per tonne at Mansfield was £65·10; at Rufford, £58·02; at Silverhill, £55·29; at Pye Hill, £57·92; at Babbington, £57·01; at Hucknall, £56·32; at Newstead, £53·42; at Cadley Hill, £87·55; at Donisthorpe/ Measham, £70·87; at Wolstanton, £66·73 and at Holditch, £58·68. Yet the Garw colliery was producing coal at £53·65 a tonne and the south Wales NCB decided that the collier had to close.

Are the collieries that I have mentioned, which are producing coal at high cost, protected against that criterion because they are encouraging the UDM in those areas? It is important for miners in south Wales to know that. I have not gone into detail about collieries that produce coal at much more than £42 per tonne—I was using them only as a comparison with the Garw colliery.

I should like to pay tribute to the Garw lodge officials — Mr. John Jones, the chairman, Mr. Berwen Howells, the secretary and Eirfyl Jones, the vice-chairman—for the way in which they have conducted the negotiations, and on their loyalty to the work force. They have consulted the work force in these negotiations, as they did during the 12-month miners' strike. I would like to pay tribute also to the community of the Garw valley, which gives unstintingly to the miners and assisted them in all possible ways during their fight to retain their collieries.

In a previous debate on the St. John's colliery, I told the Minister that most miners in my constituency were not Scargill supporters, but that they were on strike because they believed that it was the only way in which to fight the battle to retain their collieries, their jobs and their families', friends'and communities future. The predictions made by the NUM in the 12-month strike are coming true in Wales, especially in my constituency.

The work force of 600 in the Garw valley has been transferred from the pits that have closed in the past six or seven years. Some 400 mining gipsies will again be without work when the colliery closes. They will look for other pits but, in the south Wales coalfield, they are being closed, slowly but surely. There are very few jobs for young people. The youngest person at the Garw colliery is 23, and no young person has been employed in the pit in the No. 4 area for the past six years.

The plan that I mentioned earlier would have been able to develop massive reserves which the NCB agrees exist in the Rhondda Fach and Rhondda Fawr seams. The plans were based on the cheapest possible means of developing those seams. It would have taken two years to get to the main seams and cost £7 million, but the plans were rejected utterly, with little thought for miners in the Garw valley.

As it is the last in the area, would it be possible to mothball the colliery? It could be used as a tourist attraction as the Garw, Ogmore and Llynfir valleys lend themselves to the tourist industry. It could also be used some time in the future as access to an abundance of coal in seams that are acknowledged by the NCB and others to be readily available. What would it cost to maintain a colliery such as Garw so that it might be used in future? I appreciate that there might be problems with gases from other collieries, but could the Minister consider it? If he cannot give me an answer tonight, perhaps he will reply later. I would like to be able to say that we will give something to people at Garw. The work force and the community have suffered as a result of 100 years of despoliation by owners and the NCB. I ask the Minister to consider the feasibility of preservation and not to seal off those vast reserves of coal, which are a national asset.

Having referred to the pressure on the work force of Garw colliery and the reason why they accepted the decision, I shall quote just two paragraphs from a memorandum written by area director Cliff Davies to the manager of the St. John's colliery on 11 November. He said:

> "I am becoming increasingly concerned that men who wish to take voluntary redundancy at St. John's Colliery will be caught by the DHSS and RMPS rules and will suffer severe financial penalties. As you are aware, unless the men are off our books by 2nd January, 1986, the penalties will be triggered. The time available to us to process such redundancies is fast running out.
>
> The same concern applies to men who are awaiting redundancy at collieries to which St. John's men will transfer. If we delay much longer, these men too will be caught by the DHSS and RMPS rules."

That meant that if the miners were not prepared to accept redundancy by 2 January 1986—and the same criterion applies to miners at the Garw colliery—they would lose substantial sums of money and face 12 months loss of unemployment benefit. As they had already lost 12 months work without any pay at all, that would not have been a matter of great concern to them if there were any future for the colliery or the miners working there, but they have been browbeaten by all and sundry and especially by the Government and MacGregor and their understudies in the industry. That is why the miners took a majority decision to agree to closure.

That valley, in which 8,000 people reside, is full of trees and spoilt only by the NCB tips. The only employment in the area is with Offrex Rexel, which has a predominantly female work force of 500 at Llangeinor, Sweetex which employs 40 women part time and Flextank, which has a mainly male labour force of 200.

My constituents therefore ask or special consideration and the restoration of special development status to the area. The NCB should reinstate the area to its past beauty, make it safe, ensure that subsidence problems are resolved and prepare sites for factory development. The Government should give special consideration to the loss of £250,000 in rates to the local authority as a result of just two pit closures.

The loss of jobs is of even greater significance in an area of such high unemployment. In the Maesteg area, male unemployment was 24 per cent. before the St. John's colliery closure. It has now escalated to nearly 40 per

cent., with further increases due to washery closures. The same will apply to the Garw colliery and the Ogmore valley.

My last point is equally important. What I said in the debate on 23 April about the effects on the community needs to be repeated today. The Minister replied:

"The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the Margam project several times in the House and blamed the Government for not bringing it forward fast enough. The board has now received planning permission from West Glamorgan county council to build a colliery at Margam, which would employ about 650 people. However, the board has yet to make a final decision on whether to proceed with the project. If it decides to proceed, the next step will be to refer it to the Secretary of State."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 853.]

In an article published in the *Western Mail* on 24 April 1985, the reporter, David Lewis, said that Mr. Philip Weekes, who was then the South Wales NCB area director, had announced that the NCB was to develop the Margam mine. I should like to know why this project that was promised by Mr. Weekes is not yet in being. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Energy will press the NCB to develop this mine. I understand that it contains the best coking coal in the world and that acid rain is less likely to be a potential hazard.

Finally, I attended yesterday in the House a coalfield communities campaign reception. The campaign is supported by 69 of the 100 local authorities in coalfield areas, including my authority, the Ogwr borough council. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will look at the document that was presented yesterday by the coalfield communities campaign to a number of hon. Members and consider its arguments about the decline in communities as a result of colliery closures.

1.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): First, I must begin by commending the diligence and concern of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) for his constituency and his skill in securing, albeit at this late hour, a further Adjournment debate on a pit closure in his area. He knows that, whenever a possible pit closure is announced, it must be of serious concern to everybody who cares about the coal industry's future, but in particular to the local community. If that community is in an area of high unemployment, as is the case with Garw colliery, I recognise that there are special problems. The Government and the National Coal Board recognise the nature of those problems and have gone to enormous lengths to ease any difficulties with which the men or the community may find themselves faced when a pit closes.

The hon. Gentleman faced me across the floor of the Chamber on a similar occasion on 23 April. The issue that he raised then was St. John's colliery. Much of what I said on that occasion holds true now, and I make no apoligies to the hon. Gentleman for repeating myself.

Perhaps the House will consider for a moment the general question of pit closures. I have pointed out to the House many times that the closure of individual pits is a matter for the NCB, in consultation with the mining unions. Opposition Members repeatedly and incorrectly allege that the Government are shutting pits in their constituencies. The Government employ no mining engineers and no coal specialists who can take a view on the prospects for a particular pit. That is the role of the NCB, and in the hon. Gentleman's area it is the role of the director and staff of the south Wales area of the NCB.

Pits have always closed — 330 under Labour Governments in recent years — and in all cases it has been the result of consultation within the industry, not with Government. I admit that, when a pit has been the main employer in a community, as Garw has been for over 100 years, it makes no difference to the people who live there what the complexion is of the Government in power. They are concerned for their future, and rightly so. The Government, too, are concerned for their future, but, more than that, we are concerned for the future of the whole coal industry and for the health of the nation's economy.

Opposition Members continue to suggest that keeping open uneconomic pits is an answer to unemployment, but it is not. Today's uneconomic pit is often the exhausted pit of two or three years' from now, and by keeping open grossly uneconomic capacity the industry harms itself and drains the nation's resources. What the Government want to see is a healthy coal industry. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the commitment that we have shown to achieving that objective — the massive and record support that we have given the industry in the past six years.

Despite the longest and most damaging industrial dispute that this country has seen, that support has enabled miners to remain at the top of the industrial pay league. It has ensured that, during a massive and long overdue restructuring, there have been no compulsory redundancies. No man has been forced to leave the industry and those who have chosen to leave have done so on extraordinarily generous terms. That support has led to the creation of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd, which is not only bringing new industries into mining areas but giving men who have worked in the coal industry the chance to make a fresh start, often using their redundancy money in creative and imaginative ways.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Ogmore referred to the modifications to the colliery review procedure which have been introduced. I am aware that, in the case of Garw, the men have voted to agree to the closure of the pit and to transfer to other pits or accept voluntary redundancy. Nevertheless, had they chosen to oppose the board's proposals, there is now available a review procedure which, by the inclusion of an independent review body, allows for a completely impartial recommendation to be made on the future of any pit referred to it. Hon. Members will have read in the past few days of the case of Darfield main colliery, itself the subject of an Adjournment debate a few weeks ago. Following a national appeal meeting, a rescue plan put forward by the British Association of Colliery Management was accepted by the board and the pit is to remain open. That stresses and underlines the value of the procedure.

The hon. Member for Ogmore has asked me to look at the feasibility of preserving Garw colliery and the cost of mothballing. That must be, and is, a matter for the area director and his staff. I do not know whether the hon. Member has raised this matter with the area director but, if he has not, he should do so at the earliest opportunity, because it is for the area director to decide. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that a survival plan was put forward at Garw by the NUM but that the investment envisaged by the plan was said by the area director not to have provided a sufficient return. The NCB has announced investment plans for the south Wales coalfield which show the extent of its commitment to the area. Betws, Abercynon, Penallta, Abernant, Taff Merthyr, Merthyr Vale and

[Mr. David Hunt]

Oakdale will benefit this year from investment in high technology. They are pits with extensive reserves, sound geology and good prospects. No doubt men who have voted to accept closure at St. John's and Garw will transfer to those pits and will have a long career ahead of them producing coal. The area director has confirmed to me today that the men at St. John's and Garw have been offered any pit of their choice on the south Wales coalfield. Whatever their decision, I wish them well.

The hon. Member for Ogmore suggested that the area director and the NCB have been devious in the way in which they approached this closure, because they pointed out to the work force that, as a result of paying insufficient national insurance contributions during the strike, some men would not qualify for unemployment benefit if they chose to take redundancy during the next benefit year. That is an incredible accusation, because surely it is the duty of an employer to point out to his employees any factor that might affect their well-being. No pressure has been put on miners to take redundancy, because they can equally choose to transfer to another pit.

I wish that the hon. Gentleman would put the other side of what is happening in the Welsh coalfield. There has been more investment in this financial year in south Wales than in any previous year, and there is still more investment in the pipeline. There is now record productivity. In the first three months of this year, production losses were £15 a tonne, but now the area director is talking of the coalfield moving to a break-even position in the first quarter of next year. Last week, the highest ever productivity of 2·1 tonnes per man shift was achieved. In addition, in this financial year, averages should be higher than in either of the two years before the strike. This is a marvellous success story for south Wales, and if the trend should continue, therein lies the greatest hope for the future.

The hon. Gentleman is right to stress the vital role that will be played by the National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. in his area, and the many other areas that are faced with the serious problems caused by pit closures. He will appreciate that many of the issues that he has raised are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, but I shall ensure that the points that he has raised with me—both those that are my responsibility those that are the responsibility and of my right hon. Friend—are dealt with, and he shall receive replies on the points to which I have not had time to reply tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 11 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Mr. Speaker: Questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland—Question No. 1.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for raising this point so early, but it is relevant to questions 3 and 4. I am a member of the Select Committee which this morning decided not to report to the House. Am I free to refer to this matter, should I be fortunate enough to catch your eye?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That question might have been more appropriate when we reached it, but I shall deal with it now. What happens in a Select Committee, sitting in private, cannot be discussed by the House until the Committee has reported. It is for the Committee to decide what action it should take within the terms of reference given to it by the House. However, questions 3 and 4 are of a wider nature. Provided that the hon. Gentleman does not refer to what went on in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, he will be in order.

Mr. Dewar: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for prolonging this discussion, but if a Select Committee decides that it will publish no report, does it mean that the Committee is still barred from reporting? I understood that the point of the ruling was that one did not comment until the report was before the House. As there is to be no report, is the Committee not entitled to report that there is to be no report? There seems to be a danger—I put it no higher—that the House will look a little silly if there is the clack of the market place —the talk of the steamie, if I may put it in Scottish terms—and yet it is barred from discussing the matter.

Mr. Henderson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not the case that whether or not a Select Committee reports to the House, discussion of what took place during the Committee's deliberations is a matter of privacy?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is exactly what I said, but that is not to say that the questions on the Order Paper cannot be discussed in the House. That is a different matter altogether.

Mr. Douglas: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I intervene with great reluctance to ask if you will examine exactly what you said. My view is that if a Select Committee decides to publish evidence, whether or not it reports in final form to the House of Commons, matters that are in the public domain can be referred to in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Committee has not reported. That is the point. We must get on.

Mr. Lambie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the Chairman of the Select Committee which decided today to publish the proceedings but not to issue a report, surely the Committee will look foolish if the press discusses this matter in Scotland but the members of the Committee that was directly responsible for the decision not to report are not allowed to comment. Will you reconsider your decision, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot reconsider it, because this is a matter of fact. It is perfectly possible for the minutes of proceedings to be published, and I understand that that will happen. That may be commented upon.

Dr. Bray: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can the House not discuss what the Select Committee has decided to publish? It is well known generally and it will be widely reported in the press. It is also common knowledge in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not know what the Committee has decided until it reports its proceedings. Question No. 1, Mr. Gordon Wilson.

List D Accommodation

1. **Mr. Wilson:** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of provision of list D accommodation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): There are 18 list D schools providing 922 places, of which 729 are currently occupied.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister recall his correspondence with me about the unfortunate case of the girl of 14 who could not be provided with secure accommodation and absconded for a period, though she was subsequently safely returned? Does he realise that there is considerable alarm among the children's hearings and the police about the lack of secure and balanced accommodation? Will he postpone the proposed transfer of list D schools to the regional councils and produce an overall report on the situation to make sure that the system that is to be passed over is a coherent system?

Mr. MacKay: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my reply he would realise that there are about 200 places surplus to need in the list D sytem. Negotiations are underway between the principal local authorities involved and the list D schools, and I am satisfied that the negotiations will come to a conclusion that will allow to continue schools that in the eyes of the regions are necessary for the continuation of the system to continue.

Mr. McQuarrie: What steps does my hon. Friend propose to take following the decision of the social work services group to cease having a role with the list D schools with effect from 1 April 1986?

Mr. MacKay: That decision was taken by my right hon. Friend and me. The subject has been on the go since 1968 when the then Act envisaged that the Secretary of

State would retain his responsibility on a temporary basis only. I thought that it was time to bring that temporary arrangement to an end. Many people agree with me. I believe that once the current negotiations are concluded, the list D school system will be closely related to the local authority social work system, and I believe that that is the correct place for the relationship.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister has said, certainly in correspondence, that the amount of direct grant currently given to list D schools will be wholly made over to the local authorities assuming responsibility for those schools. Will that amount be hypothecated for that purpose? If not, will the hon. Gentleman assure us that by April next year the same number of places will still be available? That is particularly important for local authorities which do not have list D schools in their areas. Will the hon. Gentleman also answer the point made by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) about secure accommodation?

Mr. MacKay: The arrangements for secure accommodation will continue as before. The children who end up in secure accommodation do not come only through the children's panel system and, therefore, through the social work department of the region. The broad purpose of the cash settlement has been to avoid giving local authorities extra costs without extra resources. We have agreed the transfer to the local authorities of resources that would have been used by the Government if we had continued to support the schools direct.

On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, given the large number of places that are surplus to need, it is clear that the solution that will marry the social work departments and the list D schools will make sure that the needs are met.

Teachers(Pay)

2. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the proposal by the Scottish teachers' unions for an independent pay review.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): There is no substitute for direct negotiation among the parties involved. Pay cannot be considered in isolation from a proper reappraisal of the duties for which teachers are paid: and Parliament has set up machinery within which these matters ought to be resolved.

Mr. Strang: Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge the disastrous situation in our schools? Surely he recognises that after 18 months of action, including 12 months of strike action, the teachers are more determined than ever. Without a new Government offer, the forthcoming examinations will be disrupted and teachers are talking seriously about intensifying their action right up to the general election.

Regardless of whether the front page story in *The Guardian* today is true, will the Secretary of State make it clear to the Prime Minister that if an independent pay review will settle the position in England and Wales as well as in Scotland, it will be so much the better? Will he tell her, above all, that we must have a settlement in Scotland, and have it soon?

Mr. Younger: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point. What is required is for the parties involved to get together and negotiate a settlement, which I believe is possible, given good will. I agree absolutely with the hon. Gentleman about the disastrous situation in Scottish schools, but it is no use calling on me to take an initiative to resolve the matter. I have already produced two initiatives, both of which were rejected. It is time that someone else had a shot.

Mr. Hirst: May I take the opportunity to remind my right hon. Friend that many professionally committed teachers who are striking for more pay nevertheless accept that it is reasonable to look for more realistic conditions of employment? Will he assure me that in the eventual resolution of the disputes there will be an amendment to the conditions of employment that will prevent the frustration of curriculum development and in-service training?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. I accept absolutely that most teachers feel extremely strongly about what they regard as the inadequate way in which they are treated and paid. I have accepted that all along. Perhaps my hon. Friend will agree that the saddest feature is that, in spite of that being recognised, the teachers do not appear to be willing to move. I hope that they will now consider that carefully.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State oblivious to the fact that last Thursday's strike affected nearly every school in Scotland and that nearly 1 million Scottish pupils are being continuously affected by the Secretary of State's failure to find a just solution to the dispute? Is the Secretary of State aware that at the rally on Thursday in George square, Glasgow, attended by 10,000 Scottish teachers, some placards proclaimed that some of the teachers had been Tory supporters? Even they are now supporting strike action as a last resort in pursuit of their legitimate demand for an independent pay review.

Mr. Younger: No one is in any doubt that a large number of pupils and schools were affected by the so-called industrial action last week. It is distressing that parents are becoming more and more concerned. They are writing to us asking why there cannot be some solution which includes ensuring that this sort of nonsense can never happen again, to the detriment of their children.

Mrs. McCurley: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the role of the employers in the teachers' strike, because in my opinion their voice has been distinctly muted?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's view. The employers made it clear at the beginning that they agreed with the teachers. The employers have always been different from the teachers in that they believe that any review of pay alone would be incomplete. They are equally certain that there must be a reassessment of conditions of service for teachers if any lasting solution is to be found.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Secretary of State realise that by dismissing the teachers' action as "this sort of nonsense" he shows his failure to come to grips with the seriousness of the problem? Since it took him about six months to produce his first negative response to the proposal for an independent pay review — which suggested that he was not opposed to it in principle — will he reconsider now, like his colleagues in the English Department?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that I said that the teachers' case was nonsense. I have

never said that. I have always acknowledged that the teachers feel strongly about their case. I said that it was nonsense to treat children in a cavalier manner by harming their exam prospects. That is nonsense, unacceptable and unworthy of the profession.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the problem with the dispute is that the real victims—the schoolchildren—have no votes and no say in the matter? Does he agree that the teachers have conducted the dispute at minimum cost to themselves? Will he therefore consider representations from parents who say that the dispute cannot be allowed to continue? If the employers will not act against the teachers, will my right hon. Friend consider taking powers so that he can?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend's general comments. I do not have the power to take such action, as I do not employ teachers. They are employed by the employers. I agree that parents will now require as a further outcome of the dispute, not merely a solution that will satisfy the teachers and their fears about remuneration and so on, but a settlement which includes a reasonable guarantee that such disruption of schools can never happen again at no cost to the teachers.

Mr. Ewing: Will the Secretary of State be more forthcoming and admit openly and honestly that he is the employer of the teachers and that he alone is standing between the teachers, the children, the parents and a settlement of the damaging dispute?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the teachers have shown good-will in suspending all industrial action until after Christmas? Does he agree that if the Government do not react we shall be heading straight for an all-out strike? Has the Secretary of State been attending the meetings with Lord Whitelaw, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Prime Minister? If he has, does he expect to make a statement before the Christmas recess with propositions to resolve the damaging dispute?

Mr. Younger: If I had been the teachers' employer, many matters would have been made much easier in the past few months. One problem has been that employers have not felt able to exert pressure on the teachers to be more reasonable in their demands. Twice I have made major moves in the direction of the teachers, including finding a large sum of money—additional to anything that the employers had offered—to try to resolve the dispute. No similar move has been forthcoming from the teachers. I would of course deplore an all-out strike, but at least that would commit the teachers, as they would then have to suffer some financial penalty instead of putting it all on to the children, as they have been doing up to now.

Mr. Donald Stewart: If the Secretary of State refuses to take the initiative in Scotland, will he try to interest the Prime Minister, who apparently is taking some initiative over the English teachers' strike? Or does the right hon. Gentleman think that the Prime Minister regards Scotland as a far off country of which she knows nothing, remembering that she referred to the constituency of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) as the far north?

Mr. Younger: I can answer the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) by saying that I am involved in all meetings about the teachers' disputes, north and south of the border.

BSC Ravenscraig

3. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has made any assessment of the annual economic effects on Scottish steel users that would result from the closure of British Steel Corporation, Ravenscraig; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: No. There is no proposal to close Ravenscraig.

Mr. Fallon: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the maintenance of any excess capacity by the British Steel Corporation imposes additional costs on steel users and taxpayers north and south of the border?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the point that my hon. Friend makes. My right hon. Friends and I decided earlier this year that, in view of the uncertainty of the market for steel, it would be right for the BSC to plan in the sense of keeping all the five major plants going during the next planning period. That strategic decision on the part of the Government has secured the future of Ravenscraig.

Mr. James Hamilton: Will the Secretary of State dismiss entirely the remarks of his hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), whose show of parochialism is outstanding? Will the right hon. Gentleman promise to make it crystal clear to the chairman of the BSC that Ravenscraig will be retained not just for three years but beyond that?

Mr. Younger: I have met the chairman of the BSC on numerous occasions about this matter and I have made my views on Ravenscraig clear to him, but neither he nor anyone else can give a guarantee for any plant into the completely unrestricted future. However, the hon. Gentleman will be as pleased as I am that we have secured Ravenscraig for the present planning period.

Mr. Henderson: Is my right hon. friend aware that many people in Scotland believe that the real guarantee of the future of Ravenscraig is the word of the Secretary of State and of the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*—and that attempts to link in other factors to the future of Ravenscraig may be damaging to Scottish interests?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks. A strange feature of the last few months is that nobody seems to have noticed that the Government insisted that Ravenscraig should remain open during the current planning period.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that whatever he has been up to behind the scenes has been extremely damaging to the future of Gartcosh, to Ravenscraig and to the honour and credibility of Conservative Members? Is he further aware that a mass of detailed evidence was submitted to the Select Committee on the future of Gartcosh and the dependence of Ravenscraig upon it and that that Committee ran away from the issues at the behest of Conservative Members? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to make a proper examination of all the evidence that was submitted to that Committee?

Mr. Younger: References to the motives or honour o hon. Members are no substitute for genuine arguments on this issue. My right hon. Friends and I are still awaiting the views of the Select Committee.

Mr. Fletcher: Although long-term projections of steel demand and plant capacity are extremely hazardous, does

my right hon. Friend agree that the closure of Ravenscraig in the foreseeable future would have a damaging effect on British steel users, on steel exports and on the Trident submarine-building programme?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right. He has mentioned some of the factors which led the Government to decide that Ravenscraig should not be closed during the present planning period.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State accept that if the rumours that are circulating are true, there will be deep and bitter disappointment that some Scottish representatives are apparently putting party loyalty before personal conviction in their judgment on the future of the Scottish steel industry? Will the right hon. Gentleman understand that on the Opposition Benches there is a unanimous view that Gartcosh should be offered at the very least a guarantee that is equivalent to that which has been given to Ravenscraig, a plant of which it is part? It is the firm belief of the majority of Scots that that should be done, and the right hon. Gentleman will ignore that at his peril. Will he give an assurance that Ministers have not closed their minds to that possibility?

Mr. Younger: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. I can make no comment upon whatever has been decided or not decided by a Select Committee of which I am not a member. I think that the hon. Gentleman will accept that. I have received a large amount of evidence on Gartcosh, and views have been expressed from many sources. I am carefully evaluating the evidence and the various views. I hope that I can add to my considerations any other views that I may receive before any final comment is made.

Gartcosh Steelworks

4. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make an official visit to the Gartcosh steelworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have no plans at present to do so.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Secretary of State aware that it might do him a whole lot of good to visit Gartcosh, if only because a change of company might be helpful? Is he aware also that if he ever meets the men and women of Gartcosh he will find that they are people who say what they mean and mean what they say? They would never be a party to the disgraceful betrayal which we witnessed in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs this morning, which was a contribution to the pantomime season and a disgrace to Scotland? Will he accept that the men and women of Gartcosh believe that they have a future and that Ravenscraig has a future and that Scottish Members are determined to fight for that future, in the knowledge that they have the overwhelming support of the Scottish people?

Mr. Younger: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the views and feelings of those who live or work in the area around Gartcosh. One of the most distressing features of the controversy over the past few months is that those people have been faced with tremendous uncertainty. I cannot make any comment upon a Select Committee of which I am not a member.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever happens in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, the Committee can make recommendations only? If the members of the Committee, who represent different parties, are unable to make up their minds and agree to a positive resolution, they cannot make recommendations. The decisions that are made for Scotland are made by my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues and they decided, in conjunction with the decision of the Prime Minister, to keep Ravenscraig open for three years. That deliberate policy decision was put into effect. When the time comes for that decision to be reviewed, it will be necessary to make another political decision.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. As he will appreciate, I can make no comment on anything to do with the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Lambie: No wonder the Secretary of State is not to pay an official visit to Gartcosh or Ravenscraig. I give the warning that those areas should be the last ones that he should visit. Is he aware that in spite of the determined attempt by myself as Chairman of the Select Committee and Opposition Members to reach a compromise that would not be averse to our principles and would be agreeable to Conservative Members — *[Interruption.]* Despite my determined attempts as Chairman to achieve a compromise agreement — an agreement which I thought was accepted by the responsible Government Members of the Select Committee—it has been decided that no report will be published. Had the Secretary of State any say in the decision that was reached by the Tory Members of the Select Committee? Did he interfere at the end of the discussions? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand from the Chairman of the Select Committee that the minutes are to be published today. Once that order has been given, it is in order for the minutes to be referred to.

Mr. Younger: First, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) is not correct. I did not say that I refused to visit Gartcosh or Ravenscraig—I merely said that I had no present plans to visit Gartcosh. Secondly, as the hon. Gentleman is the Chairman of the Select Committee, he is responsible to the House for the Committee's conduct and he can perhaps answer for that conduct better than anyone else. Thirdly, may I make it perfectly clear, as I should have thought my conduct this afternoon had done, that I have had absolutely nothing to do with anything that the Select Committee has done.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that there are those in the House, who are not necessarily on the other side of the House, who hold a genuine view that the future of Ravenscraig may be gravely compromised by the continuance of Gartcosh? Having listened to the evidence, are we not entitled to reach a conclusion that differs from that of the Chairman of the Select Committee?

Mr. Younger: I very much appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's comments, but that just leaves me in the same position of saying that if, and when, the Select Committee produces any views, I look forward to reading them.

Dr. Godman: Is not Gartcosh steel, which is of high quality, used in the construction of submarines? Will the

right hon. Gentleman comment on his failure to persuade his ministerial colleagues to place new submarine orders with Scott Lithgow and/or Yarrow?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman should not believe everything that he reads in the newspapers. No decisions of that sort have yet been taken.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those hon. Members who worked hard to achieve a compromise in the Select Committee found it most disappointing that a majority voted against it?

Mr. Younger: I note what my hon. Friend says, but that is a matter for the Chairman of the Select Committee.

Mr. Wilson: Despite the bumbling political ineptitude displayed in the Select Committee this morning, and in view of the Quisling-like behaviour of some members of that Committee, will the Secretary of State take the lead in reviewing the evidence for the retention of Gartcosh——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We never refer to each other in the Chamber as Quislings. The hon. Member should use another word.

Mr. Wilson: If reference to that good Norwegian expression is not allowed, may I substitute the word treachery?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just as bad. Come on.

Mr. Wilson: If I must withdraw the word Quisling, may I substitute the word treacherous? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is important in these highly charged matters to keep the temperature down. Will the hon. Member use a more acceptable word please?

Mr. Wilson: In full deference to your views, Mr. Speaker, but not concealing my own, I withdraw that term.

Mr. Younger: On the question concerning the Select Committee, that is a matter for the Committee's Chairman.

Mr. Parris: Although it must be right to try to create real new jobs in the Gartcosh area, what purpose can it serve for the Scottish Office to spend £1 million of taxpayers' money poaching 300 jobs from Belper in my constituency to create 300 jobs near Gartcosh?

Mr. Younger: I am sure that no one would wish to poach jobs from anywhere else. I can only say that it has often been done to us in the opposite direction.

Mr. George Robertson: Is the Secretary of State aware of how carefully the people of Lanarkshire have listened to the soft words and assurances from Conservative Members about the future of Ravenscraig? The people also launched the overwhelming bulk of evidence put to the Select Committee showing that there is an inextricable link between Gartcosh and the future of Ravenscraig. Does the right hon. Gentleman therefore realise that a sense of betrayal, dismay and anger will be felt in the west of Scotland today when they realise that the same Conservative Members have sold out on so much of what they said in the past?

Mr. Younger: I do not know how the hon. Gentleman knows that, because, like me, he is not on the Select Committee.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that over the years too many decisions about the British Steel Corporation have been taken on political rather than economic grounds? The effect of that has been to divert scarce resources from more to less profitable and efficient uses. That has resulted in the corporation's impoverishment and has made job security more rather than less precarious.

Mr. Younger: I agree that in the past wrong political decisions have made greater problems for the steel industry than there would otherwise have been. The Government's role is to take the most strategic decisions and to leave the industry's management to run it in the best way that it can.

Mr. O'Neill: If the Secretary of State were to go to Gartcosh he might find out from the workers and the management that Gartcosh has many satisfied customers for its products, not least Carron Steelyne in my constituency. In *The Engineer* magazine it has said that it has no confidence that any other United Kingdom supplier will ensure the quality or delivery times that it received from Gartcosh. It would be put into some difficulty were it to have to find another supplier within the United Kingdom, because it does not have confidence that other parts of BSC will produce what it requires.

Mr. Younger: I understand that point, but it is a matter for the British Steel Corporation. Its view is that it will be able to meet its customers' demands with the plans that it has.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my right hon. Friend note that the Select Committee voted down the Chairman's report because Opposition Members chose to vote it down as the Committee had received no evidence to enable it to come to the conclusion that the Gartcosh, steel mills should remain open? Will he therefore take an opportunity to visit Gartcosh or arrange for representatives of the SDA or elsewhere to visit it, to begin discussions with BSC (Industry) to create genuine and lasting jobs in businesses that have a future in that area, and not be diverted by the antics of Opposition Members?

Mr. Younger: I note what my hon. Friend says. It is worth mentioning that BSC (Industry) has already said that it is prepared to help in the Gartcosh area.

Forestry Commission (Broadleaf Policy)

5. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements the Forestry Commission has made for public consultation on the implementation of the new broadleaf policy in each of its seven conservancies.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 2 December in response to similar questions.

Mr. Davies: Does the Under-Secretary of State recognise that when the chairman of the Forestry Commission lodged the new policy in October he gave an undertaking that there would be full consultation at local level with interested parties? Is he further aware that two of the conservancies have now embarked upon discussions of the new policy but have not contacted the headquarters or local branches of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England or the Woodland Trust? Will the Secretary

of State have a word with the chairman of the Forestry Commission and ensure that the consultation is meaningful and that conservationists' interests are taken into account?

Mr. MacKay: I am sure that the Forestry Commission will read with interest what the hon. Gentleman has said. Considerable consultation has taken place in all the commission's areas with a wide range of voluntary conservation bodies. Tremendous interest has been shown in the broadleaf woodland grant scheme since it came into effect on 1 October.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Is my hon. Friend aware that a great deal of anxiety is felt about the widespread and unimaginative blanket afforestation in Caithness and Sutherland? Is he further aware that that is an area of conservation interest and that there is no guarantee that trees that are planted will reach economic maturity? Should not that policy be reviewed?

Mr. MacKay: I know that there is some controversy about planting, not only in Caithness and Sutherland, but in other parts of the country, but I have no doubt that the people doing the planting have worked out that the economics of it are correct. In addition, I am sure my hon. Friend recognises that the planting of trees and the future of forestry products will provide much-needed jobs in rural areas.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister satisfied that the current incentives available under the broadleaf policy are sufficient? As consultations are taking place, will the Minister at least try to get his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to put pressure on the Treasury to come forward with a more favourable tax regime to provide further encouragement?

Mr. MacKay: There is no evidence of any lack of interest in broadleaf woodlands grant scheme. Indeed, I believe that there has been so much interest that details have had to be reprinted. The Forestry Commission is impressed by the number of people and bodies who have expressed interest. I hope that the result will be an increase in the broadleaf planting in Britain.

West Lothian District General Hospital

6. **Mr. Robin Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with progress on the West Lothian district general hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: The first phase of the hospital should be completed in spring 1988. Discussions are continuing between the Scottish Home and health Department and Lothian health board about phase 2.

Mr. Cook: Will the Minister confirm that he may have created a misleading impression in the House on 19 June when he assured me and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that the hospital would include a paediatric ward, although the Lothian health board had already resolved to put the ward into cold storage? I welcome the pressure that the Minister has applied to the board to give substance to his assurance by restoring the paediatric ward. Does he agree that it would be plain daft if the hospital were unable to cater for the health of the fifth of the population of the new town who are of paediatric age?

Mr. MacKay: The design for phase 1 of the hospital, includes a 26-bed paediatric unit. The board's present plans mean that only those services provided at Bangour general hospital will be available when the first beds are opened at the new hospital. As there is no paediatric unit at Bangour hospital, the paediatric services in phase 1 will not be immediately available. For the reasons that the hon. Member has outlined, I have asked the board to consider opening the paediatric ward at the same time as the other facilities in phase 1 are commissioned.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give the board the money to do that?

Mr. MacKay: Lothian health board is one of the best financed boards, not just in Scotland, but in the United Kingdom. To give it additional money would mean taking that money away from less well financed boards. Lothian health board has enough money within its budget to fund and process the new hospital.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a strong case for Lothian health board to be highly funded because much of the medical teaching throughout Scotland is carried out in the Lothian region?

Mr. MacKay: I have said to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and I am happy to repeat to my hon. Friend, that the total Health Service funding in Lothian in 1983-84 was £350 per head. That is the third highest in Scotland. All of the factors about teaching hospitals and so on are taken into account in the formula on which the allocation to health boards is decided.

Stobhill Hospital (Maternity Unit)

7. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the proposed closure of the maternity unit at Stobhill hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have received a number of representations about the board's proposals. In the first instance, it is for the Greater Glasgow health board to consult all interested parties. Thereafter, the proposed closure will require the agreement of my right hon. Friend, who, in reaching a decision, will take into account the outcome of the board's consultation exercise.

Mr. Hogg: Will the Minister accept from me that the closure would be unacceptable to Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and that it would mean the break-up not just of a first-class facility serving the northern area of Glasgow but of a highly skilled team whose services we cannot afford to lose?

Mr. MacKay: As the hon. Gentleman says, the Stobhill maternity hospital provides a service to the residents of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. The Greater Glasgow health board would have to discuss with Lanarkshire health board the effect on residents of any proposed closure before submitting any formal application to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hirst: Is my hon. Friend aware that one in three of the babies born to people in the Stobhill catchment area is born in a hospital outside the area? Does that not suggest that the local community has not supported the excellent obstetrics unit at the district general hospital?

Mr. MacKay: I cannot confirm the statistics, but it is certainly true that many people in the catchment area do

not have their babies in Stobhill maternity unit but go to other maternity units in the city. I am sure that the board will take all those factors into account.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman has agreed to meet my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and other hon. Members from the Glasgow area tomorrow. Will he give an assurance that he will allow Stobhill to be discussed at that meeting?

Mr. MacKay: I do not see how I could prevent hon. Members from discussing it if they wished. Indeed, I imagine that it is one of the items that will be discussed at that meeting. It is worth noting that in Glasgow last year there were 524 staffed maternity beds, but average occupancy was only 368 and maximum occupancy on any given day was 440. It seems obvious, therefore, that there is an oversupply of maternity beds in Glasgow.

Mr. Maxton: In view of the proposed closure of the maternity unit and the other cuts that the health board will have to impose as a result of Government policy, how can the Minister justify the boast that the Government have increased and will increase still further, the amount spent on the Health Service in Scotland? Or does the so-called £120 million extra of which the Secretary of State boasted last week mean that the Greater Glasgow health board will not have to implement those cuts?

Mr. MacKay: The Greater Glasgow health board will receive its share of the additional money made available by my right hon. Friend to the hospital-based Health Service—an increase of about 6·8 per cent. from this year to next. Greater Glasgow is the second best funded health board in Scotland. Under the SHARE formula adopted by the Labour Government, the bulk of the additional money will go to the least funded boards. Nevertheless, Greater Glasgow will receive its share and I believe that with that increase it will be able to continue to provide excellent services for patients.

Severe Weather Aid

8. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is yet in a position to announce the amount of aid to be granted to the farming industry in Scotland following the current year's bad weather.

Mr. Younger: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 28 November.

Mr. McQuarrie: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. I hope he will not take it unkindly if I say that it is too little and too late. Farmers in Scotland lost £150 million due to the severe weather crisis, and they were looking for rather more help. Is my right hon. Friend prepared to meet the president of the Scottish National Farmers Union to discuss the continuing crisis? Will he deplore the most unhelpful remarks about Government aid made by the representative for North-East Scotland at the European Assembly?

Mr. Younger: I note my hon. Friend's comments I appreciate that, in view of the very difficult conditions, farmers in Scotland would have liked the maximum amount that could be found. I believe, however, that £16·9 million is a pretty good response and shows how seriously we take the difficulties. I am grateful to the farmers for having received this reasonably well. I frequently meet the president of the Scottish NFU, and he knows that he can always see me if he wishes.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Secretary of State aware that the agriculture community in Scotland feel that the Government have betrayed them? Is he further aware that it is a matter not just of financial aid but of services? As Lord Gray wrote to me stating that the service provided by the Lasswade laboratory in my constituency is essential and that consideration was being given to the matter, would it not be in the interests of the agriculture community if a decision were taken about that facility, which is so important to that community as well as to the staff there?

Mr. Younger: I quite appreciate that the agriculture community considers that important, but I cannot agree that farmers in general in Scotland appear to have been let down by the Government. We have provided vast sums of extra money to help them with many difficult problems, and I know that that is greatly appreciated. As for the laboratory at Lasswade, discussions about possible locations for the establishment of a unit to ensure that essential services are maintained in Scotland are continuing.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that farmers in north Tayside appreciate the help that has been given, as they realise that they were not alone in suffering from bad weather? They have made their recognition of the fact that others suffered clear in comments to the press.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and agree with his assessment. Farmers know that they can count on a firm response from the Government when they ask for help. This settlement shows that.

Mr. Steel: Is the Secretary of State aware that those of us who represent parts of Scotland that were particularly badly hit by the severe weather find that our farmers agree with the president of the Scottish National Farmers Union, who described the Government's announcement as "a severe disappointment"? In the interests of open government, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he and his colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food assessed that about £26 million was needed, but that they lost their battle with the Treasury?

Mr. Younger: The right hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. My colleagues and I worked hard to get the best possible package for farmers. The general view in rural areas is that it was a pretty good effort.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my right hon. Friend accept one word of criticism? It is that the package appears to have been designed to help most those who need it least and to help least those who need it most. Why was it not possible to include in his package help for hay farmers and others, especially tenant hay farmers, who receive no public funding and who were virtually wiped out during the summer?

Mr. Younger: I am afraid that I do not agree with my hon. Friend's general assessment. What help there is goes to those who need it most. I am sympathetic to the case that he has mentioned and to those who concentrate on hay production in his constituency, but we had to consider first the livestock producers, who were likely to find that they had animals to feed but no hay with which to feed them

during the winter. They had to be the top priority. I am sorry that it was not possible to help everybody who suffered as a result of difficult weather conditions.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this long-delayed package falls miles short of the expectations that were raised by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at the Conservative party conference? What does the right hon. Gentleman say to Scottish livestock producers and poultry farmers who now face the prospect of unfair competition from Irish farmers, who had the benefit of a much more generous aid package, including cheap grain from European stores?

Mr. Younger: It is not at all clear that that form of aid will help those whom it is intended to help. As for general assistance, the hon. Gentleman can always say that he would rather have had more money. I ask him to think whether he would have got anything like as much from any other Government. I doubt very much whether he would.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I welcome the assistance that has been given, but will the Secretary of State explain why there was less assistance for crofters than for farmers? Is this part of the Government's philosophy—giving more to those who have more?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his general welcome, but the one thing on which most people would agree is that crofters are treated extremely generously by public funds.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Lord Advocate (Appearances)

43. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland on how many occasions since his appointment the Lord Advocate has personally appeared in court in *(a)* criminal and *(b)* civil cases.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): My noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate, has spent 42 days in court engaged in criminal cases, and eight days engaged in civil business.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Solicitor-General confirm that at least one of those days spent on civil business was in the action to determine ownership of the assets of the Trustee Savings Bank? Rather than the Lord Advocate spending another day, or more, next year arguing the appeal before the Inner House, would it not be better for the Government, even at this late stage, to accept Lord Davidson's judgment and abandon any attempt to deprive the depositors of Scotland of their assets?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I can confirm that the Lord Advocate appeared in the TSB case, principally because he was the respondent in the petition. However, it would be wholly inappropriate to make any further observations on the case, because an appeal has now been marked.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is good that the Lord Advocate should spend time in court, so that he keeps in touch with the affairs of the law, as well as spending time in the other place, where he must ensure that new laws are implemented?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes, both my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I believe that it is appropriate for Law Officers to be in criminal and civil courts to ensure that we are in touch with the legal affairs of Scotland. For the record, I was in court on 65 days.

Travelling People

44. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he is now in a position to review the non-harassment policy in respect of travelling people.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: There are no plans to review the policy. The position remains that the policy is linked to the achievement of local authorities in the provision of pitch targets. Once pitch targets are reached, the policy will no longer apply.

Mr. Lambie: How can the Solicitor-General expect decent people to respect the law when the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock is not prosecuting travelling people who break the civic government, environmental health, and road traffic Acts? Why is it that some people are above the law?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have repeatedly made it clear that the non-harassment policy linked to sites relates only to trespass. None of us can be unaware of the political influence that the hon. Gentleman enjoys, at least in his own constituency. In view of the fact that the two district councils in the area that he represents have identified possible sites for travelling people, he could avoid asking me this question for the ninth or tenth time if he deployed that influence to ensure that travelling sites were established there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will make available considerable funds for that purpose.

Mr. Henderson: Notwithstanding that, does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the original toleration policy was produced to meet the needs of legitimate travelling people of long standing and repute? Nowadays there are increasingly large numbers of people taking advantage of this policy, for whom it was not designed. In view of that, will my hon. and learned Friend hold discussions with his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Scottish Office to establish a register of those for whom the policy is intended, so that others may not abuse it?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I understand my hon. Friend's point. As he is aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has an advisory committee on the travelling people in Scotland, and if my hon. Friend feels that a considerable number of people are now travelling round Scotland who did not form part of that original traditional grouping, it might be a proper matter to put to the advisory committee for consideration.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Given the Solicitor-General's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) will the hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House why he is opposed to Dundee district council's attempt to establish a site for travelling people within its area of responsibility?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Because, as the hon. Gentleman appreciates, Angus district council has already established travelling people's sites in its area. I am not opposed to establishing a site, but there should be proper consideration of the variety of sites in Dundee, one

of which is in a location which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the travelling people have already said they prefer. That would be the best solution.

River Poaching

45. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions for poaching in Scottish rivers were successful in 1983 and 1984, respectively.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In 1983, 530 persons were proceeded against for salmon and freshwater fisheries offences. The charges were proved against 448 persons. The corresponding provisional figures for 1984 are 532 and 461.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, as poaching is rife in Scotland, those figures are disappointing? Will he assure the House that the legislation forecast in the Queen's Speech will enable him to bring many more successful prosecutions, and to stamp out this offensive attitude of poachers?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I do not know whether the figures could have been improved, given the existing offences. As my hon. Friend appreciates, provision is to be made for updating and strenghtening anti-poaching measures in legislation to be introduced. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is encouraged that such a warm welcome is to be given to that. There is certainly a need for a further extension of offences.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Solicitor-General remind the Secretary of State that, as well as pursuing prosecutions for poaching, some of us in the highlands would like the Government to pursue a course whereby more of the income from salmon fishing generally went to the locals?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: That is not a matter for me. I share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about salmon poaching in his constituency. It is no longer the old-fashioned business of one fish being taken for the pot. A commercial element is now involved, and if it can be stamped out under existing legislation or legislation to be introduced, he, too, would welcome it.

Complaints Against the Police

46. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many complaints against the police have been submitted to procurators fiscal over the past 12 months; and how many have resulted in prosecutions.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In the past 12 months, a total of 1,093 complaints against the police have been submitted to procurators fiscal. Figures for 1985 available to 31 July show that 21 complaints have resulted in prosecution.

Mr. Canavan: Why have no prosecutions been brought against Strathclyde police, who, on 1 May this year, in Janefield street near Celtic park, caused fear, alarm, risk and injury to many people, including one of my constituents, by making repeated cavalry charges into hundreds of innocent people peacefully making their way home after a football match? If the Government are serious, even-handed and consistent about combatting violence at football matches, why should the police get away with behaviour that is worse than many forms of football hooliganism?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman and I must use words differently if he can describe the events of that afternoon as peaceful. Not only were 21 police officers injured, but 12 civilians were injured, one police officer was rendered unconscious and required plastic surgery, and a teacher who assisted a police sergeant was seriously injured and required intensive hospital treatment. In those circumstances, and against the background of the fact that about 62 people are yet to be prosecuted and brought before the courts in relation to the events of that afternoon, it is inappropriate for me to make any further comment on the matter. However, I inform the hon. Gentleman that only two specific complaints were made to the procurator fiscal about police conduct that afternoon. I am aware that a broader and more general criticism has been made of the use of police horses that afternoon, but Crown counsel has said that no proceedings will be taken in respect of that.

Mr. Strang: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, I will not take a point of order yet. We are still in Question Time.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that although it is important to follow up in great detail complaints made against the police, that task is made much more difficult when those complaints are frivolous and malicious? Will he consider ways in which to discourage such malicious complaints against the police?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes, indeed, and in recent discussions with procurators fiscal I have made it clear that if, while examining such complaints, a procurator fiscal believes that the complaint is malicious or is a deliberate waste of police time, he should warn those making the complaint that it is an offence, and that far from police officers being prosecuted, those who make malicious or time-wasting complaints against the police may be brought before the courts.

Prosecution Policy

47. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with procurators fiscal on prosecution policy.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I meet procurators fiscal from time to time to discuss matters relating to prosecution policy.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Solicitor-General consider discussing with chief constables their practice of referring to procurators fiscal complaints made against the police which should more properly be dealt with by internal police complaints procedures?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is certainly not for the procurator fiscal to deal with complaints if they contain no allegation of criminality. However, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, with the Scottish system, if any allegation includes the prospect of a possibility of criminal offences being committed by a police officer, it is proper that the matter should be examined not only by the procurator fiscal but, ultimately, by Crown counsel and either the Lord Advocate or myself.

Mr. Strang: Further to the point of order raised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr.

Clarke). Mr. Speaker. Your ruling was correct and all hon. Members understand it. However, notwithstanding the enormity of the repercussions on the House of Commons of that act of sabotage by Tory Members, we cannot discuss it. You said that the minutes of that disastrous decision are being published today. Were they published at 3.30? If that is so, can we discuss the issue, which will not stop the campaign to save Gartcosh?

Mr. Speaker: I did not know that the minutes were being published until Question Time had started. If the minutes have been ordered to be published, as I understand from the Chairman that they have, it was in order to refer to them in Question Time. That is why I corrected my earlier ruling.

Mr. Ewing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for raising this point of order, because you have been more than generous with Question Time. Nevertheless, this is a very important marker, as you will appreciate. Will you consider the wider implications of what has happened today? It is well known in the House —I do not make anything of this—that there have been internal problems inside the Scottish Conservative group and——

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *indicated dissent*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know that and it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Ewing: I shall come to my point of order, Mr. Speaker. Such outside influences are now seen to have an effect on the work of the Scottish Select Committee and the price for settling that dispute has been the jobs of 700 steel workers at the steel plant at Gartcosh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has a touch of the extension of Question Time.

Later—

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This relates to the point of order raised earlier. You said that the minutes of the proceedings of the Select Committee would be ordered to be printed. The Select Committee did not order them to be printed. The vote against a report came from a majority of those in opposition, who voted to annul the report. If the report is annulled by a vote, by whose order are the minutes, containing the report that was to be annulled, to be printed?

Mr. Speaker: I hope that I was not misled. I understood from the Chairman of the Select Committee that the minutes had been ordered to be printed today.

Mr. Fairbairn: With respect, that was not done. If it is suggested by the Chairman of the Select Committee that he has ordered the minutes to be published, may I have your ruling that they should not be published?

Mr. Speaker: If that should be the case I was in error and my earlier ruling should have stood. I will look into it.

Written Answers

3.36 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw your attention to a copy of *Hansard* which I made available to you. I wish for some guidance on a point of editing in the *Official Report*. I am sure that it was inadvertent, but it is important. On 9 December, in column *439* there is a written answer to me above which there is a heading "Job Creation". Beneath that are four *Hansard* columns listing constituencies, opposite each constituency there is a number, and heading each column is the word *"Jobs"*. I can understand how those compiling the *Official Report*, on receiving that list, may have been misled into thinking that those figures represented jobs that had been created.

As we all know, hardly any jobs have been created anywhere anyhow and nearly all the jobs listed in *Hansard* are not created jobs, as the heading would suggest, but avoided redundancies. For example, in the case of Sparkbrook, nearly 3,000 jobs are listed, nearly all of which were intended redundancies that were then avoided.

I ask for your ruling on two matters, Mr. Speaker, because of your relationship with *Hansard*. First, will you ensure that the title is remedied? I know that it cannot be done in the daily copy, but it could be in the weekly edition or the Bound Volume. Such a title is clearly misleading. Secondly, will you use your good offices to ensure that the Minister provides the requested information—which he has refused to give—of a breakdown of the figures into jobs preserved and jobs created?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot deal with the second part of the hon. Member's question, but I shall certainly look into the somewhat misleading heading at the top of column *439*.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mr. Jopling.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: There seem to be points of order every day.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not a coincidence that there always seems to be at least one statement on an Opposition day? It is most unfair to those right hon. and hon. Members who are trying to get into the debate.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for that.

3.41 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): With permission, I will make a statement on the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers of the European Community on 9 and 10 December. I represented the United Kingdom, accompanied by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State in the Commons.

The council agreed in principle, subject to the opinion of the European Parliament, to extend the quota system for sugar for the five years 1986-87 to 1990-91. For the first two years, the A and B quotas will remain at their existing levels, and the Council will take a further decision by the end of 1987 on quotas for the remaining three years. The maximum rates of levy on A and B sugar will also remain unchanged for the first two years, except for a small additional levy designed to recoup, over the coming five years, the deficit that has accumulated on the levy account. The additional levy will be shared between member states so that those who have produced most quota sugar will pay the most. As a result, the rates of levy will average 1·31 per cent. of the present intervention price for the Community as a whole, while in the United Kingdom it will be set at 0·8 per cent.

The decision to fix the quotas for two years, instead of five years as the Commission proposed, is helpful. In making its further decision, the Council will be able to take account of developments, in particular the expected increase in the use of sugar for industrial products.

The Council agreed to postpone until a later meeting further detailed discussion on proposals on sugar for the chemical industry, and for a revised starch regime.

The Council also adopted a proposal intended to fulfil a commitment made during the price-fixing negotiations to extend the annual sheep premium to goats in certain regions, and also to untupped ewes of certain breeds in mountain areas. The premium is to be paid at 80 per cent. of the full rate. I made it clear that the proposal on ewes is unsatisfactory, since it does not cover all the breeds and regions which are affected. Accordingly, I voted against the proposal.

There was further discussion of a measure setting minimum standards for battery cages for laying hens. Although the standards fell well short of what I would wish, I recognised that they were the best on which agreement could be reached. The Danish Minister, however, was unable to accept the text at the present time, and the matter will be taken up at the next meeting of the Council on 19 December.

Finally, the Council discussed the Commission's proposal to ban the use of hormonal substances for

[Mr. Michael Jopling]

fattening cattle. All other member states were prepared immediately to accept such a ban from 1 January 1988. I continued to argue that, before reaching a decision, the Council should have available the scientific evidence from the Lamming committee and should take full account of the implications of a ban for imports of meat and meat products. I also urged the Council to adhere to its previous decision to adopt such a measure only by unanimity.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for making the statement. I agree with him that it is most disappointing that the Council has set aside the work of the scientific body that it set up. That does not bode too well for the future. Will the right hon. Gentleman be a little more explicit about what will happen if the majority vote goes against him next Thursday? What does he intend to do? He is reported in several newspapers as having said that in his view it is illegal. Does that mean, as the Parliamentary Secretary, his hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Mrs. Fenner) hinted but would not expatiate upon, that he will refer the matter to the European Court? Furthermore, how has the recent Heads of Government decision on voting affected the matter?

Does the right hon. Gentleman think that the additional beet sugar levy will achieve its object, which is to make the sugar regime self-sufficient and self-financing? The levy has not managed to do that yet, and I note that even the highest rate of levy falls below what the Council suggested initially should be paid by everyone. Will the regime be self-financing? If not, how much will it cost to finance it?

However, that is secondary to the problem that the continuation of quotas has not tackled. We are 3 million tonnes in surplus in the sugar regime throughout the Community. Will not the adoption of the new quotas perpetuate that situation?

Did the right hon. Gentleman take the opportunity to discuss the near trade war that exists between France and ourselves in the ewe trade? I am sure that he will agree that that will have severe effects on British sheep farmers. What will he do next week? He will have the good wishes of the House if he promotes British opposition with the utmost vigour.

Is there a national derogation so that countries that wish to impose higher standards in the keeping of battery hens than the Council of Ministers feels disposed to agree will be able to do so?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. He mentioned the continued refusal of the Commission to receive the final reports of the Lamming committee. I share his disappointment.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the possibility of a majority vote. I drew the attention of the Council of Ministers to previous decisions—the first in 1981 and another this year—that changes in the regime should be made only by unanimity. I told the Council that I continued to hold that view.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the additional beet sugar levy would enable the fund to reach equilibrium. The deficit in the fund to which the Commission referred is no less than 400 million ecu. The extra levy is intended to eliminate the deficit over five years.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a 3 million tonnes surplus in the Community. He will know that during the negotiations I have argued that because our B quota was reduced to 10 per cent. of the A quota, as a result of two bad-weather seasons in the early 1980s there ought to be an adjustment in the other direction because the under-production no longer occurs. I believe that I was right and that I had widespread support in that argument.

I share the hon. Gentleman's worry about the way in which our ewemeat exports are being hindered in France. I discussed the matter with my French colleague and told him that I believed that the measures being taken were intolerable and ought to be lifted forthwith.

The intention of the proposed agreement about battery hens is that we should set minimum standards. It is open to some countries to go further, if they wish.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the arrangement that the sugar regime should be renegotiated after two years is sensible and will be well received in the industry, because it is given time to get itself organised to take advantage of the new opportunities that should be opening up for it?

Will my right hon. Friend maintain the closest co-ordination with his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry and with the sugar industry so that we maximise the possibility of the sugar conversion industries being deployed in this country, to our benefit, whenever possible?

Will my right hon. Friend also pursue the difficulties over the ewe trade with the greatest vigour? It is essential that the confidence of our sheepmeat producers is sustained.

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the possibility of reconsidering sugar quotas in two years. We have found the best possible solution, bearing in mind that the new opportunities for the industrial uses of sugar are not yet available. I hope that we shall be nearer that point in two years. With my colleagues, I shall do my best to ensure that industrial processes are taken up in the Community, especially in Britain—that is why I have taken the stance that I have.

My hon. Friend asks me to take vigorous steps to ensure that the hindrances to the ewemeat trade are lifted. I undertake to do that.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend referred to his representations to the French Government about their wholly illegal ban on British sheepmeat, but he has not told us what the French Minister replied. What did he reply, and did my right hon. Friend say that he would impose a ban on French turkeys which will remain unless and until the ban on sheepmeat is removed?

Mr. Jopling: When I raised the matter with the French Minister, he told me that he had received a message from the Commission that in the Commission's view the steps being taken were illegal. He said that he would reply to me within two days. That takes us to today. I shall be interested to hear the reply. I hope that the illegal action will be stopped, but my hon. Friend cannot expect me to announce in the House that I intend to take illegal steps. That is something that no Minister has ever announced to the House.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): In view of what the Minister has said today, will he consider the possibility of taking the ban on ewemeat to the European

Court if no action is taken by next week? He would certainly have our support for that, because we believe that the obduracy of the French Government is not in the spirit of the European Community.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is being said in Europe that the hormones ban will begin on 1 January 1988?

Mr. Jopling: We shall watch the ewemeat situation carefully. We shall keep in mind the possibility of referring the matter to the court. No decision on hormones has been taken, but I confirm that the latest Commission proposal is that a ban should come into force on 1 January 1988.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): For the reasons outlined in Monday night's debate, does not the hormone problem go far beyond trenbolone and zeranol? Is not a matter of principle involved? What does Mr. Andriessen say to the question, "Why did you not take into account the likely results of the Lamming committee?"? Are we not reaching a time when, far from the days of Lardinois, in order to curry favour with frankly ill-informed opinions in the Bundestag or elsewhere, the commissioners are prepared to override scientific evidence? Is not that a matter of principle on which the Government should stand firm?

Mr. Jopling: I asked questions of the commissioner yesterday in almost precisely the terms in which the hon. Gentleman asked me questions today. The commissioner said that he thought it opportune now to disband the Lamming committee. That is a political decision. The hon. Gentleman does not have to convince me of the rightness of his case, because I have put exactly that case for weeks, and I am equally exasperated by the Commission's attitude.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): If the French continue to ban exports of British sheepmeat, does my right hon. Friend realise that he will come under increasing pressure from our farmers to ban imports of French turkeys, particularly before Christmas? If my right hon. Friend is unwilling to consider taking such action, what other steps can he take to help the British sheep trade?

Mr. Jopling: I am prepared to look—I always do so, anyway — at whether all importations from all countries are strictly within the law, but my hon. Friend will not expect me to tell the House that I intend to take illegal steps.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): When will the Agriculture Council take action against the extension of Commission competence involved in the fixing of cereal prices this year by which cereal prices have been determined by the Commission despite a West German veto that they should not be reduced?

Mr. Jopling: I regret that the matter is in the hands of the Commission. The hon. Gentleman will remember the circumstances which led to a German use of the Luxembourg compromise in the middle months of this year. We discussed this issue briefly on Monday, when the Presidency asked the Council of Ministers whether any members of that body had changed their view from the time when the veto was applied. There was silence in the room and, clearly, there continues to be a stalemate. In the meantime, the Commission is fulfilling its duty to fill the vacuum.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement that neither Britain's A nor B quotas will be increased will cause great disappointment? Is he further aware that his statement that there is no guarantee that our quota will be increased even in the third year will cause still more disappointment. Does he accept that the needs of the chemical industry are such, if Britain is to maintain its biotechnical lead, that they must be satisfied, and is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the supply is available at the right place?

Mr. Jopling: The British Sugar Corporation and beet growers recognised that a possibly extended market for sugar resulting from industrial processes was not yet with us. Under the previous arrangements, we renegotiated quotas for five years. We now have a helpful step forward in that we shall have the opportunity to look at the quotas again after two years, when we shall know much better what industrial processes are being established. We shall then have a stronger case to argue for an increased British quota if those industrial processes are in the process of being constructed.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Switching from beet to cane sugar, may we be told whether there has been a resolution of the dispute between the EEC and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries on the future prices of cane sugar? If there has been, then, in the light of the two-year moratorium, is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that the decisions reached at the Council are in accord with the objectives set out in the House of Commons resolution of 2 December?

Mr. Jopling: The dispute between the Community and the ACP countries was not discussed at the Council meeting this week. The hon. Gentleman will know that this situation follows a decision at a previous recent Council meeting at which the settlement which the Commissioner had negotiated with the ACP countries was strongly criticised by the Council of Ministers. That situation awaits resolution.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is the Minister aware that the decision not to extend the ewe premium to all sheep breeds in our less-favoured areas is regarded in those areas as a serious failure of advocacy on his part? On what conceivable criteria were the breeds selected, other than apparently the fact that some are covered in his constituency?

Mr. Jopling: For the first time, as a result of my advocacy yesterday, the Commissioner has agreed to make a move on what I acknowledge to be a most unsatisfactory situation. I believe that we would have got a helpful move forward on the extension of breeds and areas if the Commissioner had been allowed to put down his amended proposal. The difficulty was that the matter was blocked by the French and German delegations, for reasons which had nothing whatever to do with the issue.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the result of the agreement on sugar is that the Community will continue to dump 3 million or more tonnes of sugar on to world markets, thus depressing the world price of sugar and the standard of living of many poor people throughout the world? Can he give an assurance that there will be no further increase in production in the Community as a result of the agreement?

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

Will he confirm that the proposal to provide an additional cane refining margin and thus reduce the price of sugar to cane producers has been abandoned?

Mr. Jopling: I hoped that my hon. Friend would be pleased that the Council of Ministers has agreed a scheme that will eliminate over five years the deficit of 400 million ecu from the sales of surplus sugar on the world market. Surely that will be a disincentive for dumping on that scale in future. I hope that it will be.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I welcome my right hon. Friend's characteristically robust stand and his success in Brussels. I thank him for achieving an extension of the A and B quotas, at least for two years. Will he return and ask for more for the remainder of the five-year period, which I assume he was discussing? Secondly, I thank him for ensuring that we do not contribute largely to the crisis levy. After all, we did not create the crisis. Thirdly, there will be disappointment among sugar beet growers and in the British Sugar Association that we have still not achieved the higher quota to which we are surely entitled.

Mr. Jopling: I believe that the British Sugar Corporation and British sugar beet growers will be pleased that the option remains, which it would not have done otherwise, to increase our sugar quota, if it can be demonstrated in two years' time that the market for the extra production exists in new industrial processes. It would not have been possible to justify an increase in our quota by arguing that a new market was readily available now. That is one of the weaknesses of the case. We have made a major step forward because we shall be able to renew our claim, on which I have never given way, at a time when the arguments for it could be infinitely more compelling.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Did my right hon. Friend make it clear to the EEC that, in addition to us believing that a ban on hormones would be wrong, we think that the attitude of Commissioner Andriessen is nothing short of deplorable? Has he detected any change of attitude in the EEC along the lines of the excellent and sensible debate that took place in the Chamber on Monday night, which concluded that any legislation on hormones should be based on hard scientific reality and not on foolish emotion?

Mr. Jopling: I am sure that my hon. Friend would have approved of the line I took in the discussions. I said that no decision on a ban should be taken until we had the full scientific evidence, had arrived at the completion of the Commission's discussions with third countries to ascertain exactly what the implications would be, and knew with more certainty whether a ban could be enforced, which is not clear at this moment.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): What effect has the budget financial mechanism had on the Council in persuading it to produce plans which would discourage cereal farmers from planting cereals in the spring, which would lead to an increase in the surplus of cereals next year?

Mr. Jopling: I am sure that my hon. Friend, with the great attention that he pays to these matters, will be aware that there is a proposal from the Commission before the Council to deal with cereal surpluses in future. We have already discussed that once and I expect that we shall be discussing it again at the Council meeting on 19 December. I have no doubt that we shall at regular intervals in the months ahead, discuss further proposals to try to contain the cereal surplus.

Mr. John: Will the Minister recognise that the effect of adding to our sugar beet quotas will be to increase the surplus, currently standing at 200,000 tonnes in Britain, which is a larger amount than the biotechnology and chemical industries believe will be used in the mid-1990s? We are all keen to see the industrial use of sugar, but there is no point in adding to the sugar quota if all that we are doing is adding to the surplus.

Mr. Jopling: If we add together our home sugar beet production and imported ACP sugar production—there is some production volatility and there are seasonal differences—the total is close to total consumption. The amount of sugar that we export and the amount that we import are broadly in balance. If the capacity of the industrial market were to increase, an argument could be advanced to increase by a modest amount the British sugar quota.

BILLS PRESENTED

Animal Welfare (Royal Commission)

Mr. Christopher Murphy presented a Bill to establish a Royal Commission on animal welfare: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 May and to be printed. [Bill 48.]

Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, supported by Mr. Hugh Brown, Mr. Alexander Eadie, Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn, Mr. Michael Forsyth, Mr. Michael Hirst, Mr. Gerald Malone, Mr. John Maxton, Mrs. Anna McCurley, Mr. Albert McQuarrie, Sir Hector Monro and Mr. Bill Walker, presented a Bill to make fresh provision in the law of Scotland with respect to the consequences of birth out of wedlock, the rights and duties of parents, the determination of parentage and the taking of blood samples in relation to the determination of parentage; to amend the law as to guardianship; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time: and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 January and to be printed. [Bill 49.]

Opposition Day

[2nd ALLOTTED DAY]

Inner Cities

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.7 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move,

That this House recognises that, as a result of Conservative Government policies, growing numbers of people in Britain are forced to live on the margins of poverty or below the threshold of an acceptable standard of living; believes that more individuals are being denied the opportunity to fulfil their true potential, and that society cannot become an harmonious whole while large numbers of people are homeless or living in totally unsatisfactory conditions; demands new initiatives to overcome widespread disrepair and to regenerate Britain's cities and urban areas; and therefore calls on Her Majesty's Government to reverse the deliberate reduction in Rate Support Grant and investment in housing, and to strengthen and develop the partnership arrangements seriously weakened by the actions of the present Government.

We have chosen to debate the deepening problems of Britain's cities and urban areas because of their vital importance to the millions who live in these areas and because of their importance to the well-being of Britain as a whole. There is abundant evidence to support the need for urgent and fundamental changes in Government policies across a wide range of issues. It is indicative of the Government's failure, and fear of examination of it, that they have consistently refused to find time themselves for these issues, so crucial to the well-being of millions of families, to be debated in Parliament.

The evidence is mounting as report follows report and as each one exposes the Government's failures. For example, we have received reports from the Audit Commission; from the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry into British housing; from the British chambers of commerce, entitled "Reviving the Inner Cities"; from the Group of Eight on construction resources; from the Department of the Environment on the condition of local authority housing stock; and, most recently and perhaps dramatically, from the Archbishop of Canterbury's commission, entitled "Faith in the City", from which the opening words in the motion are taken.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the difficulty with reports that concentrate on only one part of our political or social life is that they take to themselves the luxury of seeing an item in isolation? Those who compile the reports do not have the responsibility which every Government must bear of providing resources across the spectrum of Government responsibility? Does he accept that any report must be seen in that important and restricted context?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I do not agree with any of that. Nor do I agree with the hon. Gentleman's description of the report which is entitled "Faith in the City". It does not match the reality of what the report has to say or the work that went into producing it.

This incompetent and cowardly Government are reduced to deception, insults and abuse in an attempt to discredit their critics who range across the whole spectrum of British society—the unions, the professions, industry, voluntary bodies, the Church and all shades of political opinion. Sadly, in the latest example of orchestrated Government abuse, the trickery has partially succeeded. Having had the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's commission for at least 10 days before publication, Ministers cynically connived in breaking the embargo with the sole intention of discrediting the report — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That shows their sensitivity. They connived in breaking of the embargo, with the sole intention of discrediting the report and many distinguished members of the commission. As Ministers calculated, there has been as much discussion in the media of the commission's membership, alleged Marxism and other puerile insults as of the two years of sustained and constructive work of what, by any reasonable test, is an eminent and honourable group. The Government's behaviour can be described only as contemptible.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): As the hon. Gentleman is giving particular credit to the bishops who wrote the report, perhaps he will give credit to those bishops who have got into print by condemning the Militant Tendency in Liverpool and have seen through the smokescreen of fake public expenditure. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to praise those bishops as well.

Dr. Cunningham: Bishop David Sheppard—one of the two gentlemen to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, in case he was not aware of this—was a member of the Archbishop's commission.

It is perhaps significant and somewhat depressing that at the conclusion of this debate we shall hear not from the new, sparkling addition to the Department of the Environment, the Minister of State for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) — but from the chairman of the Conservative party. I fear for the quality of his reply and indeed its accuracy, especially as many of us believe that it was the right hon. Gentleman who orchestrated the off-the-record briefing, abuse and denigration of the report in the first place.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): I conducted no off-the-record briefings. Whatever I said about the report was on the record and said in public. It was not I or my colleagues who broke the embargo; it was whoever put the copies of the book on sale in the bookshops on Saturday.

Dr. Cunningham: In that case, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will join my colleagues and me in denouncing the behaviour of those of his colleagues who did not have the guts to put their remarks on the record in the first place. Apparently, the Government's relationships with the Church have sunk to such depths that when, in typical fashion, the Prime Minister harshly lectured a senior clergyman recently, saying

"If only you were better at teaching the people the ten commandments, we would not have unemployment and moaning minnies",

the reply was swift:

"Prime Minister, if we were more successful at teaching people the ten commandments, we would not have your Government."

All is not well in our cities and there is no point in saying——

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): All is not well with your exaggerated speech, alas.

Dr. Cunningham: At least I am speaking, which is more than the hon. Gentleman is doing. I should not have too much to say from a sedentary position if I were him.

All is not well in our cities and there is no point in saying, as the chairman of the Conservative party does, that it is all due to "wickedness" or "post-war funk", whatever that might be. Nor is there any point in saying——

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Just so that we understand, what does the hon. Gentleman call "our" cities? The report to which he refers has nothing to do with Scotland, and all is well in the cities in Scotland.

Dr. Cunningham: Nor is there any point in saying, as I am not saying, that the problems have just arisen or that they are all the responsibility of this Government. Some of today's problems have their origins in decisions taken years, if not decades, ago. They persist in areas where Labour councils are in office as well as in Tory areas. Yesterday's planning dreams and bureaucrats' housing units are today's nightmares for millions of families.

Our charge against the Government is not just one of indifference, although that exists and many Conservative Members regularly display that callous abdication of duty. We say that a mountain of evidence demonstrates that the special problems of the old inner cities are rapidly worsening because of deliberate, calculated and sustained policies applied during the past six years by the Conservative Government. The problems faced by millions of people are being increased by the failures of Conservative policies. For millions of our citizens, those failures mean that the nightmares will continue.

The problems are poverty, very high unemployment, low pay, inadequate and often appalling housing conditions, homelessness, poor health, family breakdown, unstable communities, racial discrimination and harassment and loss of confidence in the police and, indeed, in the political processes. Problem inner-city areas are often characterised by mixed cultural traditions or racial groups, high levels of crime, such as burglary, robbery, drug abuse and alcohol abuse, and general anti-social behaviour and violence. These awful conditions are often, but not always, associated with bad local authority housing. The inner-city problems exhibit stark contrasts between wealth and poverty, often within sight, or easy walking distance, of one another. There is usually a loss of middle income, skilled and administrative working people—those able to move out. After six years of this Government, almost every measure of inner-city deprivation is getting worse. The downward spiral is accelerated as unacceptable patterns of behaviour become a cause as well as a consequence of the problems.

At present, Government policy is a mix of largely uncoordinated, often contradictory and ineffective programmes. Frequently, Ministers are attempting to give some aid to deprived areas while penalising them much more. The claim that the Department of the Environment is concentrating resources on the worst affected communities is simply dishonest. The record is there for all to see. For urban programme allocations, for partnership and programme councils, which represent the most deprived communities, allocations increased—in real terms, it is true—from 1980 until the fiscal year 1982-83. They then remained static and were cut in cash terms for the current fiscal year.

The change over that period in real terms compared with 1981-82 and 1985-86 is an additional £39·5 million. In contrast, cash grant has been withdrawn sharply and regularly over the same period from those authorities. Including penalties, the reduction has been £428 million —more than ten times as much taken away as given to the authorities. When housing subsidy and housing investment cuts are considered, the position is even more horrendous.

I shall quote some examples comparing the provision in 1979-80 with the current fiscal year, at constant prices. The London borough of Hackney had rate support grant of £69·6 million six years ago. For 1985-86, the figure is £37 million—£32·6 million less than six years ago. In 1979-80, Hackney received £78·5 million in housing subsidy and investment allocations. For the current financial year, the figure is £45·3 million—over £33 million less than six years ago. Hackney now receives £3·5 million more in urban programme resources, compared with a combined total loss of £65·8 million. Hackney is classified by the Government as the most deprived urban borough in England.

On the same basis, Manchester's combined loss in rate support grant and housing support is £181·9 million. The gain is £3·7 million. For Birmingham, the comparable figures are a staggering loss of £214·5 million set against a gain of £3·4 million. Newcastle upon Tyne has had a loss of £101·9 million and a gain of £3·4 million. The record is the same for virtually all city and urban authorities. Liverpool has suffered the largest percentage of reduction in rate support grant of all—a staggering 76·4 per cent. reduction between 1981-82 and 1985-86.

Those authorities have had to cope with such cuts year on year for six consecutive years of Conservative Government. How dare Ministers claim that they are concentrating resources on those communities most in need? Such claims are a deception—frankly, a lie.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that over the past six years I have had an honourable record of talking about local government problems, not least those of my city of Birmingham? Although it is correct to say that many places have not had the full grant that I believe they should have had, including the city of Birmingham—I hope that when the amount of grant we shall get is announced it will be more reasonable than seemed at one time—does he accept that if a council, whether Labour or Conservative-controlled, goes in for spending £7 million on new parish councils when cities are under pressure, that is the kind of social need that should be left on one side until the money is available to ensure that the ratepayers can afford it? Does he agree that some things may be desirable but cannot be afforded at this stage?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, I agree that not everything can be afforded at once or at present, but I also disagree with the hon. Gentleman in the sense that those decisions are properly for the elected city council of Birmingham and not for this House or the Government.

My right hon. and hon. Friends support Birmingham in so far as it is moving towards the dispersal of its administration and devolution from city hall — the council house—towards structures which are nearer to the people and their problems.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Would it be worth putting it on the record that, whereas local authorities have had their grants cut by the Government, the Government can find plenty of money to bail out the casino economy — £350 million at a stroke for the Export Credits Guarantee Department, £252 million for the Common Market because it went bankrupt and £100 million for Johnson Matthey Bankers because their friends were in trouble? The list is as long as one's arm. They find the money to look after their own when it suits them. My hon. Friend and the rest of us will battle on to find money for the inner cities and the local authorities so that we can provide services for our people.

Dr. Cunningham: I am pleased to be able to say that I agree with my hon. Friend. *[Interruption.]* It is team work. That record and the Government's attitude are all the more despicable when set beside not just the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) but the tax cuts for the highest income earners, which have been worth more than £22 billion since 1979.

Who on the Conservative Benches dare parrot the cry of throwing money at problems when faced with such comparisons? We agree that throwing money at problems is an inefficient use of precious public resources, but taking money away from the inner cities, the underprivileged and the poor and ladling it into the hands of high income earners is an obscenity.

Who, apart from the most grasping, can justify the further use of desperately needed resources to make even more income tax cuts, while at the same time the Government are planning the further reductions in rate support grant that we shall hear announced next week and further cuts in housing investment — the very foundations of local authorities' abilities to tackle the multiple deprivation so prevalent in the areas under debate today?

Set beside the scale of the problems, the current urban programme is financially, managerially and politically marginal. In 1985-86 it comprises 0·0002 per cent. of planned Government spending, or 6·5 per cent. of planned expenditure by the relevant councils. In contrast, housing investment allocations alone have been reduced by 71 per cent. in real terms since 1979, according to the Institute of Housing.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Will my hon. Friend point out that, under the partnership programme, money from the Government must be matched by a 25 per cent. contribution from the local authority, and the Government have consistently refused to exclude that expenditure from calculations made under the rate-capping proposals?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. In addition, as my hon. Friend said, the same partnerhship authorities have been subjected to increasing central control through the Rates Act 1984, Government control of their capital receipts and the abolition of the metropolitan councils and the GLC.

Many of the lessons of the inner cities are that central control has caused problems and that monolithic national policies have produced the very disasters that we have to deal with. A most unlikely convert to the case for more freedom for local government emerged recently. He said:

"local authorities should be given back responsibility for their own affairs in the face of increasing Government intervention."

It may surprise the House to learn that those were the words of the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) in a speech in Cardiff on 25 October 1985.

Some people will ask whether there are solutions to the problems. The Labour party's answer is that, however difficult the task, the problems of multiple deprivation must be resolved. We recognise that there can be no quick or simple solution, but such recognition is no excuse for any lack of urgency or for the complacency shown by the Government.

Local authorities cannot resolve the problem themselves. A partnership with central Government, industry and commerce is essential. I urge councils to develop positive attitudes towards business, enterprise and industry, however bad some experiences may have been. It is profoundly stupid, however, for the Government to suggest that private investment can be attracted to the problem areas while public resources are consistently withdrawn. Experience in America has shown that public investment is an essential first step in dealing with the problems. Local government has a pre-eminent role to play in investing in them and bringing about their resolution.

The Government urge less local government involvement and more private sector control. I remind the House that it was the Secretary of State for Education and Science who, when Minister for Housing and Local Government in the early 1960s, initiated with Taylor Woodrow in the private sector the idea of large-scale urban housing development and high-density system building, unhappily carried on by successive Governments. A decade later, the right hon. Gentleman was saying:

"I suppose I was genuinely convinced I had a new answer. It was prefabrication and, heaven help me, high blocks."

That is the most recent experience of major Government involvement, at the expense of local government, in attempts to resolve the problems.

The Government lack a clear sense of purpose. There must be a longer-term financial strategy that brings resources back to the inner cities, but central Government action must not be an excuse to undermine or bypass democratically elected councils. Surely it is critical to foster and develop people's capacity to influence their own lives and community.

Much of the hostility and disaffection felt by city dwellers towards authority comes from the feeling of being excluded from the places where the decisions are taken about them, their families and their communities. We must open up the power structures, streamline bureaucracy and improve people's capacity to influence their own circumstances. Decentralised housing management and social services can show the way. School governing bodies, parent-teacher associations and community health councils provide some forums in which that work can develop. They must be made to work properly and effectively and public participation and consultation in all aspects of local government life should be enhanced. That is exactly contrary to the Government's plans in their latest Local Government Bill.

A housing renewal programme is essential. The decline in both private and public sector housing is horrifying. Residents and tenants groups must be involved in planning and developing decisions so that people are committed to schemes for renovation or redevelopment. Although housing co-operatives cannot guarantee success, they have

[Dr. Cunningham]

already made major contributions in many areas. More workers in such spheres should be locally recruited, reflecting the ethnic and social background of those who will eventually live in the developments.

Urban poverty is rooted in high unemployment, low wages, lack of opportunity for the young, and bad and ineffective education. We believe that central to the Government's new strategy should be a commitment to full employment. The task of reviving the inner cities depends on work opportunities, particularly for the young and the long-term unemployed. However, it is not sufficient to provide jobs that cannot guarantee a decent standard of living, in which health and safety are sacrificed to short-term gain or from which whole groups of workers are excluded because of their colour or sex. That has been the nature of low-wage unemployment in the inner cities for far too long.

A strategy to combat poverty must also address the enormous disadvantages faced by black people and those from ethnic communities in the inner cities, who are found disproportionately among the poor. Discrimination is widespread in employment, housing, education and training, the provision of personal social services and access to credit or financial assistance. There is also a bias against black people which perpetuates the poverty that they face. Local authorities should be encouraged to monitor their provision in those areas to protect against discrimination and to see that the needs of ethnic groups are adequately considered.

Poverty is also concentrated among women in the inner cities, particularly single pensioners and single parents. Like black people, women suffer discrimination in employment and are found in the lowest paid, least secure jobs. Employment protection is therefore of special importance, along with adequate day care to improve women's employment opportunities.

There seems to be little point in further hand-wringing and agonising about what causes riots in our cities. We have accumulated analysis and experience in plenty from the United States and, regrettably, since the early 1980s we have been gathering all too much of our own. Surely we do not need to re-learn the lessons spelt out in the Kerner report following the civil disorders in the United States 20 years ago.

Police forces are absolutely critical to life in the inner cities where people are living closely packed, where poverty and dreary environment are combined in high concentration and the personal and collective security of people is often threatened. In parts of some cities it has simply ceased to exist. People are afraid to be out alone and at home they exist behind chains and bolts on their doors. A self-confident, disciplined police force is clearly crucial in improving the quality of people's lives. Too often, however, the police appear to be unable, if not unwilling, to discuss their operating policies openly with the communities that they serve. Too often, they seem prone to respond to violence or, even regrettably on occasion to provoke it.

As the old saying goes, a bobby's lot is not a happy one. Who steps between brawlers, disarms the armed robber, breaks down the door and finds the corpse and tackles the armed raiders? It is the police. In the Metropolitan police alone, nearly 3,000 officers were assaulted and injured on duty in 1984 and just over 3,000 in 1983. That is one in seven officers or nearly 10 per day. It is a difficult and dangerous job and the burgeoning crime rate under the present Government is making it almost impossible in some inner-city areas.

The need to take ethnic recruits has been identified as an important factor in urban crises, but the record is deplorable. Only 700 out of 125,000 police officers in Britain are of black or ethnic origin. In the Metropolitan police last year, only 36 of the 1,220 new recruits were from ethnic minorities, only 1 per cent. of the whole force is not white and of that tiny proportion only two have reached the rank of inspector.

The problem is not a lack of applicants. The commissioner has said that he is loth to lower standards, but he does not have to do so. He has only to be more imaginative in the recruitment of willing applicants and to alter the grotesquely unrepresentative nature of our urban police force. The result will be a vast improvement in community relations, as similar programmes in the United States have shown. There are clear lessons for us in the American experience in that respect.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Members of ethnic minorities resident in England are concentrated in the cities and major towns — 44 per cent. in greater London and 40 per cent. in the 32 local authority districts containing the partnership and programme areas considered by the Government to be in greatest need of help. Priorities will vary, but in many areas the size of the ethnic communities is sufficient to require explicit attention to their problems.

Mechanisms that the Government should introduce without delay include the assumption of powers to prescribe the keeping of ethnic records. Public sector organisations should know which employees are in which grades, who is applying and being recruited to vacant posts, who is profiting from in-service training and who is receiving the services offered. As many hon. Members recognise, the existing machinery of government in Whitehall and at local level seems ill equipped to tackle the vast problems of urban and inner city areas. The partnership programme started by the Labour Government recognised this almost a decade ago but progress in removing obstacles has been painfully small and slow. The main reasons for that have been the assault on local authority freedom, the massive withdrawal of resources and the huge inefficiencies of the Government's financial regime for local authority expenditure.

All should be changed, as the Government have belatedly recognised. We perhaps need a Minister for the inner cities to straddle the conflicting interests of the several Departments involved. Certainly more ministerial time and effort must be given to the problems. The same is true in local government. Spare-time, unpaid decision-takers are often ill equipped to deal with the huge problems that they inherit on election and which clearly need full-time political attention.

There is no reason why urban life for millions of our fellow citizens should continue to involve poverty, misery, squalor and decay. There is no reason why the ethnic mixes of inner city communities should be a permanent problem. Despite the difficulties, there is a liveliness and

vigour to be encouraged and built upon. We must give people a chance and we must give them hope. The Government give them neither.

President John Kennedy said:

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich. Political sovereignty is but a mockery without the means of meeting poverty, illiteracy and disease. Self-determination is but a slogan if the future holds no hope."

Under the present Government, the future for millions of our people in the inner cities offers no hope at all.

4.45 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises that the problems of the inner cities are longstanding and will not be solved by the outdated policies of inefficient and ill-directed public expenditure; supports the Government's policy of targeting public expenditure more effectively towards areas of greatest need; recognises the vital role of the private sector in providing jobs in cities; welcomes the growth in home ownership which has led to a massive transfer of wealth from municipal landlords to individual families; and calls upon local authorities to conduct their affairs responsibly so as to ensure that scarce resources are not wasted, and to encourage rather than deter private enterprise and opportunities for individuals and their families.".

I shall attempt to refute the pessimistic note on which the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) ended his speech. The hidden hand behind the debate, of course, is the report by the Archbishop's commission. That is why the debate is taking place. I had not noticed any great desire on the part of the Opposition in the past few weeks to debate the inner cities.

Dr. Cunningham: I am sorry to intervene so early in the right hon. Gentleman's speech but it is a matter of the record that in the past year the Opposition have several times chosen to give our time to debate these issues. The Government have consistently refused requests from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for such debates. That is the truth of the matter.

Mr. Baker: In the few weeks in which I have been responsible for my present portfolio I have detected no great desire by the Opposition to debate the inner cities, no doubt because such a debate gives us the opportunity to show how badly many Labour councils have been running the inner cities.

The analysis of the problem in "Faith in the Cities" starts from the view that the Christian should show compassion to those in need—the poor. People living in the inner cities are particularly beset by poverty, as the hon. Gentleman has pointed out. The report goes on to say that the Christian gospel is as much concerned with the civic as with the private sphere—that is to say, the Christian should be as much concerned with man's material condition as with his spiritual salvation.

The report admits that no single blueprint has emerged from the tradition of Christian social thought which would be able to deal with the problem.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): What is the right hon. Gentleman going to do about it?

Mr. Baker: I shall come to that.

I think that few would disagree with that analysis in the first few chapters of the report, but I enter one caveat. The report gives the impression of lumping together all the people who live in the inner cities and describing them as poor when that is palpably not true. In chapter 9, the report defines poverty as

"being denied access to what is generally regarded as a reasonable standard and quality of life in that society."

No attempt is made to distinguish absolute from relative poverty. Not being so well off as one's neighbour is put in the same category as destitution.

Mr. Heffer: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

The approach that I have described was strongly condemned by Charles Booth in his classic study of poverty in London in 1902. He wrote:

"The question of those who actually suffer from poverty should be considered separately from that of the true working classes whose desire for a larger share of the wealth is of a different character. It is the plan of agitators and the way of sensational writers to confound two in one, to talk of 'starving millions' and to tack on the thousands of the working classes to the tens of hundreds of the distressed. Against this method I protest. To confound these essentially distinct problems is to make the solution of both impossible. It is not by welding distress and aspiration that any good can be done."

It is a pity that that crucial distinction is not made in the report. It is on that wide definition of poverty that the report bases its recommendations.

Mr. Heffer: I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman has read the report, because part of it considers the gentrification of areas of inner cities. It says that gentrification takes homes from people who badly need them and provides a contrast between the gentrified and people who are living in poverty.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman only emphasises my point, which is that the report does not distinguish between relative and absolute poverty, so putting into one class some 15 million people who it calls poor.

We need an escape from poverty, and I do not believe that the report's recommendations provide the best escape in inner cities. To deal with widespread poverty there must be massive State spending. This is, of course, not a revolutionary proposal. Indeed, it is highly conventional and can take its place alongside any number of proposals made in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s, and it is implicit in the Opposition motion. It does not break new ground—the plough follows the predetermined furrow. That is what I find most disappointing in the report. The answer is a collectivist solution—the local council is essentially the saviour of the city. It is the council which must house the poor, feed the hungry and care for the old. The report fails to recognise that public expenditure can be only part—an important part—of the solution in dealing with the cities' problems. It also fails to recognise that injudicious public expenditure has often become a cause of the problem rather than being a solution. Considerable sums of money were spent in the 1960s and 1970s, but can we honestly say that that was money well spent?

The report undervalues the contribution that the individual can make to improve his condition. If a man has to look to the council to be the only provider of the roof over his head and if he has to look to the council to be the only payer of his wage packet, he will remain trapped and isolated in the inner city. That is the inevitable consequence of municipal Socialism.

The Opposition are today calling for more spending by the municipal authorities. What good would more money

[Mr. Baker]

do for Councillor Stringer in Manchester, Councillor Grant of Haringey, Councillor Knight of Lambeth and Councillor Hatton of Liverpool?

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood) *rose*——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Give way.

Mr. Baker: I shall give way in a moment. What have those councillors done? Do they have such a marvellous record of success? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Those councils built the appalling estates in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: The social engineers of the past 30 years——

Mr. Straw: Taylor Woodrow?

Mr. Baker: I readily recognise that some were prompted by Governments of both parties. However, such people have sold the country a series of quack remedies for the problems of inner cities. The trouble is that, having sold us those remedies, they did not wait long enough to see the patient die.

Dr. Cunningham: I regret that the right hon. Gentleman has all too quickly descended to the level of the chairman of the Conservative party. How can he prostitute himself by saying that high-rise flats are the responsibility of local government of whatever party when the designs and decisions were enforced on local government by housing and local government Ministers and originated with his party when in government?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman could not have heard what I said.

Dr. Cunningham: I did.

Mr. Baker: I said that the social engineers and planners of the 1960s and 1970s, in local government and in central Government, are to blame for today's problems. Governments of both parties promoted such development.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way in a moment.

I know that Opposition Members agree that whole streets were demolished in the name of slum clearance. In the great surge of comprehensive redevelopment, the bulldozer relentlessly wiped out familiar neighbourhoods and whole communities. We lost the essential warp and weft of family relationships and friendship.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): So what does the right hon. Gentleman intend to do about it?

Mr. Baker: The family is at the very heart of a stable city. When Opposition Members talk about poverty and escaping from it, it is important that we appreciate that the family remains the greatest centre of welfare.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I have noticed that the present generation of council officers are quick to dissociate themselves from what is being done.

Mr. Robert Atkins *rose*——

Mr. Powley *rose*——

Mr. Baker: My analysis is probably common ground in the House. Only in the past 10 years—I acknowledge that the process started under a Labour Government—has the mad folly of comprehensive redevelopment stopped.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman blamed so-called Left-wing Labour councils for the problems of inner cities. He claims that they drive industry away and quotes the example of Liverpool. Will he explain why, in the inner-city area that I represent which has been ministered over for the past 10 years by a Conservative-controlled council, 30 per cent. of males of working age are unemployed? Who is driving the jobs away from my constituency? It is certainly not Derek Hatton. It might be Ron Watson, the Tory leader of Sefton council. It is Conservative controlled, one of the lowest rated metropolitan districts in the country and does everything that the Government ask, so why is its rate support grant cut? Why, when it asked for £30 million for its housing investment programme, did it get only £6·5 million, which is not a housing manager's pocket money?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will remember that I visited his constituency about six months ago when I saw some impressive housing improvements in Bootle carried out by Sefton council. It was using the private sector to help and providing very cheap homes for many of the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I served on Haringey council for nearly 10 years. When we took over in 1968, when Lord Greenwood, as he became, was the housing Minister, and Broadwater Farm, with all of its attendant problems——

Mr. John Fraser: Who built it?

Mr. Atkins: The plans were Labour's and Labour started it. The hon. Gentleman should be careful when talking about Islington, of which council he was a member. Broadwater Farm was started by a Labour-controlled Haringey and when there was a Labour housing Minister.

Mr. Baker: There is general agreement that, whoever bears the blame for what happened in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, it was disastrous for us architecturally and socially.

Let me turn to the future, and what can be done about housing problems in the inner cities. The answer to the inner cities' housing problems must be much more diverse, using different types of tenure and attracting as much private sector finance as possible. To launch out now on a huge programme of new council building would not deal with the problem. That has been tried. Certainly, more must be spent on renovation. This year £2·5 billion will be spent by councils on repairs, refurbishment and maintenance to improve conditions. I would like to see more spent. As the House knows, there is further provision for that in the public expenditure plans for next year.

I would also like to see a break-up in the management and ownership of large estates. The report recognises the importance of that. That is why we shall introduce a Bill to allow housing management to be passed to tenants' trusts, co-operatives or housing associations. The report also recognises the importance of our priority estates project, which has shown that localised housing

management, through tenant involvement, can help to reduce crime, bring down rent arrears and fill empty properties.

Within the last six weeks there has been an enormous breakthrough in setting up the Thamesmead trust. Five thousand five hundred houses now owned by the GLC will pass to a privately owned and managed trust. As a result of a huge process of consultation, involving a mini-election between a public sector trust run by Greenwich and the GLC and a private sector trust, the people chose the private sector trust.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): We all welcome my right hon. Friend's initiative. It is important that tenants play a greater role in the management of estates. In Leeds there is an extraordinarily high proportion of extremely defective housing. Despite the Government's Housing Defects Act 1984, there are serious problems in meeting the needs of rapidly declining circumstances. Is it not possible in those cities to allow the councils to release some capital assets that they have gained by pursuing Government policies?

Mr. Baker: Next year extra funds will be made available to deal with the problem, which affects not only Leeds, but many other towns and cities. I ask my hon. Friend to wait for the announcement by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction on spending allocations.

We also want to help councils dispose of whole council estates. I saw such a one in Bootle. Some of these are for sale, and some are for mixed renting and private ownership. Where that has happened, there has been outstanding success—in Salford, in the Wirral, in north Tyneside and in Middlesbrough. The success of the programmes has shown that many people in the inner cities want to be able to buy decent homes at prices they can afford. In those estates that have been sold and developed, prices are as low as £13,000 for single bedroom flats rising to £19,000 for two and three-bedroomed flats or houses.

We should not underestimate the importance of home ownership in dealing with the problems of inner cities. The report does not give enough weight to that. Home ownership strikes a deep chord in people, and I shall quote from the great work of Archbishop William Temple on "Christianity and the Social Order." He wrote:

> "Modern communism abolishes legal ownership by private persons; under it no one has property to give away . . . to have no property or to be forcibly deprived of it is a serious infringement of personal freedom."

We have been able to provide the possibility of home ownership to many people in the inner cities. That is why we give such importance to the right to buy, and why in our Housing Bill we shall increase the discount for tenants of council flats by 10 per cent. across the board, with a new maximum of 70 per cent. Home ownership and the right to buy represent a major transfer of wealth from the municipal landlord to individual families.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Minister explain how the right to buy can begin to alleviate the problems of the vast majority of people in the inner cities? *The Economist*, which is hardly an Opposition-supporting newspaper, last month said that the people living in the 4·8 million dwellings owned by councils in England and Wales are not just the poor, but the especially poor—the old, the ethnic minorities and the single-parent families. What help does the right to buy give the really poor in our inner cities to alleviate their problems and daily misery?

Mr. Baker: The number of flats and houses bought under the right to buy in inner London is about 19,500. That is low. Wandsworth borough has sold most with 7,500. It has shown that many of its flats and houses can be sold at reasonable prices. I want more of that in the inner cities. I agree that it is much more difficult in some of the estates in the constituency of the hon. Gentleman, but we may be able to help with privatisation through various schemes on certain blocks and through housing associations and management trusts. It is important that we break up the monolithic ownership of the estates, which has dragged us down.

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I also want to support more co-operatives. Already they are working successfully in many of our inner cities. They are funded by the Housing Corporation, whose expenditure under us has increased by 9 per cent. in real terms. Housing co-operatives in Liverpool are well known, are successful and have survived the vendetta of the Liverpool city council against them.

Hon. Members may have seen the programme on television some 10 days ago called "The Pride Factor", in which the Prince of Wales spoke about the role of community architecture. That film was an optimistic demonstration of what we can do as a nation by using the energies, talents, abilities and sweat of ordinary people who want to shape their environment and design their homes. Obviously, they can do it.

In Bristol we have had one experiment with 10 black youngsters, by the Zenzele housing association. Similar proposals are being put forward for a "sweat" housing co-operative—so-called because people will build homes and workshops by the sweat of their brows. I would like to see that approach tried elsewhere.

When hon. Members say that the co-operative housing movement is clutching at straws, I can only say that some of the best estates that I have seen in our inner cities are owned by co-operative associations. They are good because they have used people, and Opposition Members know that. That does not divide us. It is an excellent scheme. Therefore, I look forward to the support of both the Labour Front and Back Benches in this matter.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way.

The improvement of the housing condition in the inner cities, on which I place the highest priority, does not depend upon the council doing it all, owning it all, or designing it all. I am at one with the report which, in paragraph 13, talks of a lack of housing mix in many of the inner cities. The way forward cannot be through greater public ownership, more controls and bigger government. One nation is not a municipal nation.

Dr. Cunningham: None of the matters mentioned by the Secretary of State is included in the motion before the House. I remind him that we are debating not the report

[Dr. Cunningham]

"Faith in the City", but the motion tabled by the Opposition, and we expect him to answer for Government policies.

Mr. Baker: I am answering. The hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his speech that some of the phrases used in the motion were taken from "Faith in the City". Therefore, when I refer to the report, he cannot say that I am not replying to the debate. I have answered the points that he raised and set out the Government's housing policy for the inner cities. I reject the thrust of the report, which is still the thrust of most Labour Members, that municipal collective Socialism is the correct solution.

Mr. Freeson: While welcoming the Secretary of State's conversion to co-operative Socialism, may I take him back to what he said at the beginning of that passage? He said that the Government had presided over a 9 per cent. increase in real terms in the Housing Corporation's budget for housing associations. If that is the case, will he explain to the House, the country and the housing association movement why, during that period, the number of dwellings provided by housing associations has decreased from 40,000 a year to 15,000 a year? Will he also explain why the Government propose to cut the 1986-87 budget by about £35 million?

Mr. Baker: The Housing Corporation is spending much more on rehabilitation and refurbishment at present, so during that period costs have increased. But I do not underestimate the importance of the housing association movement. The Housing Corporation is conducting many experiments. I saw an example the other day in Leeds, where an old industrial site was cleared, and the Regency housing association did a deal with the Halifax building society and proposed to build 120 houses that could be sold or let at market rates. That is the assured tenancy scheme. We must encourage more such schemes to increase the resources available to the inner cities. If we are to deal effectively with housing problems in the inner cities, we must tap the private sector as much as we can.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the major problem in the inner cities is the percentage of publicly owned houses? Does he also agree that those problems are caused by the amount of public money that has been poured into the inner cities by successive Socialist Governments?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right. In many inner city areas, the main landlord, with more than 50 to 60 per cent. of properties, is the council.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): That is not true in Birmingham.

Mr. Baker: I did not mention Birmingham; I said "many inner city areas." The thrust of the report is that the municipal collective solution is the best one. I have said that that is not the best solution and that we need a mixture of tenure and much more private sector housing.

The second point of the hon. Member for Copeland was the erosion of the economic base of the inner cities. The report and the hon. Gentleman analysed it well, but they fail to recognise what the Government have done to encourage enterprise and individual effort in dealing with that problem. We have encouraged the re-use of redundant buildings to provide better premises for small businesses. We have encouraged the setting up of local enterprise agencies to give advice, especially to those starting in business. During the past six years, we have provided 3,000 new and refurbished industrial units and enterprise workshops. The prosperity of the inner cities will be recreated very much by small businesses and individuals. It was built in that way during the last century, and there are encouraging signs of it happening again. Last week in Newcastle, I opened a craft exhibition by young people, many of whom were unemployed six to nine months ago. But they had all received enterprise allowances and started their own businesses. The allowance is directed to the individual, and is a cash payment to help him or her to start in business.

Much is being done to improve the environment of the cities. In Birmingham, we have tried to improve the look of the city through enveloping and through spending money on it. We have also tried to ensure that youngsters are trained to do much of that work. There are substantial training programmes within the urban programme. At present, 7,000 people are being trained in schemes within that programme, most of which are concentrated in our most deprived inner cities.

There has been a huge improvement in the physical appearance of many cities, although not all. London docklands is the most exciting example of urban regeneration in the world. It has already attracted more than £1 billion of private investment. Every pound of public money spent has drawn in nearly £6 of private investment. We know that 2,700 houses have been completed, with a further 5,000 under construction, and that 4,700 permanent jobs have been created, while, on average, a further 1,500 people are employed on construction at any one time.

I have been pressed to set up urban development corporations in more cities. We can learn important lessons from the success of those corporations, and we are assessing them carefully. It may be difficult to establish such agencies with the full range of urban development corporation powers in highly populated areas where the extent of dereliction is not great. But some local authorities find it difficult to cope with concentrated areas of dereliction, and some do not have the management capacity. Would they be helped by an urban renewal agency, possibly working with or taking the form of a private sector consortium or trust? Those possibilities must be explored.

The hon. Member for Copeland talked about resources. On public expenditure, the Opposition's charge is that, although we have increased the urban programme from £93 million in 1978-79 to £338 million this year, introduced urban development grants under which £77 million of public spending is levering £340 million of private investment, and increased derelict land grant from £20 million to £82 million, we have at the same time reduced the rate support grant. I accept that the grant has been reduced, but that has happened throughout the country. Some towns and cities have aggravated the reduction by wilfully overspending and thereby losing more grant.

The implication of the Opposition's case is that expenditure by towns and cities has decreased. That is simply not so. In 1979-80, in the seven most deprived inner authorities, which are the partnership areas, the local authorities spent £700 million in current expenditure. This year, they will spend just below £1,400 million, which is

almost double. Allowing for inflation, that is an increase in real terms of 4·3 per cent. In 1979, the 23 programme authorities spent just over £1 billion. This year, they will spend just over £2 billion, which again is nearly double, and an overall increase in real terms of 6 per cent. Since we have been in office, all the metropolitan areas have spent 7·5 per cent. more in real terms on current expenditure.

After allowing for inflation, the figures mean that more is being spent on local government services in our towns and cities. But does anyone claim that the increase has been matched by a reduction in inner city problems? Our contention, and the thrust of Government policy, is that only by targeting money through our grant schemes can we achieve the most effective results.

Dr. Cunningham: What about capital figures?

Mr. Baker: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shouting like that. The biggest cut in capital spending in public housing was under his Government. He was not a member of it, but the figures for between 1976 and 1979 speak for themselves.

Apart from better housing and the prospects of more jobs, the other problem that afflicts our cities, on which the hon. Member for Copeland touched, is the high rate of crime. Crime is often seen as a symptom of inner city decay. We must also recognise that it is a form of decay. Too many people living in our cities have been robbed, burgled or mugged, which drives them out. They want to look after their children and live in a safe area. The causes of criminality are complex, but it is too simplistic to say that poverty and unemployment create criminals. Few people would argue that, because if poverty and unemployment cause crime, the Victorian cities, which had much greater poverty, squalor and appalling suffering, would have been overwhelmed in a sea of lawlessness and disorder. They were not.

We must make our cities safer. I applaud the support that the hon. Member for Copeland gave to the efforts that the police are making, but the establishment of so-called police monitoring groups and the refusal of some teachers even to allow policemen into their schools cannot help in this task. On law and order, as on so many other issues, the people vote with their feet. I am delighted to see just how popular the neighbourhood watch schemes are. By working together as a community, people and the police can defeat crime.

The House will be aware of the evidence that organised crime is increasingly involved in drugs trafficking. This is a new corrosive cancer for British cities. In New York, heroin has destroyed Harlem. The Government are determined to tackle the problem and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will introduce a Bill later this Session that will enable the authorities to trace, freeze and confiscate the assets of drug traffickers.

I accept that we are not debating the Church of England report, but it is the hidden hand behind the debate. It makes 38 recommendations to the Church and 23 to the state. I find it surprising that all its recommendations are made to institutions and none to individuals, for the very basis of Christian teaching is that grace flows through individuals, not through institutions. The institutions of local government, of central Government and the churches all have a role to play in helping our inner cities. However, if we undervalue the role of the individual, the role of the family, the role of independence and the role of self-help, the problems of the inner cities will get worse. The goal is to make our cities places where people can find work, where they want to live and where they can bring up their children. They are the community there now. Do not let us undervalue the contribution that they can make, do not underestimate their abilities, their talents, their determination. It is time that their voices were heard and their energies marshalled.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. I appeal for brief contributions.

5.23 pm

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): I shall deal first with resources and then with that aspect of matters on which the Minister seemed to pour scorn—the institutional aspect. I shall not bore the House or myself by quoting a whole series of statistics but it has to be said that, despite some of the acrobatics in the Secretary of State's speech, in the past six or seven years there has been a major reduction in resources going into inner urban areas. The resource cuts have been applied to other sectors beside housing, but they were significant enough. I do not think that the Secretary of State even understood the contents of my intervention when I said that his Department's figures show that in the housing association movement alone, which concentrates most of its work in inner city areas, there has been a reduction so that instead of producing 40,000 dwellings a year—rebuild and rehabilitation—it produces only 15,000. By some acrobatic means, the Secretary of State showed that there has been an increase in resources. In fact, there has been a major loss of housing produced and this is continuing.

This is not an argument about tenure. There is nothing new in the argument about the increase in the variety of tenure. I shall not go into the details of what was being put in hand when I was in the Department, but those initiatives and others were started then and have been continued. The increase in the variety of tenure or even the introduction of private finance into housing, of which I am in favour, is not an answer to the need for greater public investment.

There has been a 70 per cent. reduction in investment. A return of that investment would be leverage of private money into the inner city areas, but we do not get that leverage. Private investment does not come unless one puts a major proportion of public money into such areas to lever that money. There is nothing original about that. It is well known, as many successive Government's policies and methods have been directed to that end, not just in housing but in derelict land grants, on which I have had occasion to question the Secretary of State and his predecessors.

The derelict land budget is well below the level that would provide a huge increase of private investment in inner city areas to clear up derelict land. The biggest single cause of failure to bring derelict land and property into use is the failure to enlarge the derelict land budget, which levers large-scale private investment into those areas and on to sites. The Government know this. They know that there are schemes on shelves, in local authority after local authority, that could be brought off the shelves and put into operation within 12 or 18 months if the grant were to be increased.

[Mr. Reg Freeson]

Educational buildings in our inner areas are a disgrace and they are deteriorating rapidly again because of the cuts in the capital budget and the revenue budget for replacement, modernising or even undertaking the proper land maintenance that is lacking in many of the public and private sector buildings. The resources that should provide for new buildings, modernisation and planned maintenance of building on a properly programmed basis is not being made available but refused. The same is true of hospitals. Priority shaping of budgets so that more proportionately goes through regional authorities into the inner areas, as compared with more affluent areas, is not happening despite all that those Ministers, who are not here today, have been saying.

I have been investigating this matter, not for the first time, in my area. The regional health authority in my area — this is not untypical; it is happening all over the country — proportionately spends more capital and revenue in the outer metropolitan area than it does in the inner city area. The figures are there. The arguments are taking place between the area health authority and the regional health authority and little or nothing is being done about it at the level of the Secretary of State and his Department or in the Department of Health and Social Services.

In health, education, housing, industry and training the same point applies. In every possible direction there is inadequate resourcing going into urban renewal.

I shall not labour the point much further, because whatever Ministers may say, every authoritative source around the country — be it in politics, industry, commerce, the professions or the public services—will bring the same message back time and again to Government and Opposition Members. That message is that not enough resource is being provided and that where it is, it is not being properly applied in the areas of greatest priority need. In the main, that means the inner urban areas, although I accept that there are areas of rural deprivation that require a different approach from the one that is now being pursued.

Mr. Steen: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that many of the traditional inner areas have, because of wholesale demolition, now been transferred to the outer areas? There may be half a dozen principal cities with major inner urban area problems, but in the main those problems have been transferred because of the demolition of the old inner city areas. Does not he also accept that perhaps the best way of dealing with housing in the inner areas is overnight to move public housing to private housing by transferring the rents paid by tenants to mortgage repayments?

Mr. Freeson: Although it was a brief allusion, I stressed the point about rural deprivation. It has been well established for many years that in some city areas there are problems on the fringes, not necessarily resulting from the transfer of population to council estates. But that does not alter the fact that the main priority areas are the rundown, decaying inner areas.

When one talks about urban renewal, one should not imagine that there are hard and fast, narrow, circular rings to be drawn in every city and that beyond them similar problems do not exist. Of course that is not so, but to some extent one must speak in shorthand terms, and the thrust is correct—that the greatest concentration is in the inner areas.

As to housing, we should avoid getting bogged down in semantic misinterpretations and distortions. If, when talking about privatising council estates, Conservative Members are simply using a different label to bring ownership to tenants' groups, co-operatives and housing associations, or to alter the systems of management, that is not privatisation on my understanding of the English language. That is altering the method of management and devolving ownership and management from one kind of authority based in the town hall to authority resting in the neighbourhoods and with the communities. There is nothing new about that, although it has not been applied sufficiently.

If the Minister is now a convert to co-operative Socialism, he will get my backing, because some of us have been arguing that both inside and outside the Labour party. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has been a strong advocate of that for many years.

The Secretary of State tended to scorn the institutional question. I become increasingly baffled by the way in which we are attempting to organise affairs in relation to urban renewal in the inner cities. Is the Secretary of State for the Environment the lead Minister, or is he not? Is it the Secretary of State for Employment or the Secretary of State for the Environment? Where do the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Health and Social Services, as well as all the other relevant Ministers, come in?

There was a beginning—I say no more than that—of co-ordination and hoped-for integration of Government action in 1977 and onwards following the inner city studies and the White Paper on inner area policy. For a few years we had the initiative of the partnerships. There was nothing marvellous about them, but they were the teetering beginnings of integration and co-ordination, on which two or three years later Lord Scarman placed much stress but on which there has been little, if any, action since.

The Department of the Environment was the lead Department in seeking to co-ordinate at partnership and programme authority level in respect of all the inner city areas that had been designated. It was taking a lead with other Government Departments—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) would for a while listen to something more than noises in his head. He should listen to the noises of other hon. Members and make his speech at the appropriate time.

There was a beginning of co-ordination and a hoped-for integration across Government Departments. It was hoped that that would be echoed at local authority level. That was seven years ago, but today the partnerships exist in name only, not as a form of machinery——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Freeson: If the Parliamentary Under-Secretary does not agree, he should read the evidence of his own Department to the Select Committee on the Environment prior to the last general election, which made it quite clear that the partnerships had become a shell and were being overtaken by other methods of which we have now lost

sight. The partnerships do not exist as co-ordinating machinery. We do not even know which Minister is taking the lead. A letter that I received from the Prime Minister about 10 days ago tells me that the Secretary of State for Employment is co-ordinating the action teams — whatever they may be—in the inner city areas. But no one has said what they are doing or who is on them. Where is the Secretary of State for the Environment and his junior Ministers, not to mention all the other Ministers?

The Government are in a mess. They do not know where they are going. There is the Home Department, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of Education and Science with the Secretary of State for Employment somewhere at the top doing we know not what. But we do know that a review is taking place. There have been six or seven years of wasted time. There is no need for another report or study. There is a need for action based on the reports and studies that are lying in their numbers on the shelves of the Department and elsewhere.

The Secretary of State referred to the urban renewal agencies. I favour them in particular circumstances, and I am especially concerned with the style of approach of the urban development corporations, the new town corporations, the now-expiring central Lancashire new town corporation and such local authorities as Thamesdown—or Swindon as it used to be known—that have been adopting the coherent, integral approach that the new town corporations have adopted for years. There are examples of that throughout the country, be it in the new towns, London docklands, Merseyside, Swindon or a number of other authorities.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. He is making an excellent speech. The problem in the London docklands is that, whatever development may be taking place there, the priorities are not geared to local dockland needs or the needs of the surrounding boroughs.

Mr. Freeson: That may well be, but I do not want to get involved in discussing the content of what is going on there. I am concentrating on the method of organisation.

If we are to learn the lessons of the new towns, the docklands and other development corporations, the expanded towns such as Swindon and a few other authorities, we must regard method, organisation and policy as central. For more than 20 years there has been talk about the idea of what were loosely called the old town development corporations. I have papers on this in my files at home going back 20 years when I was active on my own local authority. Yet here we are, still reviewing and teetering on the edge. Government Departments and local authorities must learn how to cross the boundaries between different Departments in terms of budget, organisation and policy.

If we did not learn the lessons of 20 years ago, surely we ought to learn the lessons of the studies that were undertaken in the 1970s in the inner areas: in Lambeth, Birmingham and Liverpool 8, Toxteth. They pointed the way towards the urban development agency approach. They, together with a number of other experiments, also pointed the way towards local neighbourhood management in the inner city areaas on virtually a parish basis. One crossed the line from management to community. If all of the parties cannot adopt this policy and apply it in the inner city areas and wherever else it is needed—in the suburbs and beyond—we shall be debating this matter 10 years hence. We said in the early 1970s that if we did not act then we should be arguing about this problem in 1980 and 1985. If central and local government do not adopt a comprehensive community policy for dealing with urban renewal, we shall be arguing about this problem in similar debates 10 years from now, by which time we shall have created further disasters for millions of people, whom we are here supposedly to serve.

5.41 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I was under the impression that the general election was two years hence. Therefore, I am surprised that this debate should have opened with such a partisan note being sounded on both sides. I understand why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment may not regard the Opposition as a target worthy of his mettle, but he is misguided if he thinks that the Church of England merits such an attack. It is a very insignificant element in the debate.

The right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) has improved the temperature of the debate. I have always regarded the right hon. Gentleman as a dangerous Left-winger. When I was Minister of Housing for two and a half years, I had many debates with him. He knows what he is talking about. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is lucky that he is not the Opposition spokesman. The House of Commons will be the poorer if the right hon. Gentleman is prevented from returning to it at the next general election.

When we consider urban deprivation, we face a double problem. There is the old problem of the slums. When the right hon. Member for Brent, East and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and I were debating these matters 15 years ago, slum clearance was a high priority. It was a bricks and mortar problem. There was a residue of houses that were built before world war I. The slum clearance programme between the wars was interrupted and aggravated by 10 years of war and its aftermath.

One of our main objectives was to get rid of those buildings, either by rebuilding or by renovation. Many of them were in friendly, neighbourly areas. Socially, it seemed much wiser to concentrate upon improvement grants rather than upon clearance. If I were to be asked what was my greatest contribution to that office, which I did not hold for more than two and a half years, I would say that it was the contribution that I made towards stimulating improvement grants. I hope that the Government will bear very much in mind the point that that is where the social interplay between bricks and mortar and the community is to be found. If one can preserve communities, it is worth making the effort.

A new problem exercises the minds of most people. It is not that of bricks and mortar. I understand that the Broadwater Farm estate received an award for urban construction. Estates of that kind have been built all over the country and I have visited them. We were not conscious of the social price of bricks and mortar when I was Minister of Housing 15 years ago. However, it was beginning to worry some of us. The social price of high rise is now being paid. We are beginning to understand the dangers.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Amery: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to proceed with my speech because I have done no more so far, than state the obvious.

The problem is not that of bricks and mortar but of leadership, and we have to analyse its cause. The responsibility—I shall not say the blame—for this falls largely upon the motor car and other transport improvements. Before world war I, when the motor car was a rarity, the employer and his chief executives lived, if they could, within walking distance of their place of business. It was convenient for them. Joe Chamberlain, when he was the lord mayor of Birmingham, lived, at the earlier stage, within walking distance of his factory. Therefore, he and his chief executives became the patrons of various communal organisations—clubs and various amateur theatricals. His sons took part in those activities and his wife helped the sick and needy. They set certain standards. It was rather like the "lady bountiful" of the village in earlier days, but it provided a positive factor in setting standards.

After world war I, when the motor car began to become popular, many of what one might call the economic leaders went to live in the country, where they made their contribution to good causes. That contribution was no longer made at the place where they worked but at the place where they lived. Nevertheless, junior executives and skilled workers continued to live close to their place of business. This continued after the war, during petrol rationing and the development of the motor car, until the 1960s. However, as soon as the motor car became universally popular, anybody who could afford to buy one was tempted to go and live in the country or in the suburbs.

I do not say that economic success is necessarily a qualification for leadership, but it is important. Those who are relatively affluent set the standards. There has been an exodus from the inner cities of the potential community leaders, the ones who would normally have set the standards. They have left behind them what Mrs. Shirley Williams has called an under-class of one-parent families and ethnic minorities, among whom there is heavy unemployment. One cause of the unemployment is the absence in Mrs. Shirley Williams' under-class of an old boy network. The old boy network is not, as the newspapers would have us believe, a middle-class organisation. It exists throughout the country.

For 18 years I was the Member of Parliament for Preston, whose community contains a good industrial cross-section. I soon discovered that a young boy obtained employment in a factory because his uncle, cousin or friend knew the foreman and recommended him as a likely lad. However, this does not happen in the black community. It is not yet sufficiently integrated into our community to benefit from it. In deprived areas, the leaders tend to be the political leaders. Let us not cloak ourselves in white sheets. We know that in opposition we look for votes by exploiting grievances. Those who exploit grievances become the natural leaders in the deprived communities.

We cannot turn the clock back; we cannot stop the motor car; we cannot stop the television. We know that the public meeting has virtually disappeared because of television. Not only political associations, but almost all communal efforts suffer because of television and the atomisation of society that follows from that.

Who will assert the positive leadership that is needed? The two most obvious sources are the clergy and teachers. However, having read the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury, it seems to me that the Church will not make much of a positive effort. What could be more condescending than its saying that it wants its clergy to talk with a different accent? It is as if the Church believes that people in deprived areas do not want educated men to teach them. I know from my experience of industrial England that people generally do not care whether a man has an educated accent; they are more interested in his views.

Teachers could also set an example, but it does not look as though they are doing that yet. Councils could help by making it attractive to industry to come into their areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the London Docklands development corporation. That is an appointed authority, but its example could be followed by elected councils. The sale of council houses and flats would help, because ownership is the best guarantee against vandalism, provided that there is a reasonable standard of law and order.

Congestion on the roads is already helping. Across the river we see the process known as "gentrification". People who work in the City and inner London, including some who work in the House, have bought property across the river. However, they depend on a reasonable enforcement of law and order.

We must accept that there will be major changes as a result of the Changing pattern of trade. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) in the Chamber. Liverpool rose to greatness on the slave trade. It was a very good business, but I do not think that we can start it again. There was also good business with south America and north America, but the trade balance has shifted towards the south-east of England.

Glasgow rose to greatness because ships were prepared to come up the river to get their goods. They are no longer prepared to do that.

We cannot resist the pressure of geography. We must ease it. We face a similar problem with unemployment. Most unemployment—I am not talking about the hard core—is the transfer of human resources from older industries to newer ones. Thanks to our relative wealth, we have been able to make the transfer not too painful.

Money will help to solve the problem, but we must make the money first. That is reminiscent of Mrs Beeton and her cookery book — "First catch your hare." National growth is the key. Some hon. Members may have read Jane Jacobs' book "Cities and the Wealth of Nations". I recommend other hon. Members to read her book, because she takes the view that nations are the economic creatures of their cities and that if their cities die, they die. With modern communications, however, the island of Great Britain is rapidly becoming a city. The welfare of its parts depends on the welfare of the whole.

We come back to the central argument: what is the right economic policy to pursue? It is proper for the two sides of the House to differ on that question, but I firmly believe that the Government have got it right.

5.54 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) did a disservice to his thoughtful speech by suggesting that the Church has nothing appropriate to say.

It comes ill for a succession of Conservative Members, led by the Secretary of State for the Environment, to speak so disparagingly of the Church——

Mr. Fairbairn: The Church of England.

Mr. Hughes: Yes, the Church of England. Such remarks come ill from Conservative Members given that the Church preaches above all the message to love one's neighbour, particularly the neighbour who is less well off. I think that the Secretary of State will have offended many people who thought that he was the new and acceptable face of the Tory party. He was expected to be sensitive to the issues, but we did not get much sensitivity today.

A few weeks ago, a publication sponsored by several organisations said:

"Unemployment, inner urban decay and and homelessness are among the key issues facing us in the run-up to the next election . . . The message is a bleak one. Unemployment is at the highest level since the 1930s. 83,000 families were declared homeless in 1984, the highest figure on record and our housing stock is sliding further into decay. The condition of the inner-cities is deteriorating and the Government initiatives to solve these problems seem to have run out of steam.

In each case, this report shows how an obsession with short-term monetary targets has jeopardised longer-term objectives. It is false economy to sacrifice essential maintenance in order to meet ever tighter budgets, yet that is what the Government has done."

The report was signed by Mr. Richard Fuller the chairman of the National Young Conservatives.

Mr. Fairbairn: The document "Faith in the City" claims to be about Great Britain. The hon. Gentleman read out some figures and I take it that they apply to England, because they certainly do not apply to Scotland. This is a British debate

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will wait a moment, he will see that I address the problem on a British scale.

The two themes of the debate are the crisis in housing and the deprivation in our urban areas: crisis—a time of acute danger; deprivation—a felt loss.

The Government ought to realise that they have the responsibility to defend the indictment that has been made more strongly and stridently this year than probably ever before.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to four reports. There have been many more than four reports this year saying the same thing. Only the last report—by the Church—moved the issue from a secular to a moral plane and said that housing people is a moral issue and that people have a fundamental right to be decently housed. But the other reports came to the same general conclusion, which is that we do not have a national housing policy. We have a policy to deal not with deprivation, but with privatisation. The policy of privatising housing is one for dealing with housing tenure and not one for meeting housing needs.

The succession of reports should make provocative and troublesome reading for the Government. The report of the Royal Institute of British Architects said in January:

"The Public Expenditure White Paper . . . makes clear the Government's intention to continue for a further three years policies which are leading to the rapid degradation of the built environment. The Government's proposals for a 10 per cent. cut in spending on construction in 1985-86 . . . follow a decade of neglect of the nation's building."

The Institute of Housing report in February said:

"Overall, the Government's proposals are about to produce the most severe 'on the ground' cutback in housing spending in recent history, far exceeding those in the early 1980s when councils were underspending available resources."

Later in the year, the National Home Improvement Council said:

"Reliance on capital receipts to supplement housing expenditure is an expedient which is both short term and short-sighted. The United Kingdom's expenditure on residential construction as a percentage of GDP is the lowest of all the European Community countries."

The Government cannot escape the indictment:

"Cuts have fallen far more heavily on housing than on any other item of public expenditure."

The Building Employers Confederation also said in February:

"Coupled with the current shortfall in new housing of 100,000 units per annum, this report shows that unless the Government does something soon towards its stated aim of making Britain one of the best housed nations in Europe, the situation will become irreversible."

Lord Scarman said that we faced

"a new housing slum generation."

In June the Audit Commission said:

"The backlog of spending on routine repairs to council housing . . . is now mounting by £1,000 million a year."

The commission agrees that the Government's policy of restricting the spending of capital receipts by loal authorities is crazy.

Then came the sting in the tail — the Duke of Edinburgh's committee, which is hardly likely to do a shoddy piece of work. It concluded:

"Very real housing problems are being experienced by many people with low and limited incomes. If the situation is not to deteriorate further, more energy and more money must be devoted to improving the availability and condition of the nation's housing."

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, professional people hardly given to political rhetoric, said:

"There is . . . an acute and growing shortage of housing . . . This manifests itself in high and rising prices for owner-occupied housing, long council waiting lists and great difficulty for those competing in a shrinking market for flats or rooms for private renting."

After all that we received the Archbishop's report the other day. The total makes up a litany declaring that the Government have a responsibility to do more than repeat the cry "The magic of the market place must prevail. We can afford no more."

Without housing and investment in the inner cities the trend will continue. The vacuum will remain. There will be no hope, just disrepair.

On a non-party basis the Economic and Social Research Council produced a widely welcomed report called "Changing Cities" which drew upon experience in the United States. It concluded that unless we bring partnership and investment into housing, into community building and into jobs, we shall continue to lose in mammoth percentages our industry and our accommodation in the most deprived parts of Britain.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): I have been listening to what the hon. Gentleman has been saying about housing and particularly about the views expressed in "Faith in the City." Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the report was right to imply some criticism of mortgage interest tax relief? Will he enlarge on his views and say whether he thinks that such tax relief is helpful or unhelpful?

Mr. Hughes: I have made my views known regularly. The Liberal party voted against increasing from £25,000

[Mr. Hughes]

to £30,000 the limit at which mortgage tax relief is available. Under the housing and tax credit system which we would use to replace the tax and benefits systems, that tax relief would go. People would receive benefit if they needed it and pay taxes if they should. There would be no disadvantage to people in the private sector or the public sector because they would be able to afford what they had in their pockets to spend.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said that this was a British debate. The inner city of London and the docks of Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast all suffer housing problems. The hon. and learned Gentleman will know that this applies not only to the capital cities. It applies to cities such as Liverpool, Glasgow, Newport and Londonderry as well. Many cities experience acute housing stress.

Mr. Fairbairn: The capital of Scotland is Edinburgh. One could not find a more prosperous and magnificent example of prosperous and thriving community than Leith, thanks to funding by this Government.

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying that there is no housing need in his capital city, many would quarrel with him.

Mr. Fairbairn: The docks are in Leith.

Mr. Hughes: I know. If the hon. Gentleman does not listen carefully perhaps not many more references will be made to his part of the country.

Mammoth increases in homelessness have taken place in our inner cities. Tonight about 27,500 people in London will be homeless and be either on the street or in bed and breakfast accommodation. Many people in boroughs such as Southwark just across the river within a mile or so of Westminster are waiting for accommodation that can be called reasonable. On some estates in Southwark even the milkman and the postman now request police escorts as they go about their business.

The Government have been dishonest because they have presented their policy as if more money were going into the inner cities. They have never aggregated rate support grant and urban aid. They say that they have increased urban aid, but the relative proportion of all national funding that has gone to the inner cities has gone down and down and down. Urban aid is minimal as a qualification of that reduction. It is a question of an increase of a few million pounds compared to the reduction of tens of millions of pounds in rate support grant for boroughs such as mine.

Rate support grant has been reduced from over 60 per cent. to below 50 per cent. of local authority expenditure by this Government. Local authority expenditure has been held down more tightly than Government expenditure. The better-off local authorities with the largest capital receipts can spend more on housing than the poor authorities which do not have much good accommodation to sell, and therefore have almost no capital receipts to supplement expenditure.

If the Government really believed in investing in the inner cities, more money, not less, would have been given to the Housing Corporation for housing associations. If the Government believed that there was a need for money to go into the inner cities, local authorities would not have had their housing capital receipts kept down to 20 per cent. of expenditure and councils would have been able to use some more of their own money to meet local needs.

Mr. Corbyn: What exactly is Liberal party policy on the Government enforced sale of public assets by some local authorities?

Mr. Hughes: I believe that local authorities should be entitled to decide whether they wish to sell, as they were before. All capital receipts should be available to local authorities to spend. There should be no restriction. If a local authority earns money through selling property, it should be allowed to spend it. It should not be kept locked in the bank.

Mr. Tebbit: Many hon. Members will be interested in the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he saying that he is against compulsion on local authorities in terms of the right to buy and that we should revert to the old practice under which local authorities were not compelled to sell to tenants?

Mr. Hughes: We have always believed in local government making as many decisions as possible. That means local authorities deciding whether to sell and the Government not dictating. We also believe that local authorities should be democratically representative of local views, which means proportional representation. That would give the right hon. Gentleman far less cause to complain against extremist policies of local authorities because with PR there would be a balanced and representative presentation of views on behalf of the local community, rather than the bias towards extremism that there is under the present first-past-the-post system.

The Secretary of State said that the important factor was the family and individual responsibility. But families need decent homes, and decent homes are a prerequisite of proper community life. Our policy has always been that Government have a responsibility to facilitate, equip, lend and otherwise provide the resources that are needed for the most fundamental of our requirements as a nation, which is to house those without homes or those who are inadequately housed. It is these people who are generally to be found in the inner cities.

We also need a partnership between public and private moneys for housing and jobs and partnership to make sure that the police are supported. Cities require partnership, not antagonism and confrontation. For that reason, my hon. Friends and I will not support the Government amendment. It talks of "targeting", a word which reminds one of snipers, in this case aiming from their emplacement in Marsham street at a couple of the problems that they can see from their high lookout tower. We do not need snipers. We need a bombardment of Government commitment with the full artillery that the Secretary of State and the chairman of the Conservative party can direct at the issues that matter to the people at the bottom of the heap.

Perhaps the Conservative party is not able to deliver because of the divide between the wealthy and poor. For example, in the constituency of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Mole Valley, nearly 30 per cent. of people are professional or managerial, 66 per cent. are middle class and 65 per cent are owner-occupiers. Compare those figures with the areas that hon. Members on the Opposition Benches represent, such as mine, in which 7 per cent. are professional or managerial, 39 per

cent. are middle class and 2 per cent. are owner-occupiers. Having made that comparison, the right hon. Gentleman may begin to understand why the Conservatives do not understand the real issues. The reality is that they do not share them.

The Archbishop's report called for "Faith in the City". That means commitment to the city. It means charity, yes love, to people in the city. It may be difficult enough at a time of increasing prosperity to have a bias for the poor. If the Government are drawing the purse strings tightly round the spending that they control, the bias to the poor should be even greater. We have a duty to say to this neglectful and complacent Government, "You have a responsibility. Sleeper, wake".

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I again remind the House that a large number of hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I make a further appeal for brevity.

6.13 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I shall obey your stricture, Mr. Speaker, because this debate is of great importance to hon. Members who represent city constituencies.

We face two problems. The first is the need for us to live with the problems of a generation now dead. The second involves the way in which we solve those problems, and by "we" I mean those who, like myself, have been involved in public life in cities for 20 years or more.

We face not only Victorian and Edwardian decay. We are having to solve as well the problems about which we spoke in the 1950s, when we talked of building units rather than homes. I recall more than one Minister of Housing, of either party, urging me, when I was the chairman of housing in Birmingham, to keep on building units. Indeed, when I occupied that office in Birmingham we built in a record year 9,400 units. That was regarded as—and it was in the short-term — a considerable achievement, particularly compared with the number of units we build today The trouble was that they were units. They did not make particularly happy homes. They shoved people up into the clouds, and those flats have caused many of the social and other problems of today.

The Secretary of State for the Environment's report refers to the need to spend £19 billion to bring the nation's housing up to a decent standard. That amount grows like the fungus on the decaying walls of the inner city areas of this country.

Mr. Fairbairn: Which country?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: We are debating Great Britain, of which I thought Scotland was a part.

We must decide our priorities. I accept that it is proper for the Church of England to produce a report such as "Faith in the City." On the other hand, the Church's sermons might ring truer if, as a great landlord, it did more for its tenants to help solve the problems in the hundreds of thousands of houses that it holds.

The chairman of a residents' association of property in Maida Vale talked about the Church being unchristian, dictatorial, unfair and unkind. I agree that the Church has every right to produce a 400-page report on this subject, but it might do better to look to the mote in its own eye rather than in the beam of the politicians. The report was right to declare that there are problems for us all to face.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I will not give way because, as Mr. Speaker pointed out, many hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

An enormous problem faces us all. If tens of billions of pounds are needed to solve the problem, we must consider how it is to be raised. Lord Stockton talked about selling the Georgian silver and the Rembrandts. Few of us have such items to sell. If the noble Lord was saying that selling such items to go to Monte Carlo or on a world cruise was a misuse of the money, he was right. But if we sold the Georgian silver and the Rembrandts to make sure that the walls were sound and the roofs were waterproof, that would be a good investment. The state does not need to hold British Gas or any other great asset. But it must make sure that the assets that it sells on behalf of the people improve the fabric of society, especially those in society who cannot help themselves.

If a great part of the money that is raised from such sales is used to improve areas such as Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, the people of which suffered to make Britain the great industrial nation it was, it will have been a good investment. But if it is frittered away, we will not have made a good sale. That is the great debate that we should be having.

Nobody—from the official Opposition, the alliance or these Tory Benches—would suggest that there is an easy answer. Those who say that if we had the will all our problems could be solved within a couple of years or so are wrong. As an ex-chairman of housing and a leader in Birmingham local government for many years, I appreciate that we are talking about gargantuan sums. They amount to more than £19 billion. It is likely that that sum would have to be spent each year.

We must decide as a nation what we are seeking to do. Instead of talking about housing units, we must make sure that we do not build the new slums of tomorrow. It is so easy to talk about units, but instead we must talk about homes, areas and people. The greatest mistake in which I and others of my generation were involved was in sweeping aside people who sometimes lived happier lives in squalid conditions than in the awful flats that we built. Let us ensure that what we provide for tomorrow is better and more enduring than the new slums that many of us were involved in building.

6.20 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Many different reports on housing have been mentioned during the debate, but I would not have thought that any Member who represents an inner urban area, or who has one within his or her constituency, would need a report from any quarter to make him aware that there is a housing crisis. If Members in that position visit their constituents' houses, listen to the cases that are brought to them at their surgeries, and appreciate that many members of the building trades are out of work, they will know, without the provision of any reports, that there is a housing crisis.

In Coventry, in the aftermath of the bombing, the most immediate and pressing task was to get roofs over heads. Traditional building could not provide the roofs as quickly

[Mr. George Park]

as they were needed, so Coventry council turned to Wimpeys, which constructed thousands of no-fine dwellings. Central heating needs to be installed in these dwellings along with the provision of improved insulation and new wiring. That need is desperate. The windows need to be replaced in high-rise flats and there is a need also for new lifts.

It has been estimated that to make 7,000 dwellings habitable in the categories to which I have referred, the cost would be £36 million, plus a further £12 million for single-storey buildings to replace floors, to make general improvements and to carry out conversions.

In responding to Government policy, the council was in negotiations with the original contractor to get it to take on the refurbishment of part of one of the estates in my constituency. It negotiated with Wimpeys for two years to try to get the company to take on the work. Unfortunately, Wimpeys has pulled out of the negotiations. It has left the council to try to find another contractor to do what the Government are urging local authorities to undertake. There has been a delay of two or probably three years and the tenants see their current misery extending well into the future. The result is a rising tide of resentment. So much for private involvement.

In addition to the post-war dwellings, there are 2,700 pre-war houses. The cost of modernising them is estimated to be £33 million. There are 17,000 houses in the private sector which need modernising at a cost of £70 million. I appreciate that even if the Government made resources available on that scale, the building industry could not respond immediately. However, with a need to spend £151 million on housing, Coventry has an allocation under the housing investment programme of £7·7 million. That has been supplemented by £12 million from capital receipts from the sale of houses and land, but that can be only a short-term expedient. At the current rate, it will take 11 years to cater for the pre-war houses alone, never mind the no-fine housing. In the private sector, it will take 23 years to deal with the existing problems. It must be recognised that the deterioration continues and becomes worse week by week.

In Coventry, there has been no new building for the past two years, during which there has been a waiting list of over 7,000. All new build has been stopped, even for those in special categories such as the elderly and the disabled. All the resources are concentrated on modernising and improving. The help from housing associations is minimal due to the reduction in housing that they have been able to provide.

The Government cannot possibly believe that they are giving a fair deal to those who live in urban areas. In my constituency, the areas which have the no-fine constructions are doubly disadvantaged because they are the areas in which the rate of unemployment is roughly double what it is in other parts of the constituency. In those areas it is 34 per cent. as opposed to 15 per cent. elsewhere.

Mr. Winnick: If at the end of the day my hon. Friend is the only west midlands Member who is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I intervene to say that in my borough there has been no new build in the public sector since 1979, and that there remain many dwellings awaiting modernisation? The tenants of the Rosehill estate at Willenhall sent a deputation to the Department of the Environment to put their case. Is it not essential that the Government's policies are reversed so that provision can be made for the many thousands of families that are waiting to be housed or rehoused by local authorities?

Mr. Park: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says. I do not imagine that Coventry is facing a housing crisis on its own. The Opposition have decided to debate the issue because they recognise that it is a nationwide problem. We have been given an opportunity to highlight the problems that we face in our constituencies. That is why I am drawing attention to the problems within my constituency.

The Government have no policy that will make the inner cities or urban areas generally better places in which to live and obtain employment. If someone gives a prospective employer his address and it is in one of the areas on which we are focusing attention, that is enough to rule him out as a prospective employee. Many of my constituents have told me about that. The urban programme is not an urban policy, as it operates only at the margins. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who opened the debate on behalf of the Opposition, went into that in some detail and I shall not go over that ground again.

The ability of local authorities to develop urban policies has been hamstrung by financial restraints. Taking the rate support grant at 1985-86 prices, Coventry received slightly less than £74 million in 1981-82. In 1985-86, it received £57·5 million, a reduction of about £16·4 million, or 22·2 per cent. The sheer scale of the problem has been identified by the Audit Commission. It concluded that between £30 billion and £40 billion must be spent on housing construction in the public and private sectors. There is a backlog of about £15 billion on renovation and major repairs. The immensity of the problem is not being faced by the Government. The cost in human terms—in misery and frustration—is incalculable.

The Government should start to work with, not against, local government to develop a corporate urban strategy, to assess the effects of one facet of Government policy against another. They should break out of their watertight compartments and out of this vicious circle of no jobs and bad housing — a seedbed for urban problems which cannot always be foisted on to the police to solve. The housing crisis and urban deprivation are matters as pressing as the problems facing Coventry immediately after the last war.

The need is there, and the good will would develop if it were seen that the Government were seriously intent on overcoming the problem of disrepair, lessening the demand for housing and improving the chance of obtaining a job in our urban areas. For that reason, I shall support the Opposition motion.

6.30 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) and some of the hon. Members who preceded him referred to the number of reports on the inner cities and the sad state of our housing stock in inner cities and other parts of the country. One thread runs through all those reports—the proposal that the Government should spend more money and that there should be a collective solution to the problems of poor

housing, especially in the inner cities. That recommendation was made in the report by the Archbishop's commission.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, it is a pity that the upshot of all the reports is that there should be a collective approach. I believe that each of our inner cities has its own particular problems. Those problems arose partly through historical accident and partly because of the different treatment given to each of the cities by their respective councils. Some of the deprivation in our inner cities has been caused by the success of some of the new towns which were set up after the war. For some years, I represented Crawley new town, which has been one of the most — if not the most — successful new towns. People and industry, especially in south London and the docklands, have been drawn as though by a magnet to the new towns that circle London. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said that some time ago, and he was right. The collective approach of successive Governments has promoted this trend. This is a national problem, and we should consider not only the reasons for urban decay but the problems of the inner cities in particular.

There is some dispute about the amount of money that the Government give the urban areas. The report of the Archbishop's commission said that, in some respects, some of the inner cities have suffered cuts. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the money had been increased. Whatever the position, there should be an objective assessment of the needs of cities and towns. The old system effectively allowed local authorities to increase rates by as much as they liked in the full knowledge that they were protected through the rate rebate system from ever incurring the displeasure of their electors. One reason for the demise of urban areas is that small firms and businesses found that they could no longer operate there and either stopped business altogether or moved out. Not to acknowledge that as one of the main reasons for the deprivation in our cities is to ignore the truth.

An objective assessment of rates is necessary. Government grants should be supported on that assessment, wherever it may lead. The amount devoted to urban aid has increased considerably. There is a considerable difference between places like Liverpool and Glasgow. I visited Liverpool some months ago and Glasgow more recently. Glasgow is enjoying an economic revival and Liverpool—in part, at least—is sharing an architectural revival. I am referring to the Albert docks centre, the garden festival site, and so on. They are admirable examples of what can be done. On looking at the streets of Liverpool one cannot help but be struck by the number of tenement buildings that have been broken up and the vast areas of factory space lying empty.

What has happened to Government support for places such as Liverpool? A number of firms that were attracted to the city took the money and, when the going got rough, moved out. Vacant factory lots litter the ground in Liverpool. I do not believe that, on that basis, there is any good argument that more money should be pumped into the cities in the same way—which is how I regard the collective solution. There must be a different approach.

Mr. Parry: Did the hon. Gentleman see the new housing projects undertaken by the Liverpool city council in inner city areas?

Sir Peter Hordern: I saw some of those areas. I was profoundly distressed by the amount of housing that had been destroyed, especially the newer tenement buildings and those older buildings that received architectural prizes when they were built in the 1930s. Those buildings have now been broken up.

No one can deny that the rate support grant given to the citizens of Liverpool has been generous. In Liverpool, RSG per head is £232, which contrasts with Oxford where the amount is £30 a head. It is not reasonable or rational to accuse the Government of not giving sufficient money to places like Liverpool. It is important to consider how that money should be spent and to understand the lessons to be learnt from other countries that also have urban problems. The United States has many cities that have experienced great troubles because of the demise of older industries such as steel—for example, Pittsburgh. Other places such as Philadelphia have approached the problems in differing, characteristic ways. These cities believe in a partnership between the private sector and the city authorities. They have been fortunate in gaining a good deal of private support. Local authorities have primed the pump by putting in money to create the infrastructure.

This is happening, with great success, in the London docklands. I understand that the ratio of public sector to private sector money invested in the docklands is £1:£14. The London docklands are booming. Can this experiment be carried forward to Liverpool and other urban centres? My right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench are doing a good deal in this respect, and no doubt they will say so.

I put forward another proposal to my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench to which they might not yet have considered their reaction. The common thread running through all these areas of deprivation is the need to reduce the cost of work. The experience of providing large extra funds has not been successful, but there is a strong case for reducing the national insurance contribution of employers and employees in places such as Liverpool.

It might be worth considering the system of giving tax-exempt bonds to cities that operates in the United States. It might be done by having an urban development commission. The right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) was talking about that earlier. He said that it should have been set up ages ago for the older towns. There is merit in the suggestion. Private enterprise would be attracted by having tax-free funds floated by an urban development commission from which banks could borrow. They could then lend to private enterprise in deprived areas. That idea has proved to be extremely successful in some of the older cities in the United States. It is an idea that we might follow.

The trouble with places such as Liverpool is that there are too many people trying to do too much. There is often confusion in local authorities about the work that they do. I am not sure that my right hon. Friends are clear as to who should be responsible for the urban programme. I wish that I felt more sure that they were certain about that.

I note that the regional grant system, for example, in Scotland and Wales has been handed over to the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales respectively. A strong case can be made for handing over regional grants from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Department of the Environment. I see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster frowning, but that is only because he is a former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The practice of combining the work

[Sir Peter Hordern]

of those Departments by using small teams is excellent. The impetus must come from local initiatives which are supported and headed by one authority. I am not convinced that we have the structure right.

The problem of our inner cities cannot be solved or in any way lightened by the intemperate language that we hear. The problems require deep humility from us all. I think that the Church of which I am a member was wrong to say that it thought that the Government lacked a political will in this matter. We may lack wisdom, we cannot always get things right, but it is wrong to accuse the Government of lack of political will. We should not become too fond of the extravagant statements that are sometimes made on both sides of the House about Governments, whether Labour or Conservative, about urban deprivation. The problems are deep seated. They require the attention of us all. It is easy to say that there is a magic solution, but the road that is paved with good intentions is not the road that we should adopt.

6.42 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I agree with one thing that the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said. He said that the problems that we are discussing are deep-seated and require careful consideration. They also require action. The hon. Gentleman summed up moderately in contrast to some of his colleagues who have not been so moderate. Many Conservative Members still assume that the Church of England is the Tory party at prayer. I do not think that it ever was. At one time there was possibly greater justification for saying that than there is today.

Conservative Members try to claim the national Church for themselves in the same way that they tend to claim the Union Jack for themselves. That is arrogance. The hon. Gentleman described the Church as the one to which he belonged. It is also the one to which I belong. There are millions of people who are members of that Church, because it is our national Church, who are by no means Conservatives or supporters of the Tory party.

I once had to say to a Conservative Member that Jesus was not a member of the Conservative party. He was not the Member for Nazareth, South and certainly not for Nazareth, North. Had he been a Conservative he would not have been nailed on the cross for fighting the establishment of his day. In addition to being the son of God, he was nailed on the cross because he was fighting for the rights of ordinary people in that part of the world.

When Conservative Members talk about Marxists, they remind me of what Dom Helder Camara, the Catholic archbishop of a Brazilian city, once said:

"When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food they call me a Communist."

That just about sums up the attitude of Conservative Members.

There are many traditions within the Church of England, but there are two basic ones. There is the establishment and there is the group of which, in its early days, John Ball, the radical who wanted to change society, was a member. When I was a young boy in the Church, I can remember listening to Father Grozer in the east end of London and many other people who were preaching not so much the Protestant ethic within the Church but the basic Catholic ethic, which I believe should be the true attitude towards Christianity.

Whether hon. Members like it or not, Christianity is based not just on the individual spirit and salvation but upon a collective responsibility to all people in society. In particular, it is based upon one's attitude to the poor in society, and the idea of helping those who cannot help themselves. That goes very much to the issue of housing.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that while there is moral sense in giving one's own money to try to help people there is no moral content in the Government giving away other people's money? It is for individuals to make the effort. The command of our Lord was

"take up thy bed, and walk"

and means to put individual effort into something. *[Interruption.]* There is also, "Help thy neighbour", but the two must be wedded.

Mr. Heffer: When we pay our taxes, we are all contributing towards the nation's money. I think of one of my constituents who does not have a house or perhaps of a young person who has come from Liverpool to seek work in London and cannot get any accommodation and is living under the arches. I am prepared to pay more taxes if it will provide him or her with shelter and accommodation. So should anyone else who has a conscience and a Christian attitude towards helping other people.

Mr. Tebbit *rose*——

Mr. Heffer: The right hon. Gentleman is like a jack-in-the-box.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Give way.

Mr. Heffer: The right hon. Gentleman will reply to the debate. Other hon. Members have only a few minutes in which to speak. He should content himself — *[Interruption.]*—with replying to the debate. He should not seek to intervene.

The report asks why the poor either have no homes or live in bad housing. That is the basis of the report's housing section. I am not against people buying their own homes. I never have been. I bought my own home at an early stage. As I had no children, I should never have had a home without saving up and obtaining a mortgage. I would never have obtained a council house in the days when I was young. I lived for 10 years in two rooms.

I know about the housing problems of ordinary working people. There are millions of young people who have no opportunity of obtaining a mortgage or buying their own homes, but who need accommodation. The only way that can be solved is by renting. There is little private renting now. Council property has gone down and there is not sufficient being built to deal with the problems. That is the essence of the matter.

"Faith in the City" is a magnificent report, particularly the section on housing. It is first-class, and one of the best reports that I have read for a long time. If I may say so, I think it is even slightly better than the report we in the Labour party produced and put to conference.

It is similar to ours because it does not say that there is only one answer. It makes the very important point that, for many people in the urban priority areas, low wages and rising unemployment put home ownership beyond their reach. Their only chance of housing will be by renting.

Increasingly, rented housing will be necessary for existing owner-occupiers hit by unemployment. If one walks around the older areas of Liverpool today where working people are trying to buy their homes on mortgages, one will see road after road of "For sale" signs. Incidentally, they do not all have a bike to come south to find jobs. Even if they did find a job, how would they sell their house in an area such as Liverpool and then find two or three times the price to buy in London? That is the reality and I am glad that my hon. Friends have raised the subject.

I should have liked to speak longer but as there are many hon. Members who would like to speak I shall make a final point about Liverpool. I referred recently to an excellent article in *The Guardian* by Geoff Andrews called "The Greening of Liverpool". The article says:

"Throughout Liverpool's financial crisis, the 'city housing policy' has been widely portrayed as an open drain down which the profligate council has been pouring cash that it didn't have. But, like everyone involved in the scheme, Tony Byrne firmly rejects these allegations.

That response might have been dismissed as a political one until the arrival this summer of 'Utopia on Trial', a book by Alice Coleman, director of the Land Use Research Unit at King's College, London . . . When Coleman visited Liverpool she announced that 'practically everything we had recommended they are doing—not in patches but the whole lot—Liverpool is the pioneer'."

That is what Liverpool is trying to do and if it got sufficient money and help from the Government it would deal with the problem—[HON. MEMBERS: "Heseltine did that."] The 16 priority areas were introduced by Labour councils, not by the Secretary of State for Defence. If Liverpool could get the money, it could deal with the problem in the way that it is trying to do at the moment. I ask the hon. Member for Horsham to return to Liverpool. I agree with him that when one looks at parts of Liverpool one feels one has to cry about what has happened. We can look at the positive side, which is what the council has been trying to do and unfortunately has to continue to do, partially by mortgaging itself further with a loan from the Swiss, when it should have received assistance from the Government. That should have been the way to deal with Liverpool's problem. I totally support the motion.

6.54 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) thinks that the Church of England is still the Tory party at prayer. Nobody who lives in the diocese of Manchester could fall into that error. I do not wish to criticise the Church for its views on that or any other matter. I shall deal with two aspects, on one of which the Church spent much time and one which was omitted from its report. Both are crucial to the understanding of what we should do about our inner cities. The Church's report, like so many others, reflects the same story. Our discussions today and reports over many years have followed the same pattern and much of the analysis in the Church's report follows the analysis in many earlier reports.

I wish to refer to a point on which the Church has been silent. The hon. Member for Walton said that the Church had a view about the role of the community as well as the role of the individual. That is true. But it is also important to recognise that over the years the understanding of how to tackle inner city problems has moved from the belief that it could be done by communal action to an understanding of the importance of individual actions and responsibility.

A recent and interesting document from the Society of Friends contained a number of quotations from people working in the inner cities. It showed that one of the features of the small areas within our inner cities is apathy, at times verging on despair. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) referred to lack of people able to pick up and run businesses. David Sheppard's comment about the helpless being left behind is true. The solutions suggested do not take account of the importance of personal involvement. Many people who complain that the inner city is full of old people are the very people who argue that family responsibility for old people has faded away and that it is now sufficient to park them in a home at the state's expense and make the Christmas visit with a potted plant and a smile. Those responsibilities, however, still remain.

The Church talked about people moving away from the inner cities to the suburbs and leafier places. Of course, as people get wealthier they will do that, but the link between the old place and the new is a powerful and important one. In earlier days it led to a lot of resources and money going back to the area from which the people came, but that process is diminishing. I cite one example related to changes that have occurred in education within the cities. I will not go through the arguments for grammar schools, but in the days when there was a grammar school selection process the grammar school would select from all over the city. The family remained in the place from which the child came. Nowadays, people move into my constituency to be within the catchment area of the school that is regarded as having the best academic record and highest social kudos, thus creating a middle-class ghetto. That is one of the side effects of the policies that we are pursuing. I hope that when we discuss these matters we shall remember—the Church did not, although I had hoped that it would—to pay more attention to the personal aspects of some of the policies and to the personal responsibilities that go with them.

I wish to refer mainly to housing, as that is the centre of the debate. I prefer the Duke of Edinburgh's report to the Church's report because it deals with a real problem to which the Government must pay attention. The Duke's report said, in effect, that the present structure was so confusing that it was actually hindering the housing market. Much has been said in the debate and in the Church's report about the decline in privately rented accommodation. The Church wrings its hands, makes no real recommendations about how to tackle the problem and virtually suggests that it is impossible. The Duke's report, however, makes practical suggestions. They may not prove acceptable in detail, but at least an effort has been made to tackle the problem. Mortgage interest relief, which is likely to become a subject of increasing political debate, housing associations and all the other aspects of housing in the city are considered within the overall context. The Church, however, washes its hands of all that and says that we should go back to looking to the councils to provide the necessary facilities.

If I have learnt one thing over the years it is that mammoth council estates have been one of the worst features of inner city housing. I do not refer only to high-rise accommodation and I shall not go into the question of who was responsible. It was a fashion in which we all became involved and we are well out of it. When I was on a council in the early days I dealt with apparently trifling matters such as whether old ladies could keep dogs

[Mr. Fred Silvester]

in blocks of flats, which were then pooh-poohed as matters of no concern but the importance of which has been increasingly appreciated since. Having passed through that fashion, however, let us not pass into another and imagine that it is sufficient to divide the council estates into smaller units with neighbourhood offices and the like. People want a real choice, not just between one type of house and another but among the various people offering housing — housing associations, private landlords, owner-occupation if they can afford it, shared houses, and so on. We want people to have the maximum options and to choose for themselves how to conduct their lives. I do not doubt for one moment that more money is needed for housing, but it must be provided in a way that will multiply the choice available to individuals and families.

I believe that the Government must continue to consider the amount of money available for housing. It is not just a question whether to build more council estates or to try to solve the problem in other ways. The housing fabric of the cities is clearly declining. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion referred to repair grants and there is still much more scope for the use of such grants in our cities. I am delighted that the Government are increasing the scope for the renovation of council estates, but we shall need more money than is now available to deal with some of the lousy estates put up after the war. Some money has been set aside for that, but the problem is considerable.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wanted a fusillade to be directed at the whole problem. I believe that we need a carefully aimed shot. There are real problems in the inner cities, predominantly concerning the physical environment and especially housing. If we concentrate our resources on those aspects we shall begin to make strides.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will not merely defend the Government's record, which is very good and much better than most comments in the debate have allowed, but will concentrate on the two central issues. First, he must not say that additional resources are not required for housing when clearly they are required and we cannot possibly tackle the problem without them. Secondly, the Government must strongly encourage developments already begun in which Government money for industry, for instance, is linked with private resources.

It is of fundamental importance that we should engage the people who live and work in these areas to make things hum for themselves. People brought in from outside do a good job but then go back to homes in the leafy suburbs. The people who live and work in the area must be helped and stimulated to do their own thing.

7.6 pm

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I wish to deal with the Prime Minister's amendment, so I shall be referring to matters other than housing. I suggest that when the Minister comes to reply to the debate and to the Archbishop's report he should take the Bible out of the Dispatch Box to avoid blasphemy.

Hackney is said to be the poorest borough in Britain. It is no accident that it is cheek by jowl with the richest area in Britain — the City. The wealth created in this nation does not go to areas such as Hackney. It goes from those areas and finds its way to the City. Poverty and deprivation are widespread in Hackney among both black and white communities and the housing situation is catastrophic. Some 14,000 families, both black and white, are waiting for homes while 8,000 housing units stand empty and unfit for habitation. We need money to make those dwellings habitable but we have had only cuts from the Government.

Some housing in the area is so bad that it has had to be blown up. When the multi-storey accommodation at Trowbridge was blown up people actually applied to live in the remaining flats amid the rubble just to have somewhere to live. In my constituency 300 families are living in bed and breakfast accommodation. The housing need among the elderly is equally deplorable. Age Concern reported that 15,500 dwellings for elderly people were needed in 1980 but in 1985 there are only 6,400, so more than half the housing need of the elderly has been disregarded. Many thousands of building trade workers need work and would be only too pleased to provide housing for the elderly and homeless.

Some 22 per cent. of black and white workers are unemployed in Hackney. I must stress that the problem affects everybody in my constituency, not just black people. It affects men, women, young people and school leavers who have given up hope and end up in revolt. Hon. Members ask why there are revolts — these are the reasons for revolts in Tottenham, Brixton and Hackney.

Business has withdrawn from the area. Metal Box, and clothing and furniture businesses have left in spite of pleas and offers to beat others' rates because they want to move to areas where the job can be done more cheaply so that they can make a bigger profit. Most school buildings in the area are slums. Some have been closed because they are falling to pieces. Some Ministers have gone to the area to see hospital buildings. Like me, they wear glasses, but they leave their glasses at home when they go to Hackney because they do not see what is happening. If they did see, they would do something about it.

Hospital buildings are disgusting. I have been lobbied today by some of the hospital workers who came here complaining that hospital provision in the area will get even worse because the Middlesex hospital casualty department, which treats some 14,000 patients a year, is to be closed. They demand that it be kept open and that there is better provision.

Hackney has the highest level of mental illness in the country because of the problems I have outlined and the conditions imposed on the people there by the Government. Infant mortality is the highest in Britain and expectant mothers do not get proper care, adequate food or decent housing. There are more than 5,000 single-parent families in the borough, many of whom suffer bad housing and unemployment. They need nurseries for their children so that they can go out and look for a job. The chairman of the Conservative party once told them to get on their bikes. Many have gone on bikes, trains and aeroplanes but still cannot find a job.

There are serious difficulties with relations between the police and the public and between Hackney borough council police committee and the Home Secretary, who refuses to allow the local police committee and the local police to unite to deal with problems in the area and protect old people.

Much has been said about the Church's report. I should like to quote from a document entitled "Open letter to

Church and Nation" written by 30 Methodist ministers working in inner cities. They have their feet on the ground and are aware of the problems in inner cities and write:

"There have clearly been criminal acts in some of the disturbances which have taken place. There are, however, crimes which contravene an existing criminal code, and crimes against humanity. Who are the greater criminals in our society? Whose are the policies that drive unemployment up to 80 per cent. and 90 per cent. among our young people and drive them to despair? Who are the companies that take themselves off from our neighbourhoods because profits are too low? Who are the financial institutions that find us unworthy of their investment? Who are the comfortable, wealthy middle-classes who inhabit pleasant detached surroundings such as Guildford and Cheadle and Harrogate and Solihull and either don't want to know us or even wish us in hell so they don't have to share the takings?"

Old-age pensioners are rising from their poverty and demanding the removal of standing charges for gas and for electricity. They demand free television licences, a free telephone service and the maintenance of free travel. Old people in inner-city areas such as Hackney will feel the consequences of abolition of the GLC and metropolitan councils. The Government have cut the funding of Hackney borough council just as they have cut the funding of Liverpool and some other Labour-controlled councils. Hackney's block grant was more than £50 million in 1981-82 and, at constant prices, it is only £33 million for 1985-86 — a cut of more than 33 per cent., or £65 million in real terms. The Government take the money and then ask who is responsible for the problems. The Tories say that they have not the money and that we must not throw money at the problem. The 400,000 unemployed building trade workers say, "For Christ's sake throw us the money and let us get on with building." The money should be thrown to the building trade. All this nonsense about not throwing money at the problem is just a slogan.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: No.

Hackney and other inner-city areas suffer poverty because the Government are mis-spending public money. The Prime Minister and her colleagues ask where the money is coming from. I will tell them the answer. They have the money. They have £132 billion of our money, but what do they do with it? That is what the unemployed, taxpayers and I, on behalf of Hackney, want to know. Britain is not a poor country. We have only to ask the Sainsburys of the country who are making colossal profits out of the people to learn that this is a rich country. They want even more riches. They are embarrassed by their wealth, but they reach out their greedy hands for more and call on the Government for lower taxation. They want lower taxes for themselves and higher taxes on the backs of workers. That is what the Conservative party stands for.

The Government are wasting our money. They spend £18 billion on armaments but it does not defend the people of Hackney, who want decent living conditions, not defence against some fictitious enemy. They want another £10 billion spent not on Trident, but on housing and jobs. They want £17 billion spent not on unemployment, but on jobs. They do not want £5 billion spent hanging on to Northern Ireland; they want that money to be spent on the people of this country. They want £1 billion spent on the EEC and supporting activities, but on the problems of our cities. They do not want £12 billion to go in interest payments to usurers who own the national debt; the money should be used to satisfy the needs of the people.

I was an engineer until I retired. Working people created £270 billion of wealth last year. This is a wealthy nation, but what are the Government doing with that money? Who gets it? That wealth should be redistributed in the interests of inner cities.

7.19 pm

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts). It is not unreasonable to remind the House, particularly Labour Members, that Conservative Members care as much as they do about the inner-city areas, particularly those of us who were born, bred, and educated and have spent our working lives in the cities. We can agree with much of what Opposition Members say, but equally we profoundly disagree with many of their conclusions, especially when hyperbole starts and rational argument disappears.

What I find most puzzling and disturbing about the debate is that no one, not even the Church in its paper "Faith in the City", has addressed the fundamental question which must be asked and analysed before we can find remedies, which is whether we need the cities. Lest it be thought that I am about to argue that we should abandon the cities to their fate, let me say straight away that I shall argue for the reverse.

That question was the name of a report commissioned by President Carter in 1979 when the United States of America turned its mind to the problem, in much the same way as we are doing today. The report was called, "Do we need the cities?". In the United States there was a drift from the northern industrial towns and states to the southern states, with northern America suffering from the same urban decay and deprivation as we do.

How do we perceive the role of the city in the 21st century? The city as we know it today, and the industrial city as it was known in the past, will bear little resemblance to the city of the 21st century. We must consider the way in which our industrial cities evolved. Two hundred and fifty years ago Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Sheffield were only villages. With the advent of the industrial revolution came the growth of the modern industrial city as people moved from working on the land to working in the city. At that time people moved from the land to the city because they expected and found a better life in the cities. Although, by comparison with today, living standards then may have been abysmal, they were better in the cities than on the land.

The growth of the cities escalated when the railways extended city boundaries to the suburbs. The growth of the cities is reflected in the 1832 Reform Bill, when, for the first time, the cities were enfranchised. One can almost identify precisely the peak in the growth in the cities in the 1931 census. From then on one can trace the depopulation of the inner-city areas throughout the length and breadth of the land.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) rightly pointed out that the decline in the population of inner-city areas has coincided precisely with the growth of motor car ownership. In the past, when people moved to cities to find work and homes they had no mobility. Therefore, they had to live as close to their place of work as possible. With the coming of the motor car, artisans had a choice. The 1930s saw the exodus of people in the upper income brackets from our inner-city areas; but the real exodus started after the war with the

[Mr. Cecil Franks]

professional classes. If they could work in Manchester yet live in the more luxurious places of Cheshire or Lancashire, why should they live in the hostile environment of an inner city? They had mobility, so they left, followed soon after by people in the middle income groups. Today those who live in our inner cities do so not from choice, but because they are trapped by economic conditions. If they had the financial resources and economic means, they would be in the forefront of those seeking to leave the inner-city areas. The economic walls and bars which surround the inner-city ghettos are as real as the steel bars which keep in the inmates of Strangeways and Walton gaols.

The House, better than any other body, knows of the decline of our inner-city areas. A trend which applies to every city is that 15 years ago the city of Manchester had 11 Members of Parliament representing it, but today it has five. That accurately mirrors the decline of the cities, and the same is true for Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle and Birmingham. The cities have been declining as the consumers — the inner-city dwellers — have exercised their choice, and at the first opportunity have sought to live anywhere other than the city.

What is the role of the city in the 21st century? Every hon. Member will have his own notion and idea, and I do not claim that mine is necessarily right, but one or two facts are abundantly clear. Cities will continue to decline in importance, to become the administrative and regional centres, and centres for the transportation systems. It is an inescapable fact that our inner-city populations will continue to decline because the man in the street does not wish to live in the poverty, squalor and hostile environment of our inner-city areas.

What positive steps can we take to alleviate today's conditions? In the late 1950s and in the 1960s Moss Side in Manchester was cleared under an ambitious slum clearance programme, for which no one will fault the council. I was a new young member of local government in Salford in 1960, and went with the council to see what was happening in Moss Side. It was said to be the future, and an example of how cities could rebuild the slums of the past. It is now 25 years since then, and we have new slums and new ghettos. It may seem strange that I, who spent 10 years as leader of the Conservative group on Manchester city council fighting the Labour party, particularly the new Left, should take this opportunity to pay them at least one compliment. When I visited the city recently, I saw that the council had taken the brave, but absolutely correct, decision to demolish the multi-storey deck access flats in Moss Side. I applaud that.

But the council will face a genuine problem following that decision, and the same will apply to every council that adopts that approach. The council will have borrowed money over 60 years for that block of flats, which, after 20 years, it has demolished. It has destroyed an asset which in reality was no longer an asset, but a liability. For the next 40 years the council will be obliged to pay the capital and interest charges on that development. It is futile to apportion blame in this matter. The truth is that central Government encouraged and local government was happy to be encouraged. One political party designed the tower blocks and the other contructed them. All political parties are culpable, and it is a waste of time to apportion blame as to whom is responsible. However, the practical problem remains in Liverpool, Hackney, and all the places where councils wish, rightly, to demolish the mistakes of the past.

The Government may wish to consider a good way of helping the inner cities and of removing the faults of the immediate past. That is to adopt the precedent that we have set with our nationalised industries of allowing local authorities to write off part of the debt. If a local authority decides that a high-rise block of flats is anti-social, the Government should co-operate in writing off part of its debt.

Mr. John Patten: I visited Manchester and Salford this morning. My hon. Friend mentioned the need to rehabilitate inner-city housing. With his greater knowledge of Manchester and Salford from his experience of local government there, can he explain why one Labour-controlled council — Salford — is co-operating with the private sector to bring back into use housing that is desperately needed, but Manchester city council is refusing to do so?

Mr. Franks: I can explain that easily. I was leader of Salford council for several years, and I know the current leader well. He is what I would describe as a moderate, sensible, local Labour politician with whom, at the end of the day, common sense prevails. However, the leadership in Manchester has gone exactly the same way as the leadership in Liverpool. I should tell Labour Members that when they have finished their inquiry in Liverpool, the next one will need to be in Manchester.

It is obvious that the cities of the future will have different communities from those of today. They are being created even now. We talk about the communities destroyed by the bulldozers. That is true, but new communities will arise of their own accord. At present, we can use only words, but what we must do is give some leadership to the new communities. It is futile to spend money on trying to keep captive an inner-city population that does not want to live there. However, at the end of the day, there will be a population of some sort. In any expenditure on the inner cities, our top priority must be to improve the environment. If we do that, we shall start to attract people back. Why has one out of three citizens in Manchester and Liverpool left those cities during the past 50 years? The answer is that, in old industrial terms, the cities have outlived their purpose. We must look to the cities of the future, not to those of the past.

7.33 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): In response to the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), may I say that probably one of the most damaging Acts of the recent past — it stopped the development of the suburbs and the free movement of the population—was the Transport Act 1985. South Yorkshire county council and Sheffield city council had started to move people out of the city centres, but that will be brought to a complete end by the Government's transport policy, not to mention their public expenditure policies. Sheffield liberated much of its housing in that way, but the Transport Act will prove a major factor in stopping the movement of people from the inner cities.

Like many Labour Members who have spoken, I represent an inner-city constituency. In many respects, and according to the 1981 census, which has since been

updated, it ranks as the most disadvantaged constituency in Yorkshire and Humberside. In the national context, only a few inner-city constituencies have more problems than does Sheffield, Central. Average unemployment is almost 30 per cent. In some parts of my constituency, it is about 50 per cent. Indeed, it is greater than Sheffield's unemployment as a whole before 1979.

I was interested to hear the Secretary of State talk about the family unit, which is under tremendous pressure in the inner cities. When one considers divorce rates, visits to doctors for tranquillisers, crime, and problems with drugs and prostitution, it is easy to appreciate the immense difficulty of keeping together the family unit. For the Secretary of State to talk about the family unit almost in a throwaway line was an insult to many of those who are imprisoned in the inner cities with all their problems of unemployment.

The problems of the inner cities are not sensationalised on the front pages of the tabloids, because many people prefer to keep their problems to themselves. However, may I give one example from many in my constituency. During the general election campaign, I visited an estate in my constituency. I knocked on a door and a woman came out. We began by discussing the election, but then she closed the door behind her and started to talk about her son. She did not want her son to hear what she said. She had a serious problem; it was nothing to be glib about. Her son had gone through the education system, attended Sheffield polytechnic, obtained a degree and applied for more than 100 jobs, but obtained none. Two days before I knocked on the door, that young man, who wanted to make a contribution to society and in whom society had invested, tried to commit suicide. His mother was deeply upset and blamed unemployment and the problems that follow it. Many of my colleagues will know from their surgeries of similar problems.

Sheffield has a housing problem. The council recently conducted a comprehensive survey of its housing stock that revealed some startling statistics. The cost of repairing and improving the housing stock satisfactorily would be £489 million. The high estimate is accounted for by the fact that many different problems have emerged at the same time. It is important that those problems are put on the record. All pre-war houses in Sheffield need to be modernised. Indeed, most of the council's money has been spent on modernising those dwellings, and 8,000 have been completed. If the annual rate of completion is not increased, it will be 26 years before they are all modernised. The council would like to step up the rate to 3,000 a year, enabling the work to be done in under eight years, but that cannot be done without substantial resources being diverted into the programme.

The second affected sector is the immediate post-war housing that was traditionally built. It is also in need of considerable repair and improvement and is facing rapid deterioration. For example, if the windows and roofs are not renovated soon, continued damage will be done and many may have to be written off. Some 13,000 houses were built between 1944 and 1950 and on average it is estimated that we need to spend £4,000 a dwelling. That brings the bill to about £52 million. The 1940-50 properties built with the uncoventional systems are in need of repair, and large expenditure is needed, estimated at about £5,000 a dwelling.

Probably one of the biggest problems in the inner cities is high-rise flats. It has been correctly pointed out that over the years a number of Administrations have encouraged the building of high-rise flats. The slum clearance programmes between the 1960s and the 1970s relied on new maisonettes, flats and tower blocks to solve the housing problems. Now, these blocks face major structural damage and major repairs are required. One Sheffield tower block, from which all the people have to be removed soon, will cost more than £4 million to renovate. It has been estimated that it will cost Sheffield some £62 million to renovate all its high-rise flats.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness made an important point about writing off debts. In Sheffield, there is an area called the Broomhull flats, which housed 653 units and was completed in May 1970. It was built by a private contractor, Shepherds and Sons Constructions. They are known in the north of England as they were active in Leeds, Nottingham and other areas. The flats cost £3·7 million to build. The block has just been completely evacuated and with the debt charges and the rehousing charges, the project will cost £1·5 million a year for the next half century. Some 653 units have been destroyed and 653 families are being rehoused. That is a major problem.

Other sectors of the housing stock have been looked at, particularly the private sector. The environmental health and housing department is in the process of surveying the entire pre-1919 stock of about 46,000 dwellings in the centre of Sheffield. Much of the stock is in dire need of renewal—both repair and improvement. Housed in this sector are many of the most vulnerable members of society, such as the elderly and the ethnic minorities. The majority of the Sheffield Asian population lives in terraced housing in the inner and urban areas.

In one ward in my constituency, 13 per cent. of the housing stock does not have inside toilets or bathrooms. The estimated cost of renewal for these dwellings is being put at £600 million. Given sufficient funding, the housing department could undertake a 10-year programme to renew the stock, using a strategy of area improvement.

Sheffield has already submitted to the Department of the Environment its programme for the coming year. It wants £489 million, but we have made a bid for £150 million for the housing investment programme for the year 1986-87. However, it is estimated on the basis of last year's grant allocation that Sheffield is likely to receive £21.6 million. That is a drop in the ocean. Sheffield's aim is to supplement its spending allocation through capital receipts and other resources and it is undertaking a capital programme of about £42 million in the year 1986-87.

Once we have dealt with the privatised stock that is in poor condition and on which a considerable amount of money has to be spent, we have to deal with the public sector. The Secretary of State and many of his Back Benchers talked about co-operatives. Nobody is knocking them or any of the housing ventures. However, the magnitude of the problem in inner-city areas means that, without direct Government intervention, there is no way in which enough money can be raised on the open market to allow Sheffield to even start effecting its housing programme. It has intervened on the open market from which much of the money comes. We are now lumbered on one programme alone with a £1.5 million debt every year for the next 50 years. These are some of the major problems and merely to touch them at the fringes will not affect the real problem of decay.

On average, Sheffield has sold 1,000 homes a year out of its housing stock, as the Government have told it to. On

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

top, it has had to take about 1,000 houses a year out of use because they are structurally unsound. However, we have been able to complete only 500 houses over the past two years. Such is the magnitude of the problem that 30,000 people are on the housing waiting list. The Government are forcing us to sell housing stock, some housing stock is being taken out because it is structurally unsound—I can give many examples of that—while 30,000 people are on the housing waiting list. At the same time the Government are always restricting expenditure on new build. That is a major problem for Sheffield and only mirrors what is happening in the other inner-city areas. Tory Members do not seem to comprehend the problems, whether they are social, housing, employment or any other facets of the inner city.

The Church report was correct when it said:

"If the smouldering anger and quiet despair are not displaced by hope, overt violence or more destructive activities may surge again. It is the sharp increase in unemployment in the inner cities in recent years that has more than anything increased the number of people living in poverty."

The housing crisis has become more acute, particularly in the inner-city areas, because people have nowhere to go to work. Therefore, they are forced to stop in their communities and their localities, which puts pressure on the family unit. With a background of 4 million people unemployed in the country, there is over 50 per cent. unemployment in the centre of Sheffield and 30 per cent. as an average, which makes such problems acute.

Unless the Government are prepared to heed the advice given not just from Labour Benches but from the Church of England and other reports on housing in the inner cities produced over the past 18 months or two years, the Government will have to talk about police forces quelling unrest. However, the problem is far too deep for such a solution. Unemployment and deprivation must be tackled and unless the Government do so, they will have to call for more and more police facilities, and more expenditure on them. However, at the end of the day, the problems will not be resolved. The Government must heed the advice given by the Labour party, the Church of England report, the Duke of Edinburgh's report and the housing associations' report. If they do not, they will reap what they have sown.

7.49 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Having listened to many of the contributions, particularly to that of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), I should declare an interest — I am British and not English. I am a Scot, and I find it offensive and un-Christian that a report that claims to be addressed to the nation and that constantly refers to Great Britain does not, in fact, talk about Great Britain at all.

If the Church of England has any concept of charity, or wishes to have any concept of authority, it is reasonable to assume that it should at least understand that in its brotherly love, if not in its church, it has British people who do not live in England and do not have the difficulties that it appears to identify in what it callously calls "inner cities".

Lest I suggest that the Church of England's hubristic, sanctimonious, self-righteous and irreligious report demonstrates a total ignorance of Scotland, let me give a quotation from this wretched document on which I have spent much time reading. Scotland is mentioned. The report states—and the House should harken to this—

"By contrast with Europe and even Scotland, English preference for the country seat as the fount of civility and power has endured for centuries".

It continues:

"The British antipathy"—

not the English antipathy—

"to the city was already well known to the Romans".

When Tacitus was about, I do not remember there being very many cities, but assuming that there were, let me pose a question. If the Church was speaking for the people then, why was it building minsters in York and churches in Oxford, Lichfield and Ely, not to mention all the great institutions of the state in the inner cities of England and the towns and cities of Scotland when it took the view that the population was antipathetic to living there?

I would not wish to advise the Church of England as it seems to be so wise, but if it believes, as its report says, that for every one person in the inner cities who harkens to its word 99 do not, it might not be a bad idea if it preached the word of God. Page 38 of its report refers to the clergy getting increasing job satisfaction in UPAs thanks to

"greater frequency of involvement . . . in youth work, community work, counselling and training".

That does not seem to have done much for the word of God, and even less for the inner cities. I felt it right, in what is apparently a predominantly English matter, to deal with one or two Scottish questions in order to demonstrate the fact that these problems are soluble.

The report states:

"In the foreground are the shabby streets, neglected houses and sordid demolition sites of the inner city; in the middle ground the vandalism of public spaces of the peripheral estates and in the background are the green and wooded suburbs of middle Britain".

I do not know where middle Britain is, but I took the trouble to look at the map, and as near as one can get it, it is Catterick. I cannot identify that middle Britain as Catterick, nor can I identify that description as having anything to do with any town or city in Scotland—far less any in England—that I have visited. It is offensive, when looking at a desperate problem, to start from pejorative nonsense of an emotional and prejudiced kind such as that.

I remind the House that the entire justification of the report is contained in its second chapter, which says that there is a Christian duty to remember the poor. The report also makes an assumption, which I find offensive, that the rich are sinful and the poor are gracious. I have no reason to believe, for example, that the Good Samaritan was a rich man. He was a good man, but for all I know the Levi priest who passed on the other side was much richer. This is not a question of whether is one in a position to pay the innkeeper — it is a question of whether one does. Therefore, the whole tenor of the report is offensive to my understanding of the Christian ethic of "do unto others as they would do unto you."

I represent the city of Perth, among many other places. I was brought up in the city of Edinburgh, and spent much of my life practising in the city of Glasgow, the city of Inverness, the city of Aberdeen and the city of Dundee, to mention only a few. In those cities there has always been a tradition of family, and although, as my right hon.

Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said, the motor car has altered the construction of where people live, that has been a slower process in Scotland.

In the very centre of Edinburgh, people live in Gorgie and Dalry. Working class people own their houses there, and in Tollcross, the whole of Edinburgh and the new towns there are people of all types. The same is true of the centre of Perth, Inverness and all the other cities of Scotland.

If there was one exception, it would be the city of Glasgow, but that city has none of the problems that are described in lurid terms in the speeches of English Members. There are people living in the city of Glasgow from all walks of life, particularly in the last eight years thanks to the Government's grants system for the repair of houses. Today, the Trongate, Maryhill and other places are lived in by people from all walks of life who own their own houses. If there is a problem in Scotland, it is the reverse—that the very policies which "Faith in the City" suggests we should follow have had an effect. The glorious tenements that were built by Irish labour when Scottish industry provided work for poor Irishmen in the last century have been bulldozed, and the people who lived there with some satisfaction banished to the necklace of hideous council schemes — 50,000 units each — in Easterhouse, Nitts Hill, Black Hill, Castlemilk and so on. That is our problem, which in my opinion results from an attitude that regards human beings as disposable.

Officials take the view that one may or may not live in a certain place, or that one may or may not have a new sink, or that one's house will be painted a certain colour. That is an extremely offensive concept. English Members of Parliament refer to "our country" and "our inner cities" when they are referring to England, but "our country" includes Scotland. Our inner cities have no problems, and I shall tell the House how Scotland solved them.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to Leith. I imagine that he was speaking on behalf of the Liberal party, because I do not believe that the other half of what is rudely called "the alliance" agrees with him. It prefers to have twin views on everything. When the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to Leith he did not know what he was talking about. I do not know whether he has been to Edinburgh, but he obviously thinks that the port of Edinburgh is in Princes street.

Leith is a very good example of what has been done in Scotland. The warehouses of yesteryear have been converted into luxury flats. People want to live in Leith. Leith is now the place to live. Gorgie and Dalry, which were comparatively downcast, have been restored and are places where people want to live. They are in the middle of the city, as is the Trongate in Glasgow.

If I may give another example, several hon. Members have referred to co-operation. Pilton, in Edinburgh, was identified in the report as the kind of place that stigmatised those who lived there. If one came from Pilton one did not get a job, or one was assumed to have previous convictions, or people moved away from one in the bus. But what happened? The town council of Edinburgh—it is called the town council although it is a city—sold Pilton to a private contractor. He did up all the houses on the Pilton estate. Who wants to live there now? Not only does everybody want to live there but more than everybody —including the people who used to live in Pilton—want to go there. They claim they are Piltoners.

Mr. John Patten: What lessons does my hon. and learned Friend draw from what happened at Pilton for the city councils of Liverpool and Manchester who resolutely refuse to co-operate with the private sector in rehabilitating and renovating empty houses that deserve to be lived in?

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall tell the Minister what lessons I believe can be learnt from Pilton. Certain councils in Scotland said that Pilton should be knocked down and rebuilt with expensive houses. That is what Manchester and Liverpool wish to do. By doing so they will compound the slavery — because slavery it is — in which these people are encamped. However, if these houses were done up and the people who lived in them felt proud of their homes, this problem would be solved. It is not because the Church of England has failed that vandalism and mugging occur. Vandalism and mugging occur because the dignity of the people who live in these places has been destroyed.

How can that dignity be restored? It can be restored by making them places of which they can be proud. One way to achieve that aim is for these people to own their own homes. Another way to achieve that aim is to make them feel proud to belong to their community. That has happened by the transformation of Pilton, and it is a political lesson that ought to be learnt by everybody. It has also happened in parts of London. I live in a very nice village in Lambeth, near Waterloo. In the Scottish tradition it is a family that contains people from all walks of life. They like one another, get on with one another and believe that each of them matters. That characteristic is absent from what is described in the Church of England report with such mordant morbidity.

Our duty is to restore human dignity to the home. I do not believe that the residents of Lambeth will be helped by the expenditure of vast sums of money upon such causes as lesbians, gays, action centres and all the rest. The solution to the problem of human loneliness and degradation is simple. It is human dignity. I live in and represent a poor constituency. Almost everybody in my constituency is infinitely less well off and more deprived than those who live in the inner cities, but they matter. They are contributing to the £230 that is spent upon everybody in the inner cities of England, compared with the £23 that is spent upon everybody in rural Scotland. When the Church of England is so compassionate for the poor, let it not forget that it is the poor in my constituency who are contributing to the riches of the inner city, which it has the effrontery to pretend that it represents.

8.6 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): May I remind the House that this debate is about the housing crisis and urban deprivation. It appears from the contributions of certain Conservative Members that they would have preferred this debate to be held across the road in Westminster Abbey. This debate has nothing to do with the Church of England report.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) is the former leader of the Conservative party in Manchester. He said that there had been a decrease in the number of Manchester inhabitants. However, he did not point out that Manchester's problems have increased. Those who are strong in wind and limb have left the city. The people who remain there are in the greatest need: the unemployed, the semi-skilled, the elderly and the disabled. They all need welfare services.

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

Male unemployment in some of the areas to which the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness referred stands at 40 per cent. Since the late 1960s, 20,000 jobs have been lost in one of the areas in my constituency. There is a stronger possibility of premature death in Manchester than can be found anywhere else in the United Kingdom, including Scotland. I see that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has left the Chamber.

There is great deprivation in many of the inner city areas. Housing is a cause of great stress, a point that has been highlighted in today's debate. It is recognised beyond doubt that the worst housing stock and the associated problems of deprivation and unemployment are concentrated in the inner city areas. However, one has to experience inner-city conditions to realise what it is like to live in slum, system-built, high-rise developments or in slum, private landlord tenancies. No brief visit from a housing Minister can result in a valid assessment of the social deprivation or the indignity that is caused by living in areas which are in great need of environmental improvement. In those areas where the cost of the repair is too great, demolition is the only answer.

People are clamouring for housing that fits the needs of the citizens of the inner cities. The riots should serve as a warning. Inner city decay manifests itself in unrest. Local authorities, the churches and right hon. and hon. Members have warned the Government about this. The former leader of the city of Manchester, Lord Dean of Beswick, has warned the Government repeatedly in the other place to stop urban decay or face the consequences. The Prime Minister knows about the housing problem. She said recently;

"Of course there'll always be a part for the public sector to play in meeting special needs and providing decent housing for those who, for one reason or another, will never be able to own their own homes."

Those are the people I represent in the inner city of Manchester. But what has happened since the Prime Minister's statement? Nothing. The Government have refused to meet their responsibility to build enough houses to meet the need, and cuts in maintenance grants have led to a deterioration of existing housing stock.

It was estimated in 1977 that we would need to build 300,000 new houses a year. The number of houses completed has fallen from 313,000 in 1975 to one quarter of that figure since the Tories came to power in 1979. Their record is abysmal. The Government have not only slashed housing allocations to local government, but have cut maintenance and improvement work in both public sector and private sector housing, yet the Government's own survey showed that more than 4 million homes in England and Wales needed repair.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities estimated that £19 billion needs to be spent on our housing stock. Over half that money is required to remedy the enormous defects inherent in the post-war housing that was constructed by industrialised building methods which have brought in their wake major environmental problems in the inner cities.

One has only to look at the physical state of the dwellings, the structural problems and the problems of dampness, water penetration and the use of asbestos to realise that system-built tower blocks and walkways in the sky have been a monumental disaster and will continue to be a disaster unless the Government do something to rectify the problems, and I do not mean Ministers coming to Manchester and the north-west, wringing their hands in anguish, crying crocodile tears and returning to their Ministries in London and forgetting all about the people in the north-west.

The Government have a responsibility and they should face it. I agreed with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness—probably for the first time—when he said that even if the properties were demolished, leaving only holes in the ground, the ratepayers of Manchester would still be paying for them. I also agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Government should foot the bill. They have a responsibility. Tory Governments were enticing local government to build such structures in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

For the planners, designers and builders, the prefabricated concrete dwelling represented an exciting experiment and a sure-fire way of making big profits. For the thousands of people who live in those dwellings, including those in Beswick and Hulme and those on the Ardwick estates, they are an expensive, uncomfortable and unforgiveable folly. The whole story of system building is one of abject maladministration and neglect on the grandest scale. It is a national scandal which the Government would like to brush under the carpet. It will require billions of pounds to repair, improve or replace our stock of defective buildings.

There is a community and tenant rejection. The Bison tenants have started a national campaign. I received letters today from Bison dwellers pleading for something to be done. They are looking to the Government.

Those people have the experience. They have seen loved ones dying in condensation-ridden flats; they know what it is like to have thousands of cockroaches invading their home every night, to be found in the bedding, in the food and where the children sleep; they see the green mildew on their shoes, on their clothes and in their wardrobes; they are the victims of package-deal shoddy housing and construction methods that were supposed to be a panacea for all our housing ills.

The accomodation intended to replace the Victorian slums are the slums of today, and they have become slums in a very short period. Whole estates in my constituency have been demolished, within 15 years of being built, and others fester, awaiting the same fate, for, without the infusion of financial assistance, there is no hope. Some people made vast profits and got knighthoods after building such places. They have left behind deprivation and squalor.

What hope remains? After six years of Tory housing policy—a policy of neglect—is it any wonder that we have intense frustration on those estates? Is it any wonder that we have riots? Unemployment, bad housing, deprivation, a poor environment: all the ingredients of unrest are there and all the warning signs are there. If they go unheeded the Government can expect to reap the whirlwind.

I am not a churchgoer, but I should like to quote from a report by Inner-City Methodist Clergy:

"We reject utterly the view that these events are simply activities of hooligans and criminals"—

it is referring to the riots.

"On the contrary, we believe they are a frighteningly clear statement about the division and disintegration in our society, the frustration and anger or our inner-city youth, the hopelessness and despair of life in communities where education, jobs,

housing, welfare services and recreation on offer remain at a pathetically low level. Increasing concentration on 'public order' will do nothing to remove the causes and we do not believe it will end the violence."

The scale of the crisis is enormous. More people are living in bad housing than at any time in the past 20 years, yet housing—good housing—should be seen as a right and a priority. Poor housing is a false economy, especially in the inner cities where the burden falls on the welfare and health services to pick up the pieces. It is a false economy when 400,000 construction workers are on the dole and when poor housing contributes to economic decline and decay.

Many words have been spoken by housing Ministers, but few have shed real tears over the plight of those on waiting lists, the thousands upon thousands of homeless forced into bed and breakfast accommodation and the 500,000 in overcrowded accommodation. The figures go on mounting day by day.

The areas most affected are the inner city areas and if we think that council tenants have been neglected by the Government, I remind hon. Members that some of the worst slums are in the private landlord sector. Some of the houses that I have been in are unfit for human habitation. They lack basic amenities and are substandard accommodation, yet local authority housing departments know that if the tenants are rehoused those properties will be re-let to tenants who are forced by the shortage of good housing to take such tenancies in sheer desperation.

The Government turn a blind eye to the abuses inflicted on tenants by unscrupulous landlords, they turn a blind eye to eviction and harassment and they turn a blind eye to the patch and prop repairs that enable landlords to get round the maintenance laws.

The Tories have no housing policy. They have abandoned the inner city areas and the council tenants in most need and they have supported private landlordism. Their answer to any criticism of inner city policy is the offensive rhetoric of smear tactics. Their only solution is more police, more riot gear and more plastic bullets. Those are the reactions of clueless, mindless Ministers, bereft of answers to the problem. Their allegiance lies elsewhere. Their allegiance is to those who do not require housing, jobs or welfare services; whose only requirement is more wealth. Ministers look after the greedy. Their allegiance is to the greedy, not the needy.

The Church document to which I referred earlier states:

"We love our inner-city communities. To us they are the finest, warmest, most rewarding places to work and to live in Britain today . . . More fires will burn, unless there is a genuine repentance. And if they do, it will be a disaster for us all."

8.20 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): The speech by the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) was one of deep meaning sincerity. I can understand the hon. Gentleman's frustrations, but he must remember that the problems did not start in 1979. They did not even start 40 years ago after the war. They have been with us for decades and throughout the centuries. If he thinks of the industrial revolution and the clearance of the slums, he will realise that the problems did not begin a few years ago.

The Government are right to try to target public expenditure. Nottingham is proof that projects can be successful. One of the best examples is the Turney's quay site by Trent Bridge cricket ground and the Notts Forest and Notts County ground which for many years was a waste site. It was derelict containing only an unused warehouse. As a result of an urban development grant, encouraged and promoted by the present Government, the site is transformed into an area of excellent housing. It has good quality flats, 70 per cent. of which were sold within a year of the site's completion. The area is transformed and an eyesore has been removed. The old post office site has also be redeveloped. Many new houses have been constructed under the urban programme with the help of the urban development grant.

Through the skilful use of the inner area programme, a dramatic improvement is being made in the quality of life on some of the enormous council estates in Nottingham. Paving, bollards, trees, parks and clean-up operations are improving the environment. The riverside walkway along the river Trent and the cycle track between Old Basford and Bulwell have improved the quality of life and demonstrate that the Government are committed to promoting useful projects and that money is being spent on them. The money is being used carefully and well.

I have some criticism of the Nottinghamshire county council and the Nottingham city council. Their priorities are wrong and the impact of rate levels in the county and the city is having a dramatic effect upon the environment and the quality of life.

We do not need the Archbishop's report on the inner cities to tell us about the problems in Nottingham. I do not believe that the report is Marxist. It is well meaning, but irrelevant. We all know about the problems in the inner cities. The report should be taken on board, but it is only another contribution to the debate.

Nottingham has one of the largest council house stocks in the country. It had about 46,000 council houses in 1984-85.

Like the areas represented by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), Nottingham's suburbs had two high-rise blocks of flats built in the late 1960s. They were regarded with pride and provided many flats and homes for the people of Nottingham. They were erected in haste. I do not blame the Government or local authority of the day. The architects must take some responsibility for the high-rise blocks.

The flats suffered all the usual problems of condensation and high energy costs and provided an unsatisfactory life style. A few years ago it was decided that the flats should be demolished. They were no longer suitable for habitation. I differ from others in the solution which emerged after the decision to demolish the flats was made.

A number of private developers in Nottingham would have paid to buy the high-rise blocks. They would have paid for the land and paid to demolish the flats. Despite the opportunities, the city authorities decided to demolish the flats at the ratepayers' expense. A ratepayer born today will be paying for 45 years for a block of flats demolished before he was born. The city authority would not listen and for dogmatic reasons decided to build council houses on the site.

I would not mind if the local authority had done that, but, having rejected the offers, it has done nothing. The land is empty and unused.

Mr. Corbyn: What would be the loss to the community of giving away that land at a reduced price to get rid of the flats? Surely the land should be retained in public ownership so that it can be used for housing development. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion would take the land for all time.

Mr. Ottoway: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Private developers offered to build houses on the land. Nottingham has 46,000 council houses. That is enough to meet the needs of the very poor people. Many people with good incomes and good employment live in council houses simply because there are so few starter homes in Nottingham. It is not impossible to obtain a 100 per cent. mortgage in Nottingham. If houses had been built on that land, many people could have moved from the council estates and owned their own homes without costing the ratepayer or the Government a penny. There is a solution which must be grasped.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) talked about what has been lost to the community. The loss is the £750,000 which the developers were prepared to pay to take over the site. That money could have been used to modernise existing council house stock.

I received a delegation the other day from the Wyrale drive action group. They came to see me because of the poor quality of their council houses. They have no insulation and no central heating. All that I could say to them was that the city council had thrown away £750,000 which could have been used to modernise their homes.

It is not only financial control that is important, but the little micro solutions which can improve the quality of life. Just a year before the decision was taken to demolish the blocks £300,000 was spent on storage heaters as a temporary form of central heating. Did the council take the storage heaters out and use them elsewhere? Not a bit of it. The storage heaters were left and sold by the demolition gang on site for £25. I know, because I bought one.

I argued with the local authority that the heaters could have been used in old people's homes. I thought that the chairman of the housing group would say "Sorry, we made a mistake." Instead he said "No, Mr. Ottaway, you are wrong. The storage heaters are not suitable." That is an admission that the solution had been examined but that nothing was done. I have a perfectly good storage heater in my possession, which proves that I was right. We are considering not just how money is spent but the management of that money and the fact that small solutions are often of great importance.

When considering how to generate life in inner cities and the suburbs of places such as Nottingham, Manchester and Sheffield, we must look not only at housing but at all matters affecting the local economy. I received recently from Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce a survey carried out in October 1985 among local small employers. The report pointed out that

"62 per cent. of participating companies said an . . . increase in rates would affect their competitiveness . . . and would adversely affect their employment situation."

The report showed that 61 per cent. of the companies questioned said that an increase in rates of 5 to 10 per cent. would affect employment chances. The report added:

"Rates have influenced the levels of business activity in Nottinghamshire and are a contributory factor in the level of employment in the county."

One would imagine that, on hearing retailers say that an increase in rates would result in unemployment, the local authority would be on its guard. Nottingham's rates are almost the highest in the country. Private investigations by companies such as Peat, Marwick have reported:

"The level of rates next year could be kept to the level of inflation."

It comes as a surprise, on hearing that, to learn that the rates will have to go up by 20 to 30 per cent. in Nottingham next year simply because the local authority will not accept all the opportunities available to it to behave efficiently, to economise and, for example, to put tenders out to private contract.

We think of the wasteful expenditure on the part of that authority — of the 400 additional staff who have been taken on in the last three and a half years, of the equal opportunities unit which cost Nottingham £150,000 last year, employing gay and lesbian officers, and the £20,000 spent in the last year on anti-nuclear activities.

I do not mind if local authorities spend money on such projects if they believe them to be worthwhile. But I have old-age pensioners coming to the House to see me to complain about their houses not being modernised. The *Nottingham Evening Post*, to which I pay tribute, almost daily highlights in its "Old and Cold" campaign problems that need urgent attention, in particular the problems that the local old people face, such as hypothermia. Money realised from the sale of flats in the way that I described and not spent on equal opportunities units and so on could be spent properly on the community.

The Government are not wholly free of responsibility, and I do not believe that they would claim otherwise. All local authorities want more, and we in Nottingham hope that when the increased levels are announced next week, we shall get our fair share of the increase. But local authorities must accept their share of responsibility and spend wisely the money that is available to them.

8.34 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): In the last year, many hon. Members have speculated on the reasons for riots and why people turn to crime. I make no apology for reading an extract from a letter that I recently received from a constituent of mine, a man in his early twenties who has been unemployed for two years:

"I just cannot get anywhere decent to live. At the moment I have a horrible bedsit without hot water."

After two years waiting for a flat from a housing association, he was offered short-life council accommodation. He goes on:

"The flat was completely empty. I had no heat or hot water for two whole weeks. The DHSS did things in their own time. There I was in an empty, cold flat, miles from anywhere, no cooker, no bed and not much else. So I got into trouble. There was always temptation, other people indulging in crime, but I never took part because I could survive without it. When I found myself alone without the basic household things and no money, I got into trouble. What does it matter when you've got nothing to lose . . . I went to court, I was fined and that was the end of that. I took my time, suffered when I had to and used what money I had wisely, like my mother always did. I bought a gas fire, stereo table, I received money for a bed and a cooker and started to settle. Then I was burgled twice. I lost everything including the gas fire. Even the boiler was taken. Back to Manningham and furnished accommodation. I rented a really good flat — I started to settle down with a nice girlfriend. I wallpapered the room and I thought my troubles were over. I fell behind on my fine payments. I was warned. In July, seven months after I was fined, I fell behind again with payments and I was sent to jail for 18 days. Around this time my landlord had received orders from the council to renovate his property. Eighteen days later, the men had packed my things and he just told me I didn't live there any more."

He concludes:

"It's painful. Honestly, you don't know what to say. You just realise the hopelessness of your situation, and what can you do? Who can you tell? Telling my friends doesn't help. It's the people in authority and positions of responsibility who need to know what's going on, who need to care about what's going on, and quite frankly, Mr. Madden, not many people do care. Even riots don't encourage people to look closer at what's happening, at how some people live or don't live. People may now give some attention to Brixton, Handsworth etc., but similar conditions, similar deprivation, exist here."

I inquired of a housing association about that young man's prospects of being offered a flat. I was told by one association:

"Your constituent's present accommodation is not ideal and lacks facilities, but his application is rated quite a way down the points system. The Association has currently over 800 applications, of which 25 per cent. are requiring bedsit or one bedroom accommodation in the Bradford area."

Another housing association told me:

"The great distress caused by the lack of decent rented accommodation cannot be emphasised too often and I would like to detail one small example of the situation as it exists in Bradford. We are currently building 38 Category 1 flats for the elderly in Bradford, and without any advertising we have received over 200 applications for the accommodation. It has been necessary for us to refuse any further applications, despite the accommodation not being ready for letting until later this year. I am sure you will be only too familiar with the distress caused to the elderly living in inadequate conditions and the disappointment which will be felt when the majority of applications are refused. There is an inadequate supply of good rented accommodation for all age groups in Bradford and the problem is increasing."

A number of hon. Members have, rightly, pointed out that the populations of inner cities are declining. That is not the case in Bradford. Indeed, Bradford has the largest population projection growth of any urban area in the country, including all the London boroughs. The population will increase by 10 per cent. in the next 20 years, according to the official population forecasts.

We have 30,000 unemployed and a waiting list for council property of more than 8,000. There are 5,500 people living in homes with no toilet, bathroom or running water. In the last three years, 146 properties were started by the local council and 84 have been completed. Our housing investment programme has been decimated. In the last three years it has been reduced by the Government by £6 million or 31 per cent., or about half in real terms. Improvement grant programmes have also been decimated.

About 10,000 improvement grant applications have been refused and the expenditure provided by the Government for grants has been dramatically reduced. In the last three years, the amount given to Bradford council for home improvement grant purposes has been £28 million. We need £66 million to meet our real needs. The gap between the required resources and the available resources for housing investment in Bradford widens each year. In 1977-78 it was only £2 million, and the latest figures show that for 1986-87 it will be £34 million.

Structurally defective housing has been mentioned. Bradford has had to transfer about 1,500 people from such housing. There are 4,786 defective properties still to be dealt with. The Government have provided only £18 million to Bradford council for that purpose. As one official said to me, "Such allocation is merely nibbling at the edges of a massive problem." We ask for action, and when we make that request we are told a variety of things. We have heard during the debate that the Conservative party is shifting its ground. The Government are saying that the problems to which we have referred have always existed. When we ask for money, the Government say that there is no point in throwing money at the problems or, "We do not have the money."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) has said, we completely reject the Government's assertion that the resources are not available to tackle the problems to which we draw their attention. We know that that is a lie. We know that the poor in the inner cities of the constituencies that we Labour Members represent have been paying for the massive tax cuts that have been enjoyed by the richest sections of the community. We have authority for saying that if we turn to the financial section of *The Guardian* of July. The introduction to one of its articles read:

"Mrs. Thatcher succeeded in giving a lot of people the impression that she intended to cut taxes, but the opposite has been the case. According to the latest calculations for the Guardian by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, only 6 per cent. of the population are actually better off as a result of the tax and benefit changes which the Prime Minister has made since 1978-79, and they tend to be those who were richest to start with. Tax changes have made some 87 per cent. unequivocally worse off."

That is the reality.

I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will not tell us when he replies that the necessary money is not available. Of course, he will give us an almost inevitable lecture on morality. We know that he is a reborn monetarist. We know also that the factor which is lacking is the political will of the Government to allocate resources where they are most needed. Resources must be made available so that we can deal with the problems that are to be found in inner cities throughout the country.

Yesterday, the Government were at it again. They took the first steps to flog off the gas industry so as to enable them to give the richest section of our community even more tax cuts next year. We in Bradford have been asking for only £4 million to electrify the line between Bradford and Leeds, and last week, when I had an Adjournment debate, the Minister who replied told me that the Government could not intervene, that it was a matter entirely for British Rail.

What is going on elsewhere? It is proposed that thousands of millions of pounds of public and private investment should be spent on the Channel link. The Government are rushing the proposal through after one of the shortest periods of consultation that can be imagined. They are refusing to allow a public inquiry into the greatest investment of public and private resources that Britain has seen in many a long year, yet my city is told that there is not a miserable £4 million available to electrify a line and thereby enable it to tackle massive unemployment and the enormous social and industrial problems with which it has been struggling for more than a century.

We are told that no money is available. There is a housing crisis in Bradford, yet £250,000 of urban aid has been directed recently to renovating 30 bedrooms in a luxury hotel in Bradford. I do not think that the 5,500 who lack a bath, running water and an inside toilet saw that expenditure as the concentration of available resources on those most in need.

At a conservative estimate, £5,000 million is being lost to the Inland Revenue through tax evasion. The Government are cutting the number of Inland Revenue inspectors while increasing the number of DHSS inspectors to deal with fraud — in other words, the

[Mr. Max Madden]

miserable sums which the poor sometimes obtain by mistakes or human error within the Department. The Government cannot sustain the argument that there is a lack of resources.

We know that £3 million a day is being spent on the fortress Falklands policy. We know that millions upon millions of pounds of taxpayers' money are being used to bail out Johnson Matthey. Millions of pounds of taxpayers' money are being directed to bailing out the Export Credits Guarantee Department. We are aware that £10,000 million or £12,000 million is being made available to finance the Trident nuclear submarine programme. The stench of corruption and fraud is hanging over the City, which is even beginning to reach some of the none-too-sensitive nostrils of those in this place. The Government do not have the guts, the will or the determination to instigate an inquiry into what is going on at Lloyd's, or what went on in the sale of British Telecom shares. They are reluctant, to say the least, to inquire into what is going on in other sections of the City.

The Government saw no reason for not granting bumper pay increases to judges, top civil servants and generals. At the same time, the Government paid lip service to their interest in the family. Of course, they have cut child benefit, which provides the most effective way of combating family poverty. The Tories do not like child benefit. They argue that it goes to everyone, rich or poor, and that it is wrong to support the better-off through the payment of benefit such as child benefit. However, they do not object to the payment of the large subsidies that go to the relatively well-off in the form of mortgage tax relief. Nor do they object to large handouts to the rich in the form of tax cuts.

The Bradford chamber of commerce recently conducted a survey of 180 companies. It asked them what had been the major constraints on their businesses over the past 12 months. Nearly 40 per cent. of the companies referred to high interest rates and the high exchange rate as major constraints. They did not put the rating system into that category. Interest rates and the exchange rate are affected by Government policy.

That which we see in the inner cities is the result of Government neglect, lack of resources and a refusal by the Government to act. Crime has reached record levels and the victims are working-class people. They want the social and economic problems dealt with which lead to crime and not more oppressive laws. The Government are responsible primarily for the problems which lead to the commission of crime. The people want a Government who listen, care, act and recognise the problems and deal with them in a sensible and common-sense way. They do not want a Government who, when criticised, immediately accuse their critics of being naive, muddleheaded or Marxist.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have set out the arguments on behalf of the inner cities and directed themselves to the help which the inner cities need so desperately. It is a great tragedy that the Government are deaf, that they do not care and that they promote acute inequalities.

Until the Government's policies are changed, the crisis which faces the inner cities in housing, education, health and the environment will continue and intensify. My colleagues and I will continue to bring to the House the complaints of those in the inner cities. It is the forum of the nation and the appropriate place for us to articulate on behalf of our constituents.

Whether the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster likes it or not, we shall continue to raise these matters in this place. We shall continue to tell our constituents that it is for the Government to act. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the resources that they have available are allocated where they are most needed, which is to the poor, the deprived, the unemployed, the sick, the disabled and the elderly.

I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has been so keen to intervene in the debate, will not give us another third-rate lecture on morality. I hope instead that he will make some positive proposals and set out the way in which the Government intend to act to combat and remedy the crisis which is facing them, whether they wish to acknowledge it or not, in inner cities throughout the country.

8.49 pm

Sir Reginald Eyre (Birmingham, Hall Green): The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) spoke of his feeling for the problems of the inner areas. I do not underrate those problems. I should like to look to the future of the inner areas, especially in the large cities and conurbations, where so many of these problems are concentrated.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was straightforward in acknowledging that the resources for dealing with all these problems are not immediately available. Supply of development land is crucial. We shall need sound solutions in the next five, 10, 15 or 20 years. We must concentrate on tackling the problems of derelict land. There are thousands of acres of underused derelict land in or near the centres of our largest cities and conurbations and, in the next 10 to 20 years, nearly every square yard will be needed for development, housing, industry, commerce, education and recreation.

The problems of land supply are underrated. In geographical terms, Britain has a much smaller area available for development than many other countries, especially the United States and even France. We have a relatively smaller area to accommodate our people. Already there are growing pressures against the development of the peripheries of our cities and strong opposition to material development in the green belt. Already the Government are doing much useful work to make land available by derelict land grants and other grants. That helps to bring wasted areas into use and thus attract new investment.

The land register shows that thousands of underused acres are owned by public authorities. There are more than 400 acres in Birmingham alone. Many hundreds of additional acres are in private ownership. Often there is widely spread ownership, the sites are fragmented, and land is not available for development. There is a need for a land assembly agency to bring parcels of land together so that sites can be prepared for development

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment referred in his excellent speech to the success of the Government's policy with respect to the London Docklands development corporation. I must admit, as a Birmingham Member, that I looked enviously at the

success generated in the docklands, at the many developments there and at the rising wave of land values in formerly derelict and decrepit areas.

The Land Authority for Wales is another example of the Government's success. Under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 the authority has

"the function of acquiring land in Wales which in its opinion needs to be made available for development, and of disposing of it to other persons (for development by them) at a time which is in the Authority's opinion appropriate to meet the need."

The authority was very successful last year, covering its administrative expenses, making a trading profit of £2·25 million and disposing of 312 acres for development at a price of just over £4 million. That authority operates in co-operation with local authorities and other bodies. It comes in to assemble sites, to provide access or services and to persuade others to do so. It disposes of land on commercial terms. There has been sensible co-operation, but would that type of co-operation be forthcoming from all local authorities? It might be necessary to have back-up powers if local authorities did not reasonably and properly co-operate in the beneficial developments in a certain area. We can see that a land development agency is operating successfully and on a commercial basis.

My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Home Secretary have referred to the need to review inner area policies with the aim of channelling resources in the most beneficial way. I agree with them, but I hope that they can accommodate this approach to the need to prepare land for further development. This policy would lock in extremely well with other positive aspects of the Government's philosophy and policy. I refer especially to the simplified planning zones proposal, which is to come before the House later in the Session, which is aimed at reducing the expensive planning delays that frustrate development in all parts of Britain. Simplification of planning law would be particularly beneficial in inner urban areas. The liberalised laws relating to building societies offer the prospect of a new flow of funds for housing association projects and new rented accommodation. If there were such developments, pension and institutional funds would be forthcoming.

Encouraging the provision of small industrial and commercial premises is already part of the Government's policy. The leverage effect from the introduction of private sector resources could be accelerated by a greater development of land use policies. I hope that my right hon. Friends will consider that proposal. I believe that it would make a positive contribution towards solving the problems. Progress along those lines would provide additional beneficial activity in the inner areas and an effective framework for sensible development. It would contribute to the success of local economies.

8.59 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr) *rose*——

Dr. Hampson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is something amiss with the procedures of the House when, as far as I am aware, no Conservative Member has been called to represent the voice of Yorkshire, Humberside and the north. If it had not been for the spite and vindictiveness of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson), Conservative Members could have spoken. If the Chair, with all respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not to impose the 10 minutes rule some discretion must be used as to what time Front Bench speeches begin, especially considering the length of the opening speeches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, (Mr. Harold Walker): There has been nothing different from the normal convention of the House. The selection of speakers is entirely a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Parry: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) must recognise the difficulties facing the Chair. We have to take many factors into account when deciding who is to speak.

Mr. Parry: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I represent the Toxteth area of Liverpool. It has the highest level of unemployment in the British mainland. We have had two motions——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a debate now on which regions have been properly represented in the debate. We should get on with the debate. Mr. Rooker.

Mr. Rooker *rose*——

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to register my protest at the lack of speakers from Liverpool. If the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) was here, he would have been called because he is a member of the Liberal party. Liverpool has been grossly under——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must resume his seat. There are 650 right hon. and hon. Members in this House representing all parts of the United Kingdom——

Mr. Wareing: They have not been here since 5 pm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order:

Mr. Wareing: Or 4 pm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not challenge me when I am on my feet. The Chair is faced with great difficulties in ensuring that all the various regions are properly represented in a debate. It is clear that in a debate of this kind we cannot have every part of the United Kingdom represented. I hope that we can get on with the debate. Mr. Jeff Rooker.

Mr. Rooker *rose*——

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask that you look at the procedures of this House. That point was raised by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). This is the second debate running that I have sat through and not been called. I do not know what convention of the House it is that allows such patent unfairness.

Mr. Winnick: There should not have been a statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Winnick: I was criticised.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there are 650 Members representing all parts of the United Kingdom. The Session is only a few weeks old but the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has already had an opportunity to participate in a major debate. I hope that the House will recognise the difficulties that the Chair faces in ensuring that the speaking time is evenly distributed among all hon. Members. I hope that we can get on with the debate. Mr. Jeff Rooker.

Mr. Rooker *rose*——

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to receive any more representations on this matter.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a point of correction. I have not taken part in any major debate in this Session.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Jeff Rooker.

Mr. Rooker: If I have counted correctly, there have been 15 Back-Bench speeches. I have missed only one, and I apologise to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway). Many hon. Members, including one from Scotland, have sought to catch the eye of the Chair.

I want to put on the record one point relating to what the Secretary of State said. The first week after the summer recess, in Opposition time, the House debated a motion relating to the inner cities. It lasted two and three quarter hours. We asked for a full day in Government time just before Prorogation. There was a day spare. Since publication of the Department of the Environment report on local authority housing we have repeatedly asked the Leader of the House for a debate. That completely contradicts what the Secretary of State said about the pressure for the debate.

It is remarkable that there has been no Social Democratic party speaker or presence in the Chamber and no amendment to the main motion, and they claim to be the effective opposition to the major parties.

One would not believe from the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister that the most recent manifesto produced by the Conservative party promised to make Britain the best housed nation in Europe. I am surprised that those words did not appear in the amendment.

It has been a wide-ranging debate and I can attempt to touch on only some of the points. I shall start by returning to 1977, to the beginning of policy formation for the inner cities in the House at national level. The problem was identified some time before that, but I shall start with the publication of "Unequal City" published by the Government of the time. It refers to the city part of which I have the honour to represent—Birmingham. It was the final report of the inner areas study.

One of the points that it made has to be put on record:

"The case for more resources rests not simply on present disparities between inner areas and other areas but on the urgency of reversing the trends of decline."

Therefore, "urgency" was a key factor in the report of the inner areas study. The study went on to point out:

"The nature and scale of the problems which beset inner areas are such that no real or lasting 'solution' is to be expected without a substantial change in the distribution of social goods and opportunities."

It went on:

"To postpone redistribution is to exacerbate the problems and increase still further the economic and social costs of dealing with them effectively."

That was the report produced under the last Labour Government.

The reference to that report in "Faith in the City" produced by the Archbishop's working party is illuminating. Paragraph 8.18 of "Faith in the City" describes

"an overall decline in central Government's financial support."

It goes on to say:

"Although the Urban Programme—the icing—has grown in real terms, the cake — the 'bending' of main policies and programmes — has either shrunk or disappeared altogether. There is one exception: the only main central Government expenditure programme to have shown a significant growth in the inner city in real terms since 1979 is that of the police."

The police have become the dustbin of Government policies. I do not intend to repeat what my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said about the dirty and difficult job that the police have to do. I shall stand second to nobody in condemning the violence that occurred in the inner cities in the latter part of the recess.

The report of the chief constable of the west midlands on the disturbances in the Handsworth and Lozells road area of Birmingham on September 9 and 10, in addition to the hour-by-hour account, contained some telling points that I hope the Government will take on board. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will also take account of them in his final summation, which is the last chapter. I shall quote the chief constable because of the growth in expenditure on the police in real terms:

"I believe also that the riots in Handsworth/Lozells, now seen against a background of further, somewhat similar, disorders in London and elsewhere, have brought into sharp focus a fundamental question concerning life in deprived inner city areas and the effect that such an environment can have on the conduct and aspirations of the people who live there . . . Policemen of every rank charged with the responsibility of keeping a fragile peace and upholding law and order in the difficult environment of the inner cities, have known for years of the facts I have just expressed. They have had to live with the fact that the problem has been passed off for them to deal with in isolation, knowing that if later difficulties occurred it would then automatically be assumed by some to be the fault of the police."

That was said by Geoffrey Dear, the chief constable of the west midlands. He was saying to the Government that they have isolated the police and are asking them to do too much in the inner cities. That is his assessment of what happened in the west midlands in September. I shall not go over the rest of the report but that point must be made clear because of what was said in 1977 and the conclusions that are drawn in the Church report.

I have listened between the lines today and the Church report has been the bearer of rural nostalgia for too long. I shall grant Conservative Members that the Church report gives a long description of economic decline, physical decay and social disintegration.

It cannot be denied that the Church's assessment of life in the inner cities is accurate, whatever the Conservatives may say about its conclusions. The Secretary of State pooh-poohed the idea of poverty and launched into a discourse about absolute and relative poverty. I suppose that the ultimate is death due to poverty. Mortality statistics standardised to take account of sex, age, and so on, taking the average chance of dying tomorrow as 100, show that the figure for Gateshead is 115 but for Scarborough 98; for central Manchester 118 but for Trafford 98; for west Birmingham 112 but for Rugby 94. No one can argue that those figures do not show a problem as between inner and outer areas. When 33 per cent. of the population of this country live on 3 per cent. of its land

mass in the seven great conurbations it is inevitable that they demand a different kind of policy to that now being pursued.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), who is no longer present, made a thoughtful speech. I agreed with everything that the right hon. Gentleman, a former housing Minister, said except his final comment that he thought that the Government's economic policy was correct. The right hon. Gentleman referred to political representation and structure in the inner cities and the changes that have taken place in society.

The norms of our society have clearly changed. In 1977, "Unequal City" referred to the

"political culture in which people are content to leave the complicated business of government to the professional or committed few who understand it."

The report referred to "the decline in activity" and to "changes in life styles". On the subject on people opting out, it said:

"Or again, it could be argued that changes in national electioneering, employing nationally networked media, and the lessening importance of local issues in local elections have reduced the functional role of constituency parties and ward organisations. Yet, whatever the precise combination of factors held to be responsible, the simple fact remains that people in inner areas do not participate because they see no advantage to themselves."

The report concluded that

"the existing political structures of urban government serve inner area residents particularly poorly."

I admit that we did not go into that problem in great detail following the 1977 report, but the Government must acknowledge that inner city policy must address that point. Birmingham was criticised earlier in the debate for parishing the whole city to devolve the government of the city and make it more meaningful to people of locally defined areas so that they do not feel alienated from decisions taken in council chambers and committees that they have no chance to attend. Hon. Members may criticise that move, but it is at least an attempt to meet the problems so clearly identified as long ago as 1977.

The problems took decades to create and they were substantially identified for the first time by the Labour Government through the inner area studies and the White Paper which preceded the setting up of the partnership authorities. If the chairman of the Tory party answers no other question when he replies to the debate I hope that he will reply to one point in the Church's report which has formed the background to the debate, both that report and the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry being mentioned in the motion. Paragraph 8.16 of the Church's report states:

"Since the coming to power of a Conservative Government in 1979, there has been no departure in policy statements from the 1977 White Paper's emphasis on the need for a central government response to the challenge presented by the inner cities."

The report goes on to quote the former Secretary of State for the Environment.

Partnership authorities should have been excluded from the general rate support grant cuts if inner city policy meant anything and if there was a decision to shift the balance towards the inner cities. The argument is based on well-founded research throughout the country. The inner cities should have been protected from the general cuts in rate support grant. Do the Government still accept the statements of the 1977 White Paper? Is it still their policy? If not, we should be told because there has been no statement since 1979.

Several hon. Members, especially my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson), mentioned the contribution of the voluntary sector through housing associations. A decent home for all makes a difference between sickness and health if nothing else. Doctors and workers at medical centres in the inner-city part of my constituency tell me that better quality housing would do more than anything else to improve my constituent's health. It is so annoying to prepare treatment for somebody knowing that they will go home to a house with a leaking roof, an outside toilet and no proper bathroom. It might be their own house. They are standing on their own two feet, but they cannot get the improvement grant to get the house up to a decent standard.

Next week, we shall have the report of Shelter and the Stress Areas Housing Associations Group, which will make some pertinent observations. Contradicted by Ministers, it will say that there has been a cut in inner-city housing association activity from 40,000 homes a year in the late 1970s to 15,000, or 18,000 a year if one includes low-cost home ownership. Nevertheless, 18,000 is the maximum, but the Housing Corporations' funding for 1986-87 means, according to some of the most senior executives in the housing association movement, a cut of 20 per cent. in new projects. That will affect housing associations which specialise in run-down short-life inner-city properties which are so neglected by the private sector.

Birmingham has 9,300 empty properties, 60 per cent of which are in the private sector. London has 125,000 empty properties, 70 per cent. of which are in the private sector. Liverpool has 8,400 empty properties, 59 per cent. of which are in the private sector. Leeds, which I visited yesterday, has 8,500 empty properties, no less than 69 per cent. of which are in the private sector. Local authorities cannot be blamed for that state of affairs, but that is what we constantly hear from the Government. So many empty properties offer an opportunity. However, public investment is needed to start the process of making them homes for people. Nobody defends empty properties, public or private. I do not and nor do any of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Nevertheless, the majority of empty properties in the cities that I have mentioned are in the private sector.

The Secretary of State was quick to mention the problems of the 1960s and the 1970s. He criticised the quick-build policies pursued then. He later threw in the 1950s as well. That was when the numbers game was all. We see today the results of playing the numbers game. One Tory Member of Parliament became Prime Minister on the strength of it and he now lectures us all from another place. There was another. I should like to quote from a typical Tory election leaflet from 1951. It says:

"Provision of houses is the most urgent social service of all. It will be the duty of a Conservative government to spare no effort to increase the number of houses built per year. After the needs of defence have been met, we shall give housing priority over all other forms of building."

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: We did.

Mr. Rooker: Yes. That was the numbers game. The numbers game was all. Quality, design and building homes for people meant nothing. They were just numbers. Of course, Conservative Members have probably realised that what I quoted was the election address of Margaret Roberts in 1951.

[Mr. Rooker]

That policy can now be seen to have produced a boom in junk housing.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose——*

Mr. Rooker: Local authorities were virtually bribed to build what is now unfit housing. Yesterday when I was in Leeds, I saw some of the 22,000 system-built dwellings of the council's 93,000 stock. Leeds has a horrendous problem with non-traditional building. In Birmingham we went the other way. We are not proud of it, and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said as much.

Dr. Hampson *rose——*

Mr. Rooker: I regret that I shall not give way because I am keen to finish my speech when I promised. I was delayed in starting for reasons that I shall not go into.

In Birmingham our solution was to build 429 tower blocks of flats. When I visit other areas with 100 such blocks they do not believe that figure. Most of the tower blocks require a massive sum to be spent on them. The Government could allow 90 per cent. grants, but people would not buy those flats because they know that they cannot sell them. That is the reality for many citizens who live in tower blocks in Birmingham.

If we were repairing and improving faster than the rate of deterioration of the housing stock, the cut of 100,000 new homes in each year of the Government's period of office could be explained, but we are not repairing or renovating at that rate. Therefore, we cannot explain a cut in the new building programme of 2,000 new homes fewer every week than were provided by the Labour Government. That is the total figure, if one does not separate public and private housing. We are interested in the right to a home, and we shall not argue about tenure. People should be allowed to choose whether they want to own, rent or share. They cannot have that choice unless there is a good supply of homes with every type of tenure.

At present there is no coherent policy for housing. Home ownership is an aim, but cannot of itself constitute a policy. We would argue for the Socialist themes of choice, variety, freedom and control—*[Interruption.]*—real choice and control, not control by landlords, whether public or private. That is reflected in "Faith in the City".

Without massive investment those aspirations will not become a reality for anybody. Therefore, we should not be too dogmatic about finance, as the Government are. They seek all solutions in the private sector. We are prepared to use the private sector so long as it is working with the public sector. The private sector alone cannot cope with what has happened. But to listen to Ministers one would think that that was the answer.

If that were so, why are so many schemes which are set up by different housing associations in co-operation with other organisations and require private cash ruled out by the Government? There is no magic of the market for housing. Those were the words used by the former Minister for Housing and Construction, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). If that were so, Leeds would not have had to take over a sheltered speculative development built by one of the most famous private sector builders because he could not do anything with it. If that were so, Parker Morris homes with three bedrooms and two toilets on Teesside would not, having been done up and sold to the private sector, have only one toilet. If that were so, in Birmingham, post-war flats sold to a private company for work to start in two months, would not be sitting after 14 months with no work having been started.

Dr. Hampson *rose——*

Mr. Rooker: No, I shall not give way.

Without the efforts of local authorities—no one, least of all anyone who has been in the House longer than me, can deny this—during the past decades many millions of people would not have had a decent home. In the 1920s and 1930s, when public sector building got under way for the first time on a reasonably large scale, it was argued, particularly in the north of England among Labour councillors, that landlordism was not a role for Socialists. Those arguments are part of the record of that decade. But we have learnt from our mistakes. The Labour party can say that, and I would like the Government to say it. When we say in "Homes for the Future" that we have learnt from our mistakes, that applies just as much to management attitudes as it does to the horrendous construction and design techniques of the past.

Many Conservative Members have criticised the Church of England report. They believe that the report implies that the public sector is the be-all and end-all. That is not true. It shows that they have not read the report. Paragraph 10.61 on page 246, which deals with public rented housing, states:

> "It will be argued by some that public housing has failed: local authority provision has resulted in a product that no-one wants. Certainly there is much to be criticised, particularly in the style of management. We have been told how councillors in the past would regard council housing as 'theirs' to distribute. ('Come along to my surgery next week, and I'll see you right.')"

That is paternalism, not Socialism. We reject that sort of management style — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members can no longer argue that the Church of England report says that the answer lies in local authority housing. We can see their sensitive reaction to that. The Labour party rejects those management styles completely in its new policy statement. That sort of paternalism——

Mr. Robert Atkins: The Labour party did it all the time.

Mr. Rooker: When "Homes for the Future" is put into operation by the next Labour Government, the hon. Gentleman will find out what our position is. Perhaps we need not wait that long. We propose to give local authority tenants a legal right to take over the management of their estates. The Government do not propose that, but at Question Time last week I was told by a Minister:

> "If the hon. Gentleman tables an amendment to that effect, it may well receive support from the Government."—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 296.]

I am prepared to table amendment after amendent and new clause after new clause based on "Homes for the Future". If Ministers accept them, perhaps there will be a change in management before an incoming Labour Government. But that Bill will contain Labour party policy, not Tory party policy.

It cannot be denied that the urban priority areas were created by the Labour Government. All the reports that have been published this year describe the problem estates that are difficult to let. Instead of using those terms, which imply that there is something wrong with the tenants, the

reports should say simply that those estates are hard to live in. I agree with those Conservative Members who asked for debt charges to be written off when 16 and 17-year-old properties must be demolished. We wrote off the costs of Concorde. We can write off the charges of deck access and high-rise flats.

There are housing problems, even in the constituency of Chingford. Waltham Forest local authority, which is governed by 25 Tory councillors, 25 Labour councillors and seven Liberals — the Tories and Liberals have formed a governing coalition—presides over 8,700 unfit houses in the private sector, and 5,700 houses without inside toilets or proper bathrooms. That is the reality of life in the backyard of the chairman of the Tory party. He must be fighting as hard as Labour Members do for the owner-occupiers in his constituency to obtain grants. However, he can do something about it, and we cannot. How does the position in Chingford, with all that unfit housing, relate to the overall position?

Given the co-ordinated rubbishing of the Church report and the Duke of Edinburgh's report, the way that Ministers have ignored all other reports of the local authorities, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Building Employers Confederation, and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, it looks very much as if the Prime Minister is simply not taking the matter seriously. If she is doing so behind the closed doors of Whitehall, the ignorant public statements are even more of a scandal than we think that they are.

I make no apology for returning to the point about Geoffrey Dear's report on the disturbances in the west midlands. What he said fits in with the tone of our motion, which was carefully drafted. It directs the blame for the present problems on Government policies, although we accept that the problem has been there for decades and was identified by a Labour Government. In his last paragraph, Mr. Dear said:

> "Just as a riot is not an entity to be judged in isolation but must be understood against the background of the community as a whole it follows that the police alone cannot remedy the circumstances that led to the riot. The Police Service will continue to play its part in the re-building of trust but the task can be successful only if the whole community works together to achieve the common aim of a harmonious society."

It is in that wholly constructive spirit that we move our motion.

9.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): I hope that I shall be able to pick up the threads of a number of the interesting speeches that have been made. However, I shall comment first on the interesting speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) who rightly addressed the problem of local authorities that hold on to land that others might develop, and spoke of the benefits that might come when authorities co-operate in disposing of that land. I noted carefully what he said about the possible ways in which they might be pushed a little harder into so disposing of land

I was also interested in the speech of the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) which on its own contained material for several hours of debate. I respond to two points. He inquired about the city action teams, which are co-ordinating about £270 million of Government expenditure in the inner cities, including that from the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment—which is particularly concerned with the expenditure for the youth training scheme and the community programme—and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The teams report to Ministers collectively under the arrangements co-ordinated by Lord Young and they consist of the regional directors of the Departments of the Environment, Trade and Industry and Employment, and from the Manpower Services Commission. There are five teams in the partnership areas. I hope that that gives the right hon. Gentleman some reassurance about how they operate.

The right hon. Gentleman also spoke about the expenditure on the Housing Corporation, I can confirm that the spend in 1979-80 was £400 million and in 1985-86 £700 million. The output in terms of completions, fair rent dwellings, new houses, refurbished houses and low-cost home ownership was 20,700 units in 1978-79 and 28,000 in 1985-86.

Mr. Freeson: Those are false figures.

Mr. Tebbit: They are not false figures. I should hate to be on bad terms with the right hon. Gentleman, because, although I could never say that I welcomed him all the time in the past, I realise how lucky we are to have had him and how unlucky we are to be losing him, in view of his probable successor.

I was a little surprised that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), having thought that he had me in a difficult position through answering a debate concerning the affairs of Departments other than my own, should stick his neck right out and make remarks about the borough of Waltham Forest, about which he clearly knows very little. The hon. Gentleman described a rather bad state of affairs in the borough, but did not say that since the borough was created it has been under Conservative control for only three years. At present the Conservative party is in office but has to rely upon some pretty uncertain Liberal support—and we all know what that is like when we are trying to solve problems.

Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman does not understand the difference between the parts of the borough, in that Chingford has a much better housing stock, which is much better looked after. That is because Chingford was formerly in Essex before the Greater London council—that abortion—was invented. Chingford benefits from not having had a Socialist council, whereas the Walthamstow and Leytonstone areas have been traditional Labour boroughs and therefore have substantial housing problems.

The hon. Gentleman quoted one of the sections of the Church of England report that is simply not correct, in that it says that the only programme that has been increased in the inner cities is the one on behalf of the police. My right hon. Friend dealt with that in his opening speech, but clearly the hon. Gentleman was not listening. Let me go through some of the figures again. Derelict land grant has doubled to £82 million; support for the voluntary sector has trebled to £640 million; housing improvement grants have trebled to £500 million; and in 1984, 105,000 houses belonging to councils and housing associations were improved, compared with 74,000 in 1978.

My right hon. Friend made the point that, in 1978, the seven most deprived inner authorities—the partnership areas — had local authorities which in 1979-80, in

[Mr. Tebbit]

current expenditure terms, spent £700 million. In the current year, their spend will be just below £1,400 million —virtually double, and an increase in real terms. The hon. Gentleman has quoted one of the parts of the report which, regrettably, is somewhat inaccurate.

I guess that the House will tonight divide on tribal lines. In many ways that is a pity, because a good deal of common cause underlies much of the noise of today's debate. Both sides of the House recognise the special problems of the inner cities. The hon. Member for Perry Barr asked about the 1977 White Paper which led to the urban programme, and that urban programme is still being strongly supported by this Government.

Both sides also accept that these programmes have not just been created in the last six years, although during one speech there were moments when I thought that crime had also been invented in the last six years. Both sides of the House want to improve the lives of those who live in the inner-city areas that have fallen into decay.

There are those who see the inner urban areas as a fertile breeding ground for revolution. There are perhaps those with ambitions short of violent revolution who regard the problems of those areas and the people who live in them as the raw material of confrontation with Government to bring about a radical change in society that is unlikely to spring from a Parliament elected in a free election. That is the Militant Tendency position as I understand it.

That is where we Conservatives wish the Leader of the Opposition well—it is always good when he pops in to listen to the debate — in his forthcoming purge of Militant Tendency supporters from the Labour party in Liverpool and in other cities——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Forget it.

Mr. Tebbit: Can we forget the purge so soon? Will there be a purge in other cities, not least in Birmingham and Manchester—*[Interruption.]* Did not the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) know about Militant Tendency in Birmingham — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to hear what the joke is.

Mr. Tebbit: I notice, Mr. Speaker, that the Opposition claim that this is a debate upon a serious issue, yet since the Leader of the Opposition came into the Chamber they have done nothing but giggle. The right hon. Member for Small Heath said that he did not know about Militant Tendency in Birmingham. I am going to tell him. — *[Interruption.]* If he will not listen, I shall have to write to him and tell him what is going on in his own back yard. According to *Labour Briefing*—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House wants to hear this.*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tebbit: No, Mr. Speaker, they do not want to hear it, because they do not want to know about Militant Tendency in their own ranks. I shall quote from *Labour Briefing*—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Let us have Jeffrey Archer instead.*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Tebbit.

Mr. Tebbit: *Labour Briefing* says:

"The Labour group is forced to scuttle from election to election trying to win voters on second hand social democratic policies. In the face of this, Labour Briefing has tried to organise a concerted ideological assault on the politics of the Labour group through their briefing magazine. Alongside this, we have set about building an organisational network across the city. This has involved establishing conveners in all the city's constituencies"—

this is the city of Birmingham—

"as a base around which to build effective briefing groups. On top of that, we are now co-ordinating an effective briefing caucus at district party level."

The right hon. Gentleman said that he did not know about this. I shall take him a bit further. How much more would the right hon. Gentleman like of it? I shall quote Mr. Mullins. The right hon. Gentleman knows Mr. Mullins. He was expelled from the Warley, West Labour party on 1 May.—*[Interruption.]* I agree about that.

According to Mr. Mullins, the full-time organiser and chief spokesman—

Mr. Robert Atkins: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to hear the point of order.

Mr. Atkins: I enjoy a good joke as much as the next man, but I cannot hear what is going on.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr, (Mr. Rooker) had a fair hearing. *[Interruption.]* Order. Mr. Tebbit.

Mr. Caborn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tebbit: We have seen how they behave in the council chambers and we see how they behave here. We see the people who are determined that there should not be a debate. *[Interruption.]* They are not going to shout me down.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear the hon. Gentleman's point of order, but I am not sure that it will help much.

Mr. Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I heard the speech of the Opposition spokesman clearly and I find it disturbing that Labour Members are not prepared to allow us to hear the speech of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Caborn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I need any help. This Chamber is about free speech — *[Interruption.]* Order. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has as much right as anyone else to be heard —*[Interruption.]* It is intolerable that he is not listened to.

Mr. Caborn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tebbit: I will continue my speech, whatever the rabble below the——

Mr. Caborn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it a helpful point of order?

Mr. Caborn: I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will protect my constituents. I have raised some serious points about problems in my constituency—*[Interruption.]* I have raised those points on behalf of my constituents, in conformity with the debate. I hope that you will protect my constituents and ensure that the reply that is being given is not a party political broadcast but an answer to the problems of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman. That was a helpful point of order, because it will enable the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to answer the debate.

Mr. Tebbit: In my own good time—*[Interruption.]* You will have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that I started my speech by answering two of the Back-Bench speakers and the hon. Member for Perry Barr. I got the right hon. Member for Small Heath interested in his own constituency and I want to tell him that Mr. Mullins says:

"Militant has members in all three Constituency Labour Parties in Wolverhampton, in Sandwell, in Dudley and in Walsall and in 11 of the 12 in Birmingham. Support is particularly strong in Bromsgrove, Ladywood, Yardley, Perry Barr, Dudley East and West Bromwich and is growing steadily in Edgbaston."

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tebbit: The right hon. Member for Small Heath says that it is not true.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for a Minister to read? Quite apart from whether it is boring or irrelevant, is it permissible for him to read?

Mr. Speaker: It is frequently done.

Mr. Tebbit: Having dealt with the right hon. Member for Small Heath, I return to the main theme of the debate —*[Interruption.]* Despite the agreement over the nature of the problem, we differ, as usual, over the methods. It is interesting to notice that the Opposition did not want to hear about Militant Tendency. They wanted to shout that down.

There is a wide diversity of views about the methods that we should use, but I wonder whether there might be enough dignity on the Opposition Benches — *[Interruption.]*—for us at least to unite in total rejection of the views of extremists.

I see no point—*[Interruption.]* When the Leader of the Opposition has managed to gain a little dignity himself —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Kinnock: Let us get to the motion.

Mr. Tebbit: I see no point in, for example, simply blaming the immigrants in these inner-city areas — *[Interruption.]*—although there can be no doubt that, from whatever causes the problems arose, they are more difficult to deal with in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society than in a mono-cultural society of single racial origin. There is simply no point in talking of sending them back home, least of all when so many, particularly of those who have been led or fallen into some of the problem categories, were born here. In that sense the cry of "Send them back home" or "Deport them" means send them to Lambeth or Brixton, or vice versa. We cannot wish ourselves back into the past before the problems existed in our inner cities.

Equally, I hope—I believe that I have managed to unite the House on this——

Mr. Leighton: Never.

Mr. Tebbit: I had hoped to carry the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) with me on this, even though some trade unions are not too keen on such matters.

I hope that we can unite in our abhorrence of extremism of the opposite kind. One could look at examples of other views on how to solve the problems. I have another quotation:

"We are not interested in reforming the prevailing institutions — the police, armed services, judiciary and monarchy — through which the ruling classes keep us in our place. We are about dismantling them and replacing them with our own machinery of class rule. Our aim is to replace the present leadership with people prepared to fight for the working class and to fight for real power. Wherever possible, we should work for all-black shortlists and all-women shortlists so that the issues can be thrashed out on the basis of class politics alone."

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Tebbit: I invite the hon. Member for Copeland to say whether he can join me in condemning that attitude.

Dr. Cunningham: I can join the House, including many Government Members, in condemning this despicable parody of a response. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Tebbit: I have been on my feet for 20 minutes and been speaking for about three minutes. That is why we are having difficulty in making progress. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Copeland finds it difficult to condemn that attitude.

Let us look afresh at some of the problems and solutions.

Dr. Cunningham: Get on.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman does not do himself credit by shouting and yelling like one of the hooligans with whom we are trying to deal.

The Labour party has prayed in aid the Church of England report. I do not blame hon. Members for that, but I suggest that there are other voices to be heard and other responses to the problems. There are even other views of the problems.

On page 15 of "Faith in the City" appears the following comment:

"How are these conditions"—

conditions that we all deplore—

"best communicated and understood? They may be described quite simply as poverty."

The words of Rabbi Blue on the radio on Monday morning shed light from a different angle and of a different quality. He said:

"Well, a clergyman recently whispered in my ear, 'You know, there is nothing worse than poverty, Rabbi Blue,' and he shook his head fiercely. I thought about it and then I shook my head too because I did know and it just wasn't true. It was the kind of thing middle-class people say if they have been brought up in a garden suburb and then got sent to a seminary after Oxbridge. If you have lived in poverty, you would know there were many things much worse."

Mr. Kinnock: Give way, give way.

Mr. Tebbit: I shall not give way. I have never had such an insolent request to give way. I shall continue to quote the rabbi. He said:

"You can survive without your money but if you lose your respectability you can't live with your neighbours, and if you've lost hope you can't live with yourself."

"Respectability"——

to use the rabbi's words—

"gives dignity to families even in poverty, and hope gives them sustenance in hard times."

[Mr. Tebbit]

However, it is not possible to maintain respectability in a society in which violence and lawlessness get the upper hand, yet that is the sort of society that has been encouraged in many of our cities.

We on the Government Benches believe that crime and family disintegration have wrought havoc. So I believe do many on the Opposition Benches believe that, though not all of them. Worse, an increasing number of them seem to believe that the police, not the criminals, are the enemy of order.

The hon. Member for Copeland made a great speech in support of the police, but what he says is not what Mr. Bernie Grant says. He began with a great deal of sympathy —*[Interruption.]* It is too late for the Opposition Front Bench to tell their Back Benchers to shut up.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Mr. Tebbit: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only four minutes remain for this important debate.

Mr. Tebbit: The Leader of the Opposition is unduly excited. I do not know where he has been, but he seems to have become a little carried away with himself.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you advise the House of the last occasion when a Government Front Bench spokesman refused to give way to the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. Ministers give way if they wish to do so.

Mr. Tebbit: I would eat the right hon. Gentleman for breakfast, but not after his display of trying to get me shouted down. *[Interruption.]*

We had an interesting speech from the hon. Member for Copeland, every word of which was heard in silence. He expressed a great deal of sympathy with policemen injured on duty, but he did not say by whom they were injured, such as by mass pickets, by Left-wing demonstrators— *[Interruption.]* No, he did not go into any of that.

The whole point of this debate—I have been able to be heard for very little of it—is that, as the Government amendment says, we shall target

"public expenditure more effectively towards areas of greatest need",

recognising

"the vital role of the private sector in providing jobs in cities"

as in London's dockland. We do not want to see the Liverpool Labour solution of employment only by the council and housing solely in the control of the council. We, as our amendment says, welcome

"the growth of home ownership."

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said, people do not burn their own homes—*[Interruption.]*—or their own businesses. We must reinforce——

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Tebbit: —social stability by——

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is clear that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Tebbit: We believe in extending personal ownership where we can. *[Interruption.]* We have seen the attitudes and tactics of Militant Tendency tonight. As I say, we believe in extending personal ownership where we can, even by what the right hon. Member for Brent, East called, by some old Socialist tag that I think I recognised, and with some sympathy — *[Interruption.]* — co-ownership, where we cannot achieve personal ownership. We shall do all we can to promote responsibility on the part of councils.

On all those issues, but above all on the issue of free speech, we part company with the Opposition Front Bench, and even — *[Interruption.]* — more with the Labour party as a whole. There is no way forward by bashing home buyers, as the Liberals want; or by chaining down businesses, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) wants; or by barring enterprise from flourishing; or by enterprise boards run by Bernie Grant; or by letting crime run rampant. That is why I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends and hon. Members of good will on the Opposition Benches to support the amendment, not least to show our contempt for that rabble who try to deny free speech in this place.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 290.

Division No. 24] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Corbyn, Jeremy
Alton, David	Crowther, Stan
Anderson, Donald	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cunningham, Dr John
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Dalyell, Tam
Ashton, Joe	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Barnett, Guy	Deakins, Eric
Barron, Kevin	Dewar, Donald
Beith, A. J.	Dixon, Donald
Bell, Stuart	Dobson, Frank
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Dormand, Jack
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Douglas, Dick
Bermingham, Gerald	Dubs, Alfred
Blair, Anthony	Duffy, A. E. P.
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Boyes, Roland	Eadie, Alex
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Eastham, Ken
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Ewing, Harry
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Bruce, Malcolm	Flannery, Martin
Buchan, Norman	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Caborn, Richard	Forrester, John
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Foster, Derek
Campbell, Ian	Foulkes, George
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Canavan, Dennis	Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Freud, Clement
Carter-Jones, Lewis	Garrett, W. E.
Cartwright, John	George, Bruce
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Clarke, Thomas	Godman, Dr Norman
Clay, Robert	Golding, John
Clelland, David Gordon	Gould, Bryan
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Gourlay, Harry
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Cohen, Harry	Hancock, Mr. Michael
Coleman, Donald	Hardy, Peter
Conlan, Bernard	Harman, Ms Harriet
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Corbett, Robin	Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John

Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises that the problems of the inner cities are longstanding and will not be solved by the outdated policies of inefficient and ill-directed public expenditure; supports the Government's policy of targeting public expenditure more effectively towards areas of greatest need; recognises the vital role of the private sector in providing jobs in cities; welcomes the growth in home ownership which has led to a massive transfer of wealth from municipal landlords to individual families; and calls upon local authorities to conduct their affairs responsibly so as to ensure that scarce resources are not wasted, and to encourage rather than deter private enterprise and opportunities for individuals and their families.

Select Committee on Scottish Affairs

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I draw your attention to the extraordinary circumstances that have led to four of my Labour colleagues, including the Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), to ask the Leader of the House to withdraw from the Committee. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are strong feelings about the apparent breakdown of confidence and mutual trust, without which a Select Committee cannot operate. *[Laughter.]* Despite the laughter from Conservative Members, we consider that to be a serious problem.

I ask whether there will be a statement, preferably tomorrow, but certainly at an early stage, about the Government's intention on two aspects of the matter—first, how they intend to restore confidence in the Committee and reassure the House that it can operate untrammelled by any form of executive pressure; secondly, on the impact of the unfortunate tactics used in the Select Committee on the consideration being given by Ministers to the case for retaining Gartcosh. It is essential that we have a chance to hear Ministers' views, because there is a real danger that, if the House does not intervene, the failure of the Select Committee to reflect Scotland's commitment to the plant may encourage British Steel to take irreversible action during the recess.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a member of the Select Committee, I am astonished. The Committee did not come to a conclusion, because the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), whose constituency is affected, in common with the other members of the Labour party, voted down the Chairman's draft report. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that is a matter for me. Whether statements are to be made is also not a matter for me. The Leader of the House is present and no doubt has heard what has been said. If hon. Members wish to withdraw from the Committee, that is a matter for the Committee of Selection, not me. I cannot help.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. What the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has said is inaccurate. It is not what happened in the Committee this morning.

Mr. Speaker: That may be true, but it is not a matter for me. We are about to debate a prayer, and the debate must end at 11.30 pm. The points of order take up time and none of the subjects that has been raised is a matter for me. I have said that if hon. Members withdraw from a Committee that is a matter for the Committee of Selection, not for the Chair. I cannot help.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. When unsubstantiated and inaccurate charges are made from the Opposition Front Bench, what opportunities are open to hon. Members to put the correct case and the true version?

Mr. Speaker: There are plenty of opportunities, but that is not a matter for the Chair.

Crown Prosecution Service

10.18 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Crown Prosecution Service (Transfer of Staff) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1846), dated 29th November 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 29th November, be annulled.

I suspect that the Solicitor-General's heart is not in the case that he will be called upon to make today. I fear that he is here as an apologist for the Treasury. The Treasury squeezed the new prosecution service to the lowest possible salary and career structure that it could get away with, or so it thought. At the eleventh hour, in a belated quasi-repentant gesture, the starting salary was raised by about £1,000 and the career structure improved in terms of the ratio of senior to junior posts. That does not augur well for the Treasury's judgment in the first instance.

Despite that gesture, the unions are still concerned, and both qualified and non-qualified staff are still unhappy. Perhaps the Solicitor-General will tell us today how the various pilot schemes are working. We hear rumours that they are badly undermanned and that there is an element of chaos in some of the schemes. I enjoin the Solicitor-General, therefore, to consult his advisers and to tell us whether the pilot schemes are going well, particularly in terms of manning levels.

Interestingly, the note regarding financial and public service manpower effects of the Prosecution of Offences Act states:

"Excluding the continuing costs of the police manpower the most recent estimates of the staff costs of the new service show a saving over current staff costs of those engaged in prosecution work, including private practitioners, of about £3.2 million on the basis of data collected in 1982."

Those savings are undoubtedly made without reference to police wages and relate to people now employed on prosecution work and to existing public prosecutors. As the new service involves taking on rather than laying off staff, and existing staff have not been asked to take a reduced wage, the expected saving of £3.2 million will presumably be achieved by using employed prosecutors rather than private practitioners and then either using fewer people or paying employed prosecutors less than private practitioners, or both—hence the disquiet about the pay, career structure and manning levels envisaged by the Treasury before the Bill even saw the light of day.

On Second Reading of the Prosecution of Offences Bill the then Home Secretary was particularly uninformative about the costs and the way in which they had been calculated. He succeeded in hiding under the skirts of various consultation reports which have not yet come to hand. I observed on that occasion:

"The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. As I understand the arithmetic, after allowing for the transfer of staff now doing the work the replacement of 600 police officers should make it a cheaper service, although the redeployment of the officers would be an additional financial burden. I therefore find the Home Secretary's position on cost difficult to swallow, unless it is a public acknowledgement that policemen are more highly paid than lawyers, which may well be so. Be that as it may, we are entitled to examine this aspect very closely in Committee and we shall not be satisfied with the type of case put forward by the Home Secretary today.

The service must be rewarded in such a way as to attract good people. The career structure promised must also satisfy some of the best people. I understand that existing prosecuting county services do not find recruitment easy. If the new service is to bear the promised fruit, as we hope, it must attract lawyers of quality who can give proper consideration to the material before them and, now that they are separated from police activity, take a more detached attitude to their responsibilities."

The Home Secretary said earlier that it was a time of considerable challenge for the staff concerned and that he recognised the uncertainty it had caused them. He continued:

"But it is also a time of challenge, with the enhanced responsibilities given in the Bill and the career structure implied by a national service. I am confident that the staff concerned will rise to that challenge."

That was the Home Secretary's high hope but, despite the improvement, there are anxieties. The anxieties about salaries speak for themselves when one considers those offered in other professions and other parts of the Government service. There is still dissatisfaction about the career structure and there is dissatisfaction about the Crown prosecuting service areas. The management consultants advised that there should be reasonable proximity between the chief Crown prosecutor and the branch Crown prosecutors. The outcome has been contrary to the spirit of that suggestion. Indeed, large areas have been set up. The unions are convinced that the number of chief Crown prosecutor posts has been reduced not in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness but solely because of the Treasury's predetermined budget. It is felt that the same approach has been applied to the structure in the areas.

As for the career structure, a rapid turnover of staff not committed to the service is not conducive to the creation of an efficient service. I am told that five lawyers have resigned from the director's office this year. That might not seem a large number, but I am told that there were only four resignations between 1980 and 1984. As 350 lawyers will be required for London alone, including the headquarters, and in view of the information that I have mentioned and what is happening in the pilot schemes, can we be assured that there will not be chaos, as I fear?

On 16 April 1985, the Home Secretary said:

"The regulations will set out the terms and conditions which will govern the transfer, which will be negotiated with representatives of the staff concerned. These negotiations have started. As we said in the White Paper in October 1983, we are concerned to proceed in the fullest consultation with those who now work in the system."—[*Official Report*, 16 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 152, 159.]

It is sad to read the letter by Mr. Derek Stobbs, the assistant general secretary of the Association of First Division Civil Servants, of 6 November this year, in which he says:

"Matters have proceeded with indecent haste since the Act was passed, without adequate consultation with staff representatives. Important decisions are taken and promulogated as accomplished facts and unchangeable. Such an approach has had a devastating effect upon staff."

The letter speaks for itself. This is a complaint from one of the organisations that represents many of the senior staff. I am sure that the whole House is anxious about that statement. That cannot augur well for the future.

Indeed, the National Association of Local Government Officers has expressed its view in the strongest possible terms. When its representatives came to speak to hon. Members the Solicitor-General himself—to his credit—listened, and not for the first time, to their case. I am grateful to him for that. Nevertheless, the union representatives remain dissatisfied with the proposals. The evidence shows that the Government have not carried out

[Mr. John Morris]

the spirit or intentions of the high sentiments expressed not only by the Under-Secretary in his speech to representatives of the prosecuting service, but as set out in the White Paper and in the Home Secretary's speech on Second Reading.

Other prosecutors will remain outside the new service —for example, those in the Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue. We would like the Solicitor-General to give an informed view on that. We understand that the salaries for those who remain outside, and who do a similar job, will be on considerably enhanced scales, perhaps £2,000 or £3,000 more than for those within the new service.

Who in his senses would seek to join the Crown prosecuting service if he could enjoy a substantially enhanced salary in other parts of Government service? We understand that, compared with the remainder of Government service, the proposed salaries for the new service will leave Crown prosecutors the poor Cinderellas.

It may be said that other Government lawyers perform wider tasks—they may have to advise Ministers on all sorts of esoteric work. May they well enjoy the giving of such advice. However, if we compare the quality of the individuals concerned, there is a strong argument against such a disparity within the Government service, and especially between those who carry out similar tasks in prosecutions on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would agree that we must compare the salary scales with the remuneration earned in private practice. Taking into account the expenses borne by those in private practice, especially at the Bar, does he agree that the salaries paid to the Crown prosecuting service are rather attractive to many solicitors now in private practice?

Mr. Morris: The hon. Gentleman must be living in a world of his own. If he accepts that many county prosecuting services have not found it easy to attract people of the right calibre, and then compares the salaries offered by private legal firms, both in and outside the City of London——

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helen's South): And the Bar.

Mr. Morris: Indeed, but I am concerned with the solicitors who will carry a large part of the burden. What comparison can there be—not with those who have to carry expenses, but with employed solicitors in private firms? That is the real test. If the hon. Gentleman believes that they are comparable, he must be living in a world completely of his own.

The Philips commission found that the existing prosecution service arrangements in England and Wales were deficient in respect of fairness, openness, accountability and efficiency. The Government set high aims in their White Paper. They seemed determined to create a first-class service, and the proposals were widely welcomed. Now, many of those great hopes have turned to ashes. There is disquiet about salaries, manning, career structures and promotion prospects compared with other parts of the Government service. Therefore, I ask the Solicitor-General whether he can put his hand on his heart and say that the Treasury has not put a huge spike into the heart of the aim, endorsed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, of creating a first-class service and of attracting people of calibre now and in the future to achieve all our hopes for a new, independent prosecuting service worthy of the name. The disquiet that I have heard —I have quoted only a fraction of it tonight—leads me to invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for the prayer that the Government's proposals should not come into effect.

11.36 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The Philips Royal Commission recommended that we should have an independent prosecuting service, as the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) reminded us. That recommendation was widely welcomed. When I dealt with the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, as a Minister at the Home Office, I was surprised by the extent of the criticism of the Government, and the broadness of that criticism, for not having included provisions for an independent prosecuting service. Sir Cyril Philips did not expect the Government to do it all in one Bill, as he made clear in a letter to *The Times*. But it was widely believed that it should be introduced as quickly as possible. I understand why, because it is extremely important in the public interest.

A former Home Secretary introduced the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, which provides for an independent prosecuting service. The Government announced that that will come into effect on 1 April for the metropolitan counties and on 1 October next year for London and the remainder of England and Wales. The Act provides for the Attorney-General to make regulations to bring the service into being, for the transfer of staff who are eligible to serve in the new service, and for their terms and conditions of service. The Government introduced the regulations, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman wishes to annul.

The response to the proposed introduction of the regulations is now to say, "You are moving too fast. You should be more cautious, think about it longer and put it off for some time." That is the purpose of the prayer that we are debating, and I must ask the House to reject that approach.

On 1 April, the metropolitan county councils will be abolished. If the service is not to come into force on 1 April, the responsibilities for prosecuting would have to go to an as yet uninvented residuary body, and thereafter would undergo a further reorganisation at an unspecified time in the future. That could not be in the interests of the staff or the public. No substantial body of opinion in the trade unions, with which I have had the pleasure of negotiating for some time, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman was kind enough to say, favours a postponement. However, postponement of the introduction of the service would be the consequence of the motion being passed, as is intended.

It might be right to pay even that price if the Government had got the organisation or the terms of employment so badly wrong that the Crown prosecuting service was bound to get off to a faltering start as a handicapped and second-class service. I acknowledge that in the early autumn there were serious misgivings as to the adequacy of the terms and conditions being proposed. However, I was able to spend much time listening to the

trade union group and to the Society of Prosecuting Solicitors for England and Wales. I acknowledge the value to me of those discussions. On 12 November I was able to announce substantial improvements in the terms and conditions. The starting salary for the Crown prosecutor, the botton rung of the admitted staff in the service, has been increased from £9,700 to £10,500, and the maximum from £14,000 to £15,000. As to promotion prospects, I was able to announce an improvement in the ratio of Crown prosecutors to senior Crown prosecutors from 3:1 to 2:1 and to make a modest improvement in pay protection.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is not just the Crown prosecutors that matter, but the ancillary and supporting staff, particularly those who service the Crown courts section? Would it not be a small price to pay to delay the implementation of the order until such time as proper and adequate staffing relations in all sectors of the service are agreed on?

The Solicitor-General: I cannot agree that that would be a necessary or desirable step. I have met representatives of the unadmitted staff. I shall meet them again in a few days time, I am glad to say, and I do not think that anything that the hon. Gentleman has said will justify the postponement.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does not the hon. and learned Gentleman's boast about obtaining extra money for the salaries of basic-grade Crown prosecutors look pretty thin and tattered when one bears in mind that in an average district team, a Crown prosecutor's average salary will be £13,323 compared with the average salary of a basic grade prosecuting solicitor, effectively the same job, at £16,009? Is he not introducing a salary scale that puts basic grade solicitors at £3,000 less per annum?

The Solicitor-General: I shall be drawing the attention of the House to some opinions from people who should know about the adequacy of my proposals.

Nobody is a clairvoyant, or at any rate a reliable clairvoyant, and one has to seek advice from designated managers of the service who know what they are talking about. The head of field management of the service is somebody whose experience is not to be sneezed at. The present chief prosecuting solicitor in greater Manchester is Mr. David Gandy, and he is the former president of the Society of Prosecuting Solicitors of England and Wales. He is the designated head of the field management for the new service, and his advice has been invaluable. There cannot be more reliable advisors than the people who, as chief Crown prosecutors, will be responsible for the 31 areas in England and Wales. Some 27 out of those 31 are now designated, and I can read extracts from letters that I have recently had from some of them, because they are reassuring.

Mr. Michael Rose, the Crown prosecuting solicitor for south Yorkshire, refers to:

"the significant and worthwhile improvements in the salary grade structure in terms of entry into the Crown Prosecution Service,"

and says:

"The improvements which have now been announced have lifted morale in my own office, and the task of those like myself, whose responsibility it will be to motivate and lead our staff into the new service, has been made easier."

The chief prosecuting solicitor for Humberside, Mr. Lesley Bell, refers to

"a workable package in matters of establishment and salary which will have a considerable effect in easing the transfer into the Crown Prosecution Service. To the professional staff of a small shire county the most welcome news was the variation of the proportion of senior Crown prosecutors to Crown prosecutors".

He adds:

"My colleagues feel, and I agree with them, that the proportion of one to two which you have obtained on our behalf will give adequate opportunity of advancement to those who are worthy of promotion. When I circulated details of the package the resultant boost in the morale of our professional staff allayed my private fears concerning their attitude to transfer".

As we are talking about metropolitan counties in the first instance, let me read from a letter from Mr. Britnell, a principal prosecuting solicitor for greater Manchester. He writes on behalf of both the professional and unadmitted staff

"to record our appreciation of your efforts in the recent negotiations to improve the pay and conditions of the staff entering the new service",

and adds:

"We now feel in the light of the improvements both in the grades and the ratio of senior staff to junior, together with the other general improvements in the conditions, that this will now lead to the establishment of an efficient and effective service staffed by people of the right competence".

They may all be wrong, and I may be wrong, but that is a risk one has to take. One does not act on clairvoyance or straight speculation if one is sensible—one acts on the informed opinions of those who will have responsibility for the service.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Solicitor-General has quoted the chief officer for the south Yorkshire area. Does he accept that there are other views in south Yorkshire as well as the view of Mr. Rose? Has he read the letter to *The Times* from Mr. Timmons, which expressed the sort of view that a moment or two ago he was affording respect to?

The Solicitor-General: I accept that there are different views, and I have read the letter from Mr. Timmons. He is the present president of the society, but his predecessor will be the head of field management, and he will have responsibility for the service. Mr. Timmons is not making the transfer. He is taking up other employment, where his skills will undoubtedly be used greatly to the public advantage.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I am sure that people in the prosecuting service accept that my hon. and learned Friend has done his best to improve pay and conditions. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in Cumbria and Lancashire, which have been amalgamated, this proposal will damage the career structure, and a number of people there feel that they will be training young solicitors simply to go into private practice. How will my hon. and learned Friend meet that objection?

The Solicitor-General: The shortest way is to refer to a letter from the chief prosecuting solicitor for Cumbria. I am glad that I gave way to my hon. Friend, who has given me the opportunity of referring to her own county. Mr. Sharp, the county prosecuting solicitor, said:

"It seems to me that your announcement about the new salary grade for Crown prosecutors and also the alteration in the structure as between senior Crown prosecutors and Crown prosecutors has laid to rest the major fears about the new service. There will be minor matters remaining but no doubt these will be sorted out with the respective unions. I hope that people will now realise that we have the makings of a good service which will give a worthwhile career".

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Solicitor-General: The House will recognise that I have given way on five or six occasions, and the debate must finish at 11.30 pm.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury) *rose*——

The Solicitor-General: I am sorry, but in fairness to other hon. Members who wish to speak, I must not take too long. I am sensitive to the criticism that this may be a second class service, but I am satisfied that the criticism cannot be sustained. Therefore I offer three facts to the House. The starting salary for legal officers in the Government legal service is £9,400. For a chief prosecutor the starting salary will be £10,500. In London, including London weighting, it will be £11,865. There will be 60 to 70 grade 5 posts in the Crown prosecuting service, with salaries of between £21,000 and £25,500. There are only 21 posts in the local government legal service, with a salary maximum that is as high or higher. Nineteen out of the 27 designated Crown prosecutors will have higher salaries than they enjoy now. Two will come in at the same salary. Only six will need pay protection. Their pay will be protected for 10 years, with a four-year taper after that.

I do not think that this is consistent with allegations of a second-class service, or of a service that offers inadequate or unattractive career prospects. It is said that pay protection ought to be for life. Although it has been pressed upon me, I do not think that that is a very serious point. Ten years is not ungenerous. It is also said that there should be automatic promotion from Crown prosecutor to senior Crown prosecutor, but I belive that in the prosecution service personal qualities are crucial and that it is not a bad principle that promotion should be competed for. The ratio is, after all, only two to one. There is no automatic promotion in the local government service. It is said, too, that the ancillary allowances are insufficient. However, when I met the trade union group I asked it to put forward what I described as a sensible, grown-up package. It produced 26 items. I have been able to meet about 20 of them, and one or more of the remainder are still under negotiation.

Mr. Crouch: My hon. and learned Friend knows that I speak with considerable humility, because I am neither a barrister nor a solicitor. However, I have been heavily lobbied by county prosecutors in Kent, and I have before me a letter from the Kent branch of the superintendents' association which says:

"Solicitors and clerical staff in the new service are going to be poorly rewarded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): That is rubbish.

Mr. Crouch: It is not necessarily rubbish. I have written to the Solicitor-General and he has been very helpful. We have already had two talks. Solicitors in the prosecuting service believe that, although the starting salary is not bad, compared with the Civil Service, their future prospects are not good. Their concern is that in future they will be unable to provide an adequate service. —*[Interruption.]* I am speaking to the Solicitor-General and to the House, not to the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg).

The Solicitor-General: I have given way to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and he has faithfully represented the interests that have lobbied him. The answer is that we shall have to wait and see. I have quoted from the letters that I have received from some of those who are responsible for the service. They should reassure my hon. Friend and those for whom he has spoken.

As for the pilot schemes to which the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon referred, there is only one in being at the moment. That is at Bow street. Its manning has already been increased. I have already visited it and I intend to visit it again.

It is untrue to say that the areas have been dictated by a pre-ordained Treasury level for the budget. I know of anxieties in Wales, but I am satisfied that the arrangements there are workable. That is the advice that I have received.

As for the saving of £3·2 million on the original cost, that estimate is no longer held to by the Government. It is impossible to be clear what the present hotch-potch of prosecuting arrangements cost the country each year, but the new proposals will cost about £115 million in the first full year.

Ministers certainly hold to what I and others have always said. We have to offer pay and conditions that will be sufficient to attract, retain and motivate people of the necessary high quality for the service. However, there is another objective. The reorganisation must not create the sort of pay bonanza that can so easily occur when there is a reorganisation. Some believe that we have had such experiences in the not-too-distant past. At the end of a reorganisation, when the smoke clears and the dust settles, we sometimes find that the old and bold are seated behind larger desks doing the same work and several thousand pounds a year better off. We are determined that the taxpayer shall be spared that result.

I have listened to the unions and to the staff commission. I was able to meet at once the commission's one specific recommendation. I believe that the Government's twin objectives are met in the proposed arrangements for the Crown prosecuting service. The establishment of the service should not be postponed.

10.56 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): When the Government announced that they were to establish a Crown prosecuting service, we were told that it would be independent, efficient and excellent. No better case for the prosecution could be made than that.

We were told, too, that the establishment of the efficient and effective new service would be an integral part of what the Government vaunt as their law and order policy; and that the service would attract solicitors and barristers of excellence, who would be able to match their advocacy and managerial ability with the skills of those who appear for the defence. We were told that those in established county prosecuting solicitors' departments would be tempted and encouraged to remain as public prosecutors after transfer to the Crown prosecuting service, because their conditions of service would be such that remaining in public prosecution would be an irresistible temptation.

How badly the country has been let down by the Government's cheapjack approach to the Crown prosecuting service. How badly the prosecutors have been let down by being cheated by the new arrangements.

It is clear that the hand of the Treasury has been at work and that the Treasury has persuaded the Solicitor-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions to take decisions that they would not otherwise have taken. For example,

I challenge the Solicitor-General to deny that the DPP wished to have at least three prosecuting districts in Wales, and three chief Crown prosecutors. But the Treasury put its dirty hand into our law and order system; as a result, Wales is to have only two chief Crown prosecutors, one of whom, whose district is designated as north Wales, will be responsible for an area that includes Holyhead and Ystradgynlais and all points in between — Wales from north to south.

I have no doubt that the person appointed will do a good job, because he is very able, but it is absurd to suggest that that area can properly be regarded as one. The Director of Public Prosecutions was right in his instinct to have three chief Crown prosecutors in Wales.

The Treasury's hand is most at work in the salary structures. It is nonsense for the Solicitor-General to claim that the salary structures are fair. Crown prosecutors do not agree with him, including some chief Crown prosecutors.

I have received representations from Crown prosecutors at all levels—from chief officers to clerical staff—from all over the country. I have been subjected to detailed lobbying from Merseyside, the north-east and other areas. I use as an example an established county prosecution service which is to be formed into a district under the new system. If one compares the salaries in the old and new systems one can see what is being done to the prosecution service.

Under the old system, a basic grade prosecuting solicitor averaged £16,009 a year. Under the new system, after adding 4·5 per cent. to adjust for the non-contributory pension provision in the Civil Service, the basic grade prosecuting solicitor will receive nearly £3,000 less — that is, £13,323.

That person's immediate superior, a senior Crown prosecutor, whose equivalent in the current system is district prosecuting solicitor, will receive £1,139 less. A law clerk who, in the current county prosecuting system, receives an average of £9,285 will, in the new system, receive £7,952. On the other hand, a senior clerk-typist in the old system averages £5,977. That grade is one of the exceptions because in the new system he or she will receive an additional £900. Only clerical assistants, specialist typists and one grade of Crown prosecutor will receive increases.

In the other ten grades in the county prosecuting solicitor service, salaries will be substantially decreased.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): Would it not be fairer to consider that the salary for a newly qualified solicitor in private practice is probably about £1,000 less than that for a junior Crown prosecutor?

Mr. Carlile: That is not a fair comparison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Why not?

Mr. Carlile: If the hon. Member would listen for a change, he would find out. He might try to keep quiet for a couple of minutes.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) is right to say that a basic grade prosecutor on average will earn a little more in the first year or 18 months. If the aim is to obtain good quality recruits, one must compare those recruits with people of equivalent ability going into private practice. Many of them after 18 months will achieve substantially faster promotion up the financial scale than is possible in the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: No. I do not wish to quote all the figures, but I shall if I have to. They show beyond a shadow of doubt that in the new service Crown prosecutors and staff at almost all levels will be underpaid.

Even during the present transition period, we can see that the job they will be doing will not be the same as is being done by county prosecuting solicitors. There have already been changes of duties, and those changes will become more concentrated and have greater effects.

There have already been significant increases in case load for all staff at all levels, and there has been an increase in the amount and seriousness of cases fully delegated by the Director of Public Prosecutions to county prosecuting solicitors. So it is not just a case of them being paid too little. They are even being asked to do more responsible work for too little.

I call on the Solicitor-General to recognise that the Government have failed to provide a proper structure and that, as a result, they will fail in their aspiration to provide an independent, efficient and excellent service. They should recognise that publicly tonight.

11.6 pm

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): It is important that the House should be discussing these regulations tonight because they are relevant to the setting up of the Crown prosecution system. I am glad that the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) tabled the Prayer, though I am sorry that he proposes to divide the House on it, for I had hoped that we could have discussed the matter without party divide.

We are concerned to see the setting up of an independent Crown prosecution service, something for which both sides of the House have called, a service which is seen to be independent on the basis that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. We are dealing in these regulations with the transfer into the Crown prosecution service of those who are now employed by the county prosecuting service.

While I recognise that not everyone is satisfied with what the Solicitor-General has achieved, he deserves to be commended for his achievements with the Treasury. A spokesman for the Labour party, speaking recently at a meeting in Canada which I attended, said, in effect, "Those who think that Ministers spend their time fighting the Opposition are wrong. They spend 90 per cent. of their time fighting the Treasury and 10 per cent. of it dealing with the Opposition." Faced with that task, the Solicitor-General is to be commended for what he has achieved.

I will not go into the figures. I suggest to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) that what the Solicitor-General has achieved must be tested on two counts. The first is whether it compares fairly with other salaries paid in the Government legal service. The second is how it compares with salaries paid in the present prosecuting salary scheme. If the hon. and learned Gentleman is right, then perhaps the proposals fail those tests. I am prepared to accept the word of the Solicitor-General that his proposals meet those two tests, for it seems that the improvements that he has achieved in his negotiations with the Treasury enable him to claim that.

We are anxious to see that the prosecution service starts with a staff that is paid, to use the Solicitor-General's

[Mr. Mark Carlisle]

words, sufficient to attract, maintain and motivate well-paid people. We should not forget that those in the prosecuting service are being assured a 10-year system, so that if their present pay is higher than that to which they are transferring, they will be protected during that period. I accept the word of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General that what he has provided is fair for them.

I hope that we shall not achieve an independent prosecuting service at the cost or the risk of an independent legal profession. It is extremely important that we retain an independent legal profession. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend can assure us that, with the use of an independent prosecuting service, the Crown prosecution will put out much of its work to agencies in the private sector to ensure that solicitors and barristers have an opportunity within the service. I hope also that my hon. and learned Friend will give an assurance—I am sure that he will do so—that he has no intention to extend the right of audience of those involved in a Crown prosecution service at the cost of those who engage in the private service in the Crown courts.

An independent solicitors' profession and an independent Bar of high standard in criminal practice is important to the success of a Crown prosecuting service. Much depends on those who work in the prosecution service being properly paid if they work for it full time. The same applies to those who are used as agents or who are briefed as barristers. When the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery criticises the salaries that will be paid by the Crown prosecution service, we must remember that they do not seem bad when compared with the findings of the Coopers and Lybrand report on the earnings of those who practise at the criminal Bar. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General will take account of the need to have adequately paid and viable professionals involved in prosecution as well as defence.

11.12 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): First, I must declare a close and personal interest. A member of my immediate family will become a senior Crown prosecutor on 1 April 1986 if the regulations are implemented.

As a former solicitor who now practises at the Bar, I wholeheartedly welcome the creation of an independent prosecuting service. However, I have one great worry, to which the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) might pay heed, which rests with salaries. The starting salary in the Crown prosecution service is undoubtedly slightly more than the earnings of those who are engaged in the early years of private practice, but the dangerous time for the Crown prosecuting service is after three to four years post call or post commission. I speak as a former senior partner of a firm of solicitors who often observed the county prosecuting service to ascertain who was good and whom one could employ.

We must ensure that, after three or four years, the attractions within the Crown prosecution service are such that those who have opted for it cannot be poached by private practice. On current salary scales, that is not to be so. After three of four years experience, the practitioner is beginning, as is often said, to get a little wool on his back. At that stage he is beginning to be able to carry his tasks and carry the advocacy. It appears that the salary structure will be in the range of £13,000 to £14,000 per annum. According to *The Times* the other day, the average earnings in the solicitors' profession at that stage appear to be nearer £18,000 a year.

There is another danger. The first tier of the salary structure runs from £10,000 to £15,000, while the second runs from £13,000 to £18,000. After three to four years of service, a senior prosecuting solicitor might find himself in charge of a team whose members are earning more than himself or herself.

Ancillary staffs will be bound by the normal Civil Service rules, under which it is necessary to have so many executive officers before there can be a senior executive officer or higher executive officer. It appears that there will be senior clerks who are disadvantaged. Those who have not had to run practices or teams will not always appreciate the essentiality of the experienced managing clerk or higher executive officer. I have in mind the ex-police officer who comes into the service post retirement. If those people are not properly paid, they will be taken by private practice.

I should like the new service to provide prosecution of quality and opportunities for people to develop and create careers within it, so that their experience is retained and the service is worth having.

It is easy for a person outside the service to be critical, just as the hon. Member for Grantham was when he talked about prosecutors having to do the job. That was a disgraceful comment. County prosecuting solicitors man, on average, about eight courts a week—a lot of work. Under the new service, they will man four or five courts a week, but they will also take on the responsibility of deciding whether prosecution continues or ceases. The new service will be independent. If people are to be given responsibility, they should be properly remunerated.

The prosecution service outside London—I can speak only of the practice outside London, because that is where my experience has been—has been first-class in the past few years. It ill behoves hon. Members to attack it and accuse it of not performing its functions. Britain can be proud of the record of the county prosecution service. I know that it will carry that record forward into the new prosecution service.

I think that the new service will be a credit to the administration of justice. I wish it well. I hope that the House will provide a little more time to negotiate, on behalf of those who will serve us, for a proper salaries and careers structure which will create the sort of service that we all want.

11.17 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I do not speak as a member of the legal profession, but I declare an interest as the Conservative party's adviser on the Association of First Division Civil Servants.

As one who has been engaged in the negotiations, I recognise the commitment of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to trying to ensure that a service is introduced with the standards to which he has repeatedly referred. He has made himself widely available—far more than is normal—in negotiations and discussions. Whatever one might say about the terms, the change reflects great credit on him. My right hon. and learned

Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) has said that few Ministers have been able to go in to bat against the Treasury and produce improved terms.

This prayer would delay things further. Whatever one might think of the timetable—admittedly, it has been short—delays in terms of the metropolitan counties and the interim arrangements would cause far greater problems than they would solve. There is no doubt that the service still has fears, which my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General recognises.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) quoted a letter by Derek Stobbs. In a more recent letter, Mr. Stobbs said:

"I was interested to see that the Solicitor-General recognises that we will as a Trade Union Group continue to complain, campaign and identify, quite correctly, a number of areas where we still want to see some improvement."

We should recognise and must be impressed by the commitment of those people who will transfer into the Civil Service. There is a great desire to have a first-class service. We should be impressed by the commitment, which is mirrored by that of my hon. and learned Friend. I ask him to monitor the development of the service as it proceeds, to continue to be as available as he has been in the past and has promised to be in the future, and to ensure that there is a rapid response if any of people's worst fears are realised. I am a great believer in the Chinese proverb that nothing is as good or as bad as it first appears.

My hon. and learned Friend's performance in making changes where necessary gives one confidence. Members on both sides of the House recognise that the stakes are high. We want to see a first-class Crown prosecution service. I recognise the commitment of those who must achieve that.

11.20 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Given the amount of time that we have had, this is not so much a prayer as a pious thought. I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) who said that it would be better if we had been able to do this——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is all very well to have replies in four or five-hour debates and although it is nice to listen to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) who is replying, in a one and a quarter hour debate it is to the prejudice of Back Benchers. There is no powerful reason why we should have a reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I take note of the intervention, as I hope the House does.

Mr. Brown: And a little more of the time of the House is eaten into. I acknowledge that the whole House supported the introduction of the service. We now find that every professional organisation representing those people who work in the prosecution service has made representations opposing the regulations.

The main objection, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said, relates to remuneration, not the timing, as the Solicitor-General seemed to suggest.

I accept that the Solicitor-General has tried to meet his critics with the concessions that he announced on 12 November. Those concessions still leave people with legitimate grievances. It cannot be right for existing employees to be transferred to the new service on protected salaries showing that the job—I accept not the individual—has been effectively downgraded. It cannot be right that those transferred on protected salaries will enjoy that protection for only a limited time. The implication is that their wages will be reduced in the future.

The best test of the wage-rates issue is not the testimonials that the Solicitor-General cited to us but the market place. That is the usual Conservative test. I shall cite the example of the Surrey division. There never has been a public prosecution service in Surrey. The work has been put out to private solicitors. When the new service was being set up the representatives of those who work in the public prosecution service asked for an internal trawl for the new appointments. That was initially refused. The jobs were advertised outside the service. What was asked for was conceded because none of the private solicitors regularly employed on that work in Surrey wanted to accept jobs in the new service at the salaries being offered.

The new service will not be flooded with applications, not least because those who wish to work as solicitors in the Civil Service, an honourable employment, can obtain more favourable conditions of employment in other branches of the Civil Service.

The Treasury and not — in fairness to him — the Solicitor-General takes the view that prosecuting criminals is low-grade legal work. That view has caused considerable offence to those who prosecute criminals on our behalf and to law-abiding citizens who do not want to see criminals escape conviction because the Government are too tight-fisted to ensure that the prosecution service is properly resourced.

The Government say that they believe in the fight against crime, but they cut the wages of those who are supposed to prosecute it. I have acknowledged the concessions to the lawyers in the new service that the Solicitor-General announced on 12 November. No such concessions have been made to the law clerks or support staffs, a point properly made by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). Over 50 per cent. of all the existing chief clerks will be subject to protected salaries on transfer. That speaks volumes for the new rates of pay. In west Yorkshire, to choose a county at random, 60 per cent. of all the inadmitted staff are subject to pay protection. What does that say for the new scales?

The area boundaries in the new service have been drawn far too extensively, hindering efficient administration. The Government's advisers accept that all is not well. In a letter of 3 September to the chairman of the joint trade union group, it was said by Mr. J. R. Merchant, principal finance and establishment officer with the Director of Public Prosecutions that

"the Director of Public Prosecutions' Department, the Treasury and the Cabinet Office realise that in the time scale allowed, we are unlikely to get the organisation right."

The organisation that the Government are "unlikely to get right" is the one that the Solicitor-General, with, I suspect, a heavy heart or a light head, is recommending to the House tonight. It is no good for the Government to pretend that there are no remaining serious problems. Two days ago each chief Crown prosecutor got a letter from the principal establishment officer at the department of the

[Mr. Brown]

Director of Public Prosecutions asking for a comprehensive list of all the remaining serious problems—not to deal with them, of course, but to help the Solicitor-General to answer the debate tonight.

I, too, want to help the Solicitor-General. The Prime Minister is much quoted as saying that the Government have never scrimped in any way on resources for law and order. I am sure that the Solicitor-General, as a loyal supporter of the Prime Minister, will want to go along with that. The Opposition are a decent lot so we shall give the hon. and learned Gentleman a chance to do that. I urge the Solicitor-General to support what the Prime Minister has said, to withdraw the regulations and to come back with some new ones next October which do not scrimp on resources for law and order in any way.

11.26 pm

The Solicitor-General: With the leave of the House, I will reply briefly to the debate.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is a very decent leader of those behind him in this regard, but on this occasion he is wrong. I am grateful for the debate, although I am sorry that it has been so short. I gave way a great deal in my earlier speech to allow contributions to be made which otherwise might not have been heard.

I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) for his comments, and I confirm that there is great public advantage in a independent Bar being available to accept prosecution briefs. The exclusive rights of audience that exist at present are also in the public interest, and the Government do not propose to change them.

I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) for his kind remarks. I shall, of course, be available for discussion with any of the relevant unions or associations and will wish to monitor the way in which the service develops in the future.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) spoke in somewhat intemperate terms about the service. His views do not accord with those of the chief prosecuting solicitor for north Wales, Mr. Clarke, who wrote to me as follows:

> "I am now satisfied that none of my professional staff are likely to be the subject of pay protection, and indeed because the Civil Service salary scales are longer than those used by our Police Authority they will all transfer with improved financial expectations.
>
> I held a Solicitors' meeting last Friday, and whilst they were all, of course, speculating as to who will be doing what next October, the morale of the meeting was higher than it has been for many months, and I think they are now much more looking forward to the new challenges facing us next year."

I am entitled to rely upon that view, as it comes from one who will have responsibility in his own province.

There is only one way in which the new Crown prosecution service can become a second-class service. That is if it is talked down into being a second-class service. No one can be certain that he is right, but I believe that, through listening to what has been said, paying attention to the market and listening both to those with responsibility for the service and to the trade unions representing the staff who will be employed in it, we have gone as far as possible to meet the twin objectives of attracting and keeping people of the right quality and ensuring that the taxpayer does not face an unnecessarily high bill.

I hope, therefore, that the prayer will be rejected.

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes 119, Noes 205.

Division No. 25] **[11.29 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*

Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

European Regional Development Fund

11.41 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9563/84 and 9506/85, the Ninth and Tenth Reports from the European Commission on the activities of the European Regional Development Fund in 1983 and 1984 and 8253/85, draft Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 1787/84 on the European Regional Development Fund; and accepts the need to provide for an appropriate share of the Fund for Spain and Portugal but emphasises that an appropriate proportion of the Fund should continue to be allocated to regions affected by industrial decline, and in particular to the United Kingdom.

The 10th anniversary of the European Regional Development Fund was last month. A new regulation governing that fund came into force on 1 January. It is opportune, as I am sure the House will agree, to review the operation of the fund at the end of its first year under the new regulation.

Both Houses of Parliament recently approved, without a Division, the Bill to facilitate the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): There was a Division on clause stand part.

Mr. Morrison: I apologise for my mistake.

A consequence of that accession on 1 January 1986 is that the regulation needs to be amended to provide for quota ranges for Spain and Portugal, and to adjust the quota ranges of existing member states.

The actual amount of money that the United Kingdom receives from the fund depends on the size of the fund's budget and the number and quality of applications from the United Kingdom compared with other member states. The budget of the Commission is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury. The process leading to setting the 1986 budget is not yet complete, but the Government's overall view is that there is need for budgetary discipline in the Community budget, as there is in national budgets.

As regards applications to the fund, our policy is, and will continue to be, to submit as many good quality applications as we can. The United Kingdom has made a promising start under the new fund regulation. For example, we expect that formal Commission decisions will be made shortly in respect of three national programmes of community interests. In the Mersey basin areas there will be a £67 million programme that will be part of the campaign by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to regenerate the Mersey basin through river quality improvement and the development of reclaimed land — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) laughs. I would have thought that he would not laugh at Mersey and Liverpool, but be concerned about what happens there.

Mr. Foulkes: Tell us more about it.

Mr. Morrison: It means cleaning up the Mersey. If the hon. Gentleman had a constituency close to the Mersey, as I do, he would know precisely what that means.

The Shildon programme is a five-year programme that will be worth about £18 million between 1984 and 1989. The money will fund a strategy devised by local and public authorities in county Durham to overcome difficulties caused by the closure of the local British Rail engineering works. The programme will support a wide range of activities, including road building, new industrial estates and advanced factories.

The package for Glasgow — the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley may be more worried about Glasgow than he is about other parts of the United Kingdom — will relate to roads, public transprt, water, sewerage, industrial development, vocational training, energy, environmental improvements and tourism.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Now that the EC has awarded 50 per cent. of the costs of the Bishop Auckland programme, how will the other 50 per cent. be funded when the local authorities and public corporations in that area inform me that they will not be allowed to borrow beyond their rate support grant and capital control limits to fund their part of the scheme? Will the Minister at least say that the Department of the Environment will meet representatives of the local authorities to discuss their problems?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman must realise that it is for the local authorities to decide their priorities.

Mr. Foulkes: Come on!

Mr. Morrison: Of course, it will be. If matching funds are available, it will be for the local authorities to decide how they should be spent. If they decide to do things purely for political purposes, it is up to them, but if they do that, they will not receive the matching funds from the regional fund.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does the Minister accept that his delightful letter, which he is presenting to us with other papers, explains that, under the new regulation, we shall receive a smaller percentage of the regional fund than our national contribution percentage? Would there not be more money for the Minister to indulge in his public spending activities in Liverpool and Glasgow if we had no regional fund? As the letter also says that the new regulation, which cuts our regional money, is to be binding in its entirety and directly applicable to all member states, without any legislation or vote in the House, are we not wasting our time talking about it tonight?

Mr. Morrison: I do not accept everything my hon. Friend says. He mentioned the letter of intent that was placed in the Library last month. The position is now somewhat different. It looks as though, this year and next year, Britain will be a net beneficiary. It is impossible to tell at this stage. After 1986, it is likely that Spain and Portugal will be net beneficiaries of the fund. Hon. Members will have listened to our debate on the accession of Spain and Portugal. I accept that there has been only one Division, but the enlargement of the Community has been agreed pretty well without dissent throughout the House. This is one of the practical, pragmatic points that must be taken into account. The potential development in Spain and Portugal is to their advantage, and to the advantage of the entire Community.

Mr. Foulkes: Answer the question.

Mr. Morrison: I have answered my hon. Friend's question and stated what the position is. It is that this year and next year, the likelihood is that we shall be net beneficiaries. The following year, the likelihood is that we

shall not. I accept what my hon. Friend said, but the enlargement of the Community will be to the long-term advantage of the United Kingdom, and the House has been agreeing that in the past two weeks or so, over which we have been debating that point.

Under the programmes that I mentioned, Merseyside, Shildon and Glasgow will have some £153 million of the ERDF. The money will be committed to the United Kingdom and without that fund, despite what my hon. Friend may say, it would not be available to us. The United Kingdom will be the first country to take advantage of the provision in the new regulation financing programmes as distinct from projects.

Another example of aid is the special measures of regional aid under the non-quota section, which were first adopted in 1979. These special measures are now helping to generate new business activity in parts of the United Kingdom which have been particularly affected by the decline of the steel, shipbuilding and textile industries. To date, the allocation to the United Kingdom for these special measures is some £118 miilion, which is helping to overcome the worst effects of decline in some of our older industries.

The final set of non-quotas is to be considered by the Council next week. The sums involved are modest as compared with the main fund, but the benefits are additional to our quota. The council of Ministers is likely to adopt regulations that will benefit Northern Ireland, and the fishery areas—I suspect that this will be of interest to Labour Members—of Hull, Grimsby, and probably also Fleetwood.

However, this will be the last set of non-quota measures under the old regulation. In many ways, the successors to the non-quota measures will be Community programmes. There are none as yet, but the Commission is believed to be about to submit proposals on telecommunications and energy. The allocations under the Community programmes will count towards the quota range of the member state concerned.

The Council will also be considering next week the Commissions's proposals in respect of the accession of Spain and Portugal. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has emphasised to Commissioner Varfis the need to ensure that adequate emphasis is placed on problems of industrial decline, and the Commissioner acknowledged this problem in his speech on the 10th anniversary of the fund. However, we must recognise that it is unlikely that the Council will wish to depart radically from Commission proposals, and that the accession of the new and less well-off countries will inevitably lead to pressure to divert funds to them. The House has welcomed the accession of Spain and Portugal as being in the long-term interests of the Community and the country.

I move on now to the implications of the recent European Council at Luxembourg. The summit's provisional conclusions mean that the European regional development fund is to be written into the treaty of Rome on the basis of article 3 of the existing regulation—that is to say, equal status for areas of industrial decline as for underdeveloped regions. Secondly, the Commission is to put forward new comprehensive proposals to clarify and rationalise the tasks of the structural funds. That represents a reasonable deal for the United Kingdom. I hope that Labour Members will agree that the equal status for areas of industrial decline helps to guard our interests. The fund has grown and is now the biggest of the three structural funds. It is still growing and evolving. We shall contribute to the process of discussion and evolution, but I can assure the House that we shall continue to strive to ensure that there is an appropriate benefit for the United Kingdom.

On that basis, I invite the House to approve the motion.

11.54 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): This is the first occasion for 18 months on which we have debated the European regional fund. They have been 18 months during which we have had legislation and new regulations from the Commission, particularly on the accession of Spain and Portugal, that affect the future amounts of regional aid that we can expect from Europe. They were also 18 months during which we have seen British legislation and regulations that will effectively reduce by £1,000 million the amount of regional aid that our most depressed regions can expect over the next five years. During those 18 months, the problems of the regions in Britain and Europe have deteriorated rather than improved as unemployment has grown — so much so that the 10th report of the European regional fund says explicitly that

"regional disparities within the Community have not narrowed in recent years and will widen significantly in the enlarged Community".

It seems that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry agreed with that statement when he spoke to the Conservative party conference, because he said that the problems of the regions

"now represents the gravest social and economic problem facing us as a nation. We ignore it at our peril".

That is exactly the sort of statement that should have lead the European heads of Government to draw up a programme to mount a concerted attack on unemployment and deprivation in the Community's worst regions.

Of the 1·7 million manufacturing jobs that have been lost in Britain over the last six years 1·33 million have been lost in our depressed areas. Even in the last two years, when the Government boast that 700,000 jobs have been created, we have had fewer full-time jobs in the north-east, the north-west, Yorkshire, Humberside, Scotland and Wales. Manufacturing investment is still declining in many of our regions. Consequently, the Minister should have told us about what he is doing in Britian and the European Community to achieve the perfectly laudable objectives of the 1984 legislation, which state that the aim of regional policy should be the correction of regional imbalances, economic convergence and a more balanced distribution of economic activity.

The Minister referred to some of the changes that have taken place in the past 18 months, such as the moves towards integrated programmes, the new formula for upper and lower limits for deciding regional aid and—perhaps the most important development—the accession of Spain and Portugal, which will add 18 per cent. to the population of the Community but only 8 per cent. to the GDP and will double the number of people in Europe's depressed regions who can draw on the regional fund.

My first question—which the Minister skated over in answer to one of his colleagues—is, how much money will we receive from the regional fund next year, and how much can we expect to receive in subsequent years? When we debated the regional fund last year, we knew that there would be minor increases in the fund but that that would not compensate for the massive cuts taking place in British

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

regional aid. It seems that this year the massive cuts in British regional aid will be compounded by cuts in real terms in the regional aid available for Europe.

In our last debate, the Minister of State, who has now been elevated to the Ministry of Defence, told us that he expected a 5 per cent. increase in the European regional fund budget every year, and said that Britain would remain a net beneficiary. In the public expenditure White Paper in January we were told that European funds from the regional budget would rise significantly over the next few years. Yet in the context of the regulation on the accession of Spain and Portugal, the Departmental note for tonight's debate states that

"the regulation would reduce the proportion of the fund received by the United Kingdom."

It goes further and says that it

"would almost certainly be less than the United Kingdom's proportionate contribution to the Community budget".

What does this mean in terms of the regional aid contribution that we can expect from the regional aid budget? The Commission wanted more money but the Council of Ministers cut the budget. The European Parliament raised it but the Council of Ministers has again cut the regional aid budget.

Britain will probably receive 339 million ecu in receipts from the regional fund this year, but we shall need 360 million ecu next year, merely to keep pace with inflation. If the Council of Minister's proposed budget is implemented, the best that Britain can expect is 380 million ecu. Britain would then receive one half of all the available free money after the quotas have been taken up, but that is unlikely. Britain can expect to receive about 285 million ecu. Therefore, this country can expect a cut in real terms next year in its allocation from the regional fund budget. Is that the result of the Prime Minister's hard bargaining in Europe and of all the efforts at Fontainebleau? Are we to expect a cut in real terms in the regional aid budget and in the years to come?

The problem is compounded by the backlog of regional fund commitments. Yesterday the Finance Commissioner told the European Parliament that

"The plain fact is that if present figures are not increased the regional and social funds will come to a halt next year."

What will Britain receive from the regional fund if that happens?

Apart from what this country may expect to receive next year from the regional fund, inadequate funding is an increasing problem. The Minister of State referred to the vast increase in the budget of the regional fund in recent years. However the regional fund still receives only one tenth of that which is received by the agricultural fund. The agricultural budget has not diminished substantially during the past five years. In 1981 it was set at two thirds of the total budget. In the 1985-86 budget it is set at exactly the same level. The share received by the agricultural budget has remained the same, but the regional fund budget has improved only marginally, from 5·6 per cent. of the budget in 1980 to 5·9 per cent. in last year's budget.

I think that everybody accepts that a special allowance must be made to cover the accession of Spain and Portugal, in particular to deal with the problems in the depressed areas of those countries. However, according to the Council of Ministers, the regional fund budget is to be increased, as a proportion of the total budget, only from 5·9 per cent. to 6·8 per cent. — hardly a great achievement for regional aid, and hardly something which, if it benefits Spain and Portugal, is also likely to benefit Britain. How can this Government boast that they have achieved a fairer deal in Europe when 8 million farmers are receiving £13 billion in agricultural aid, while 20 million people in the economically depressed areas of the European Community are receiving only one tenth of that aid?

The Department of Trade and Industry's statement raises a further point. Last year the Minister said that the United Kingdom was a net beneficiary and that it was likely to remain so. However, the Minister of State says that we shall probably no longer be a net beneficiary of the regional fund. The House should be told why the Department of Trade and Industry says something one month and why the Minister of State says something different the following month.

If our receipts from the regional fund are to be smaller than our proportionate contribution to it, will Britain not lose out as the agricultural fund is increased and as the regional fund is also increased? We lose less if the agricultural fund increases than we do if the regional fund increases, but we lose either way.

Is that the Government's achievement in Europe? We lose out under the regional fund, be it in 1985, 1986 or 1988, and we lose out under the agricultural fund. We obviously need a fundamental renegotiation of the budgetary arrangements in the European Commission, and not the tinkering that the Prime Minister had been involved in recently.

Britain is high in the list of deprived areas in Europe. In the Commission index in the 1984 state of the regions report, we have two of the worst five regions for high unemployment and low gross domestic product in Europe. We have four of the worst 10 regions, seven of the worst 20 and 14 of the worst 30. Even with the accession of Spain and Portugal—half of Spain and most of Portugal are regarded as being within the ambit of rhe regional fund —we shall still have six of the worst 30 regions in Europe. There is no sign that the position has improved since the report was compiled.

The Minister spoke with pride about the special aid that he had won for the shipbuilding, steel and textile industries. But how can the £118 million aid for those three industries compensate for the loss of more than 50,000 jobs in shipbuilding, 781,000 jobs in engineering, shipbuilding and vehicles put together in the past six years and 1·75 million manufacturing jobs? There has been too little money from the Commission and too little money from the Government.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the Conservative party conference this year:

"I go so far as to say that in making all our economic and industrial decisions we should always ask ourselves this question: what impact will this decision have upon that gulf between the different parts of the country? It may not always be possible for that factor to be the decisive one, but on this I am convinced. It should each time be at the very forefront of our minds."

Since then we have had the report on the inner cities, but the Government have offered no more new money and we have had the announcement of the go-ahead for the Channel tunnel, without any compensating attempt to get private investment in the regions. Regional aid is being cut in Britain and it appears that the real amount of regional aid from Europe will also be cut.

The European regional commissioner, Mr. Varfis, said recently:

"At present, those regions benefiting from ERDF operations are virtually the same as those which member states have put forward as candidates for regional aid. The Community however does not necessarily have to take action in all the regions laid down by the member states."

He suggested that the area covered by regional aid should be reduced to about 30 per cent. of the Community's population.

The Minister is fond of telling us that 45 per cent. of our working population is covered by his assisted area policy and that those areas may get European grants. But will the Commission be allowed to enjoy the right of a blanket rejection of applications from some areas of Britain? What powers are the Government ready to hand over to the Commission?

The Minister mentioned the three integrated projects, in Glasgow, Merseyside and Shildon. He did not give an answer that will satisfy the Opposition or the people of Bishop Auckland and other areas of the north-east involved in the Shildon project. Unemployment in Bishop Auckland is now the third highest in England and is approaching 25 per cent. Obviously, that area welcomed the success of the application for an integrated programme. A junior Minister from the Department of the Environment came from Europe and said that

"The Government quickly stepped in to take advantage"

of the programme and that

"the local and public authorities . . . have been justly rewarded for their efforts."

What does this mean and what does the Government's commitment to the north mean when the Council will be required to spend additional money to meet 50 per cent. of the programme?

I hope that the Minister will at least say that his Department will meet the councils to discuss their predicament. The problem is that much as the Government like to boast about negotiations in Europe, regional aid from the regional development fund is likely to be cut in real terms. We are likely to be net contributors, as we are net contributors to the agriculture fund. The Minister should be telling us how he fights in Europe to get the money that we need and how he will make up for lost funds by an active regional development policy.

12.12 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The regional fund will certainly be in greater demand from the United Kingdom and the new entrants — Spain and Portugal. The division between the better-off and poor regions is increasing. That is made worse by higher unemployment and greater expectations. From every quarter comes the chorus "Are we getting our money back?" But that denies the notion that the Community is a co-operative venture.

Britain has a particularly strong case for taking from the regional fund and I welcome what the Government have done in some respects. However, some take the view summed up in the phrase "If it does not shave closer than a blade, you get your money back." We cannot expect to be net beneficiaries on every occasion.

A great deal of effort went into the negotiations to hammer out derogations from Community rules, transitional arrangements and the fishing issues, but little effort went into financial planning. The fund will not be able to make provision for Britain as it has in the last two years, given the new demands by Spain and Portugal. Some of the things raised at the recent Council meeting have to happen. It will not be possible to sort out the regional funds' problems unless the fund is expanded. That involves a willingness to spend money. The problems in the agriculture fund cannot be resolved unless there is a change in the decision-making process and majority voting becomes more common.

A recent Council meeting introduced the new term "cohesion"—the ability to shift funds from one budget to another. There is not much sign that the agriculture fund will be able to release money into the regional fund. So the prospects are not good unless we make more rapid progress on the basic decision-making processes of the Community and accept that we may need higher Community resources to meet some of these claims.

There are domestic aspects to the problem which recur when we debate these issues. One that has not been mentioned this year but which is mentioned most years is the continuing difficulty that comes under the jargon word "additionality"—the way in which British Governments effectively claw back the European money, thereby negating the special treatment that the Community saw fit to give to a locality.

This is not a net loss to Government regional policy as a whole — we have seen that happening in other directions, as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) mentioned—but it represents a weakening of the special treatment being afforded to a locality. If the Community funds given to that locality are, in effect, clawed back because the Government reduce the amount that they are giving under other heads to that area—on the grounds that it no longer needs the money because it is getting it from Europe — that is negating the Community's decision to make a specific provision for that area to enhance its ability to deal with problems that are recognised as being serious.

Another key domestic problem that arises in considering this subject are the changes in the assisted area map which took place just over a year ago. There was considerable argument last night about whether the changes in the map had any effect on the total of regional fund disbursements in the United Kingdom. In general, it should not have an effect on the total, although it could if, by the drawing of the map, the Government reduced the number of viable and acceptable projects that were emanating from the United Kingdom.

But the redrawing of the map has had the effect of excluding from the benefits of European regional assistance a number of areas that meet the criteria which the Goverment mention in their amendment and which they set for redrawing the map, including

"regions affected by industrial decline".

When they redrew the map, the Government saw to it that included in eligibility for regional aid were a number of relatively prosperous suburbs and excluded from regional aid were a number of inner city areas and small communities which were precisely those most affected by industrial decline, and in previous debates several of my hon. Friends — for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) — spoke about the inner city aspects.

I have talked at length about a community in my constituency, Amble, that is greatly affected by industrial decline. It has as high an unemployment rate as any of the areas that were mentioned earlier. It has an effective unemployment rate of one in three, though that is

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

disguised by the fact that it is in a larger travel-to-work area. The unemployment rate in the entire Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area is now higher than that in the adjoining development area, at 17.3 per cent., and is much higher than in many of the areas within, for example, the Newcastle upon Tyne development area.

When the assisted area status was taken away from a number of these communities, of which Amble was one, the main effect for them was not the withdrawal of British Government aid — which by that stage had reached minimal proportions—but the withdrawal of eligibility for European regional aid. The redrawing of the boundaries for most of the areas had little consequence from the point of view of British Government activity. It was all about the loss of the right to apply for aid from the European Community.

The Government must take one of two actions to tackle these problems. First, they must look again at the map to see whether it continues to satisfy the criteria. Hon. Members in all parts of the House have drawn attention to cases where the map does not meet the criteria, and in some of those cases the situation has worsened in the meantime. It has worsened in Amble, which is even more deserving of inclusion in the assisted areas than it was previously.

There is a second method that the Government could choose to deal with some of these problems. There is a whole category of assisted areas in the United Kingdom, and in England in particular, which do not qualify for European assistance. They are defined as development areas but they do not qualify for the development fund by decision of the British Government. They are the areas that are defined by the development commission, a Government agency, as rural development areas. These are primarily the rural areas that have suffered from decline, and often industrial decline affecting mining, coastal industries, quarrying and mineral industries. These areas benefit from the work of the development commission, but unless they come within another category of assisted area they cannot make applications to the European regional fund.

The Government could make all or part of these rural development areas eligible to make application to the development fund. There is no guarantee that all their projects would be accepted following application, but it would be a proper accompaniment to the development status that the Government have given them. Within these areas are a number of regions that are affected by industrial decline and excluded, by the Government's decision, from the European regional development fund and the help that the Government say, in their amendment, such regions should have.

The regions that have faced industrial decline are in a worse state than ever. They are looking more and more beyond the Government for help overseas in the form of European Community aid. They are at the mercy of the Government in qualifying for European aid and in receiving support and backing for their applications. The Government have expressed in their amendment a desire to see regional policy help these regions, and if they want that to happen they must ensure that the right areas qualify and that the fund is developed. These must be key features of their regional policy.

12.22 am

Mr. Peter Morrison: With the leave of the House, I shall reply. We have had two rather distinct and different contributions from Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was patently against our membership of the European Community.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was not. That is absolute rubbish.

Mr. Morrison: That is precisely how the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Morrison: No, I shall not give way. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to take up the matter——

Mr. Foulkes: Come on.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was patently entirely against Britain's membership of the Community.

Mr. Foulkes: Rubbish.

Mr. Morrison: He said that he accepted that it was correct that Spain and Portugal should be partners, but apparently he did not accept the need that they, as less well-off than the United Kingdom, should have special provision. That is precisely what he said.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Morrison: No. If the hon. Gentleman does not think that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is capable of responding for himself, he is not being very complimentary to him.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Was the Minister listening to what I said when he was joking with his hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone)? Did he not appreciate that I was expressing concern that we faced a real cut in our receipts from the European regional fund budget? Does he accept that I was worried that we would end up, as the Department of Trade and Industry has said and as the motion hints, as a net contributor to the EEC budget? That is what I was saying. I hope that the Minister will respond to the fears which have been expressed by my right hon. and hon. Friends both yesterday and today about the future of the regional fund budget as a result of the Government's apparent failure in negotiations in Europe.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman must have heard what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). I accepted that there was a likelihood in the year ahead, and certainly the year after that, that we would be a net contributor to the fund. I hope that he accepts that Spain and Portugal have a long way to go before they catch up with us. As a good Socialist, a believer in trying to help others and a believer — apparently, from what he has said—in the Community, the hon. Gentleman must believe that there is a point at which one must help those who are less fortunate. I am glad that we have managed to reconcile our differences. I accept the likelihood that in the year after next, or perhaps even next year, we shall be net contributors to the fund because of the accession of Spain and Portugal. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would like that to happen because those countries are less well off in terms of regions and inner-city areas.

Mr. Gordon Brown: I hope that the Minister will accept everything that I said about Spain and Portugal—that we accept the needs of those areas and appreciate that the regional fund should be increased to meet the needs of half of Spain and almost all of Portugal. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that that was said last night and tonight by the Opposition. What success can the hon. Gentleman claim for his Government in any negotiations on the EEC's future financial arrangements if we shall end up as a net contributor in terms of the agriculture fund and the regional fund? Does this not lay bare the Government's claims to have had successful negotiations at Fontainebleau and at other Community meetings?

Mr. Morrison: It seems that I went fishing for a mackerel and caught a ruddy great whale. I was saying that there is a point at which one helps one's partners in Europe. The hon. Gentleman has just said that the agricultural part of the budget is far too big and that we should give more in regional aid. I am 100 per cent. sure that, if he says that on behalf of his party, many voters —not just in rural seats in Scotland but in England, Wales and Northern Ireland — will listen to him carefully. Much of the agriculture fund goes to support industry in rural areas. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that the balance is wrong, despite the Fontainebleau agreement, that message will be heard throughout the land.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Morrison: I have already given way enough to the hon. Gentleman. That message will be heard in many parts of the country.

Mr. Foulkes: In Islay.

Mr. Morrison: Perhaps especially in Islay. The message will be heard throughout the land, and that is how people will discover how the Labour party thinks.

Mr. Foulkes: And the Government.

Mr. Morrison: Of course.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Minister now making new policy for the Government? Is it no longer the Government's aim to shift the balance between the agriculture and regional funds? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that these imbalances will remain in such a way that our contributions to the EEC will increase substantially in future years?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman was not listening to my speech.

Mr. Foulkes: He was listening keenly.

Mr. Morrison: He was not. In my opening remarks, I said that in terms of the regional development fund we were making moves in precisely the direction he would like. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East expressed an anti-Community spirit against the agriculture fund, and so on.

Mr. Foulkes: Not at all.

Mr. Morrison: I am entitled to my reading of his speech just as much as he is entitled to his reading of his speech. The fund is being moved in the direction that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East wants — it is a greater move towards reclaiming the industrial heartlands.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was kind enough to say that he was totally in favour of the accession of Spain and Portugal. He was generous enough to say that it was not always a one-way trip, that one could not always expect everything because one was part of a club or community. He suggested that we should change the regional map. I hope that he agrees that, as that map was drawn a little less than 13 months ago, it would be a mistake to do a complete redrawing. It takes time to work through. I listened carefully to the points that he made about deprived rural areas. I do not know his constituency half as well as he does, plainly, but I know other rural areas well. I understand the point he made about rural areas not receiving the media spotlight as the inner city areas do.

It is not possible for me to say this evening, and the hon. Gentleman would not expect it, that we have a deal and can do something. It will not be easy to do what he suggests. I appreciate how problems can arise in the areas to which he has referred. He is not knocking at a completely closed door.

Mr. Foulkes: What about Islay?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman laughs and talks of Islay. I wish that I had the interest in Islay that he thinks I do. I am but the youngest son. It has nothing to do with me.

Despite the fact that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and I have had out little altercations over the Dispatch Box——

Mr. Foulkes: Answer the question.

Mr. Morrison: I have answered the question—about whether he is in favour of the accession of Spain and Portugal and whether we should be giving them some aid because they have perhaps more problems to resolve than we do. I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and his hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, who is obviously in merry form——

Mr. Foulkes: Vivacious.

Mr. Morrison: Vivacious — what a good word. I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and his hon. Friend agree with the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9563/84 and 9506/85, the Ninth and Tenth Reports from the European Commission on the activities of the European Regional Development Fund in 1983 and 1984, and 8253/85, draft Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 1787/84 on the European Regional Development Fund; and accepts the need to provide for an appropriate share of the Fund for Spain and Portugal but emphasises that an appropriate proportion of the Fund should continue to be allocated to regions affected by industrial decline, and in particular to the United Kingdom.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.)

That the draft Cosmetic Products (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 13 November, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

English Sewing Ltd.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

12.32 am

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to finish my remarks a little early to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) to intervene before my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary replies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Is that convenient to the Minister?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Parris: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this debate. For my constituents in Belper and Milford the matter is of the utmost importance and something of an emergency. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for two reasons. The first is that I am aware that he has just returned from a tiring tour of the north-east and has spent this evening preparing for the debate. We appreciate that.

Secondly, earlier this evening my hon. Friend saw a delegation of my constituents made up of members of the work force, trade unionists and the leader and members of the county council. They had come to London to talk to him urgently about the problems at East Mill and Milford. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley and I appreciate the way in which our constituents made that trip. They left the shift at work this afternoon and came to London. They have to return immediately and go on to the morning shift tomorrow. That shows us and my hon. Friend the Minister just how strongly they feel. They feel strongly because it seems to them and to me that there has been a serious blunder. English Sewing Ltd., a subsidiary of Tootal, is a company with a number of textile mills in my constituency. It also has a dyeworks. It has been in the Derwent valley for many years. It is a profitable, going concern with an excellent record of industrial relations. It intends to modernise its dyeworks. It can either adapt an existing building at Newton Mearns near Glasgow or build an entirely new dyehouse in Derbyshire.

The managing director has told me that it would be cheaper for them to adapt the building in Newton Mearns and the Scottish Office has offered a grant of £1 million to do that because it is in a development area and because the company would be employing an extra 300 people in Newton Mearns. However, it would be putting slightly more than 300 people out of work in my constituency. That seems to be simply transferring unemployment from one part of the United Kingdom to another and does not seem to be creating a single new job.

My hon. Friends and I support the broad thrust of regional policy. If the intention of the policy is to create new jobs it is right that the money should be channelled towards regions of the country in special need. If the effect of the policy is simply to create unemployment in some areas and employment in others the policy seems to serve no useful purpose. If that is the effect of regional policy I do not support it. I have asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and this afternoon I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether that was the intention of regional policy; and they all replied that it was not.

At the end of the debate I should like to leave one question in the mind of my hon. Friend the Minister. I am aware that it is better not to burden Ministers with too many. It is a simple question to which I should like the answer. What undertakings were given by English Sewing Ltd. as to the net creation of jobs that would result from the works for which it was applying for a £1 million grant? I fully understand that much that the company tell the Government must be commercially confidential. I am not expecting the details of the negotiating hand of the company to be revealed. I think it is right for the Minister to know and for Parliament to demand to know, what undertakings the company has made as to the creation of new jobs if it is applying for Government funds, the purpose of which is to create new jobs.

I spoke to the managing director of English Sewing Ltd. and he told me a remarkable thing. He said that I was not to worry about the £1 million grant because the company would have moved to Scotland anyway, with or without the grant. If that is so the Government's money has been wasted. If the Government's money has caused the company to move it has been misused. The managing director also hinted at one further reason, which I think may be at the back of the Department's mind—it was at the back of his—why the money might be thought to be appropriate. He said that the company was considering transferring all its textile operations out of the United Kingdom and that without the Government funding it might have to consider leaving not only Belper but Scotland.

I should like to deal with that argument head-on because I think that it is an important one and I hope that it will not be prayed in aid by my hon. Friend the Minister. The proper function of regional policy should not be to provide structural subsidy to sectors of industry facing long-term difficulties that arise from high labour costs relative to labour costs overseas. The tests that I believe applicants should have to satisfy to qualify for regional aid are not and should not be designed to evaluate such problems nor to recommend their solutions. If an area of industry is in structural difficulty it is an industrial structural policy that is needed, not the application of regional policy.

I want to give my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley a little time so I shall say one thing about the work force in Belper in Milford. The British working man and the British trade union movement come in for many knocks in the press, from the House and from the Conservative party, of which I am proud to be a member. Throughout this long, sad episode, however, I have seen one of the best faces of trade unionism and of an English work force. In the Derwent valley we have a strike-free record and a loyal and industrious work force with excellent productivity. The conveners advised the work force that there was no point in taking industrial action but that they should remain loyal to the company to the end. It is a happy work force, and has served the company well for many decades. The trade union has behaved responsibly in bringing the matter to my attention and to that of my hon. Friend the Minister.

I appreciate that the company has to take commercial considerations into account, but it is important for large companies as well as small companies to look to the

proven loyalty of their work force. If a company chooses to look the other way, as English Sewing appears to be doing, it may find that it has made a grievous error.

12.40 am

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) for allowing me to take part in the debate, and I echo my hon. Friend's gratitude to my hon. Friend the Minister concerning the meeting earlier today. I wish to take part in the debate because although the mills in question are just outside my constituency just over half the work force lives in it. Most people probably agree with the principle of regional assistance as an acceptable form of public expenditure if the money is properly spent, but today we must question whether the money is being properly spent.

I visit many companies in my constituency and I see many hopeful signs such as new factories and some companies expanding quite rapidly. Unfailingly, however, companies ask me whether they should not go elsewhere to take advantage of the grants on offer. I am told about Department of Trade and Industry regional assistance, the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies and a plethora of local authority incentives, often in mutual competition.

That might be all very well if Amber Valley were in the south, but it is not and it has an unemployment problem. The overall rate is 12 per cent. and although in Belper there is slightly less than 10 per cent. unemployment, half the work force at English Sewing comes from my constituency, in parts of which unemployment is more than 16 per cent. I do not blame the Government for that high unemployment as there are many reasons for it, not least the huge growth in the work force in the past three or four years. Moreover, the area is still trying to recover from the loss of 15,000 jobs due to the closure of so many pits by the Labour Government in the 1960s. More recently, new technology has led to job losses in the textile sector and it is clear that there are substantial structural problems.

All this is made worse and, indeed, almost unbearable by the fact that we are surrounded by areas receiving substantial regional aid—south Yorkshire to the north, Gainsborough to the east, Corby to the south and the west midlands, which qualify for EEC assistance, to the west, all beavering away trying to entice jobs away from the east midlands. It is thus especially galling to see such a blatant case of poaching as English Sewing. The work force has been sold down the river helped on its way by Department of Trade and Industry regional assistance grants. The situation is all the worse in that the work force has been noted for its loyalty. It is a good work force which for many years accepted low wage rises and gave high productivity in return. Moreover, the work force was backed by a responsible trade union which was more interested in the success of the company than in changing the face of society. In return for that loyalty and good service, their jobs are simply being shunted to areas where there is a tradition of militancy. What makes this all the more stupid is that, as a result of this Government expenditure, there will be no net increase in the numbers employed.

The decision may surprise hon. Members, but it must come as a surprise to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who, two weeks ago, told my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West in Trade and Industry Questions:

"my hon. Friend will be aware that the policy is normally to give assistance only where there is a net increase in jobs." —[*Official Report*, 27 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 871.]

That is precisely what is not happening with English Sewing Ltd. The pack is merely being reshuffled at the taxpayers' expense—£1 million of regional assistance grants to be precise. To make matters worse, only a couple of years ago, English Sewing Ltd. was given £300,000 in grants to modernise its mill. On top of all of that, the Government will have to contribute £100,000 towards redundancy costs. How can such expenditure—well in excess of £1 million of taxpayers' money—be justified, and what is the benefit?

The area has the advantage of one of the best and most loyal work forces in the country. What assurance can they have that this type of nonsense will not happen again? I blame the last Labour Government to some extent for the anomalies in the legislation, but I have to blame the present Government for not repealing the worst of those anomalies. Local people and taxpayers have got a rotten deal. When the subject was debated one and a half years ago, Ministers assured the House that such nonsense would not be allowed again. Well, it is happening. People in Amber Valley can probably survive fairly well without Government grants and handouts, but when their taxes are wasted by financing other areas to take away what jobs we have, they have a right to be extremely angry. I suspect that, in his heart of hearts, my hon. Friend the Minister realises that his Department's position is untenable and wrong. I therefore urge him to prevent this misdemeanour.

12.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) for raising this subject. This is the fourth time that this issue has been raised on the Floor of the House. Congratulating my hon. Friends on their tenacity and persistence is very much in order.

I shall try to deal with the issues that my hon. Friends have raised in the context of regional policy as amended by our review of 12 months ago. I shall go as far as I can within the bounds of commercial confidentiality. This issue has always posed excruciating dilemmas for successive Governments during the past 25 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West mentioned the strategic industrial point about what a Government do when they are posed with a choice between losing a facility from the United Kingdom entirely by not giving support and using regional policy to retain work in the United Kingdom. I would welcome a discussion of that, perhaps on the Floor of the House, depending on what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House does for us soon. The issue preoccupies the Department of Trade and Industry.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends for providing this opportunity to reply to what they said about assistance to English Sewing Ltd. Perhaps I should start by setting out the facts in so far as I am able within the bounds of commercial confidentiality.

The basis of the company's application has been that it has made a commercial decision that it must rationalise

[Mr. John Butcher]

its activities in England and Scotland and move to a purpose-built factory if it is to retain its operation within the United Kingdom. I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's explanation of the company's view that it was a serious proposition. After long deliberation, the company decided that the most efficient solution would be to extend and improve its existing operations at Newton Mearns and Neilston in Scotland.

The net effect of the project on employment would be to safeguard a substantial number of the jobs of the company's employees. My hon. Friends voiced their concern that we in the Department may not have been fully in tune with the workings of the application vis-a-vis our criteria and the subsequent measures adopted by our colleagues in the Scottish Office in their attempt to safeguard jobs within the United Kingdom — but, of course, meaning within Scotland. I can assure my hon. Friends that my Department was consulted throughout the discussions with the company and it may be helpful if I give some further details of the sequence of events.

The company had approached that Department, having already made a commercial decision that, if it was to retain its operation in the United Kingdom, it would have to rationalise its activities in England and Scotland and move to a purpose-built factory. In fact, at the time when those discussions took place, the United Kingdom's textile industry as a whole was facing severe difficulties. The British Textile Confederation announced in its annual report for 1982 that the industry's performance that year, together with that of the previous year, was very depressed. The industry's production was down by a further 6 per cent. from 1981 levels, and employment fell by 21,000, bringing the cumulative fall in the textile industry alone, excluding clothing, since 1979 to 163,000.

Many options were seriously considered by the company. After long deliberation, it decided that the most efficient solution would be to extend and improve its existing operations at Newton Mearns and Neilston in Scotland, taking advantage of a building already available in the group close to existing facilities and ideally suited to the project. That decision was not taken lightly by the company, which has an excellent industrial relations record in Derbyshire and a low labour turnover.

I agree entirely with my hon. Friends in that, having met their constituents only briefly, they gave a clear impression of a work force that was reasonable and highly motivated to do its best for the company and, therefore, for the well-being of the local community. Like my hon. Friends, I was very impressed by the motivation of the representatives of the company who we met this afternoon.

The company judged it essential, in a fiercely competitive market, to remain cost-competitive if it was to compete effectively with rising imports. The Department of Trade and Industry accepted the company's view that the project was an industrially and commercially viable solution. To achieve the rationalisation, the company requested financial assistance towards the costs. Without the rationalisation, there was judged to be a very real danger that all the jobs in the company throughout the country would ultimately be lost abroad.

The application — as are all applications for assistance, but especially those where redundancies are involved — was subjected to the closest scrutiny of its merits, including its contribution to regional development and the national economy. Because of the English job losses involved, my Department was consulted at each stage of the proceedings.

An offer was made — not as much as the company had asked for, but was negotiated as the minimum necessary for the project to go ahead. I should stress that the decision to offer assistance was considered by the Scottish Industrial Development Board, an advisory body comprised of senior industrialists with wide commercial experience, with the specific task of considering, among other things, whether the assistance proposed was necessary to safeguard jobs.

As my hon. Friends are aware, the Government are committed to maintaining an effective regional policy and a more cost-effective policy to ease the process of change in areas of particularly high unemployment and to encourage new businesses in those areas. In fact, my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley recently argued that his constituency should be designated as an assisted area. It is perhaps to his constituency's advantage that it does not have high enough long-term unemployment to qualify for that form of assistance. I am sure that he would share my rather mixed feelings if it did.

Unfortunately, and despite my hon. Friend's admirable advocacy, his representations of that time were not successful. However, I assure him that the most careful consideration went into the decision as to which parts of the country should benefit from regional incentives, the main criterion being the relative annual average unemployment rate.

Inevitably, the existence of special incentives in the assisted areas means that other areas will be at a comparative disadvantage in the availability of Government assistance. But, as I said earlier, we judged that without the assistance which was offered, those same jobs in Derbyshire would still have been lost. In addition, jobs would ultimately have been lost in several other areas, including special development areas. The company believes that the project was in the best long-term interests of its United Kingdom work force, safeguarding a total of 1,400 jobs.

It is not the Government's policy to use public funds simply to shuffle job opportunities round the country, with one area gaining at another's expense. But especially in areas such as textiles, which must adjust to new circumstances, multi-plant enterprises will inevitably at times carry out rationalisation programmes to enable them to survive in the longer term. It is the task of regional assistance, if it can, to mitigate the effects of such rationalisations on the assisted areas and the country as a whole. The precise scale of plant rationalistation has been and remains a matter for decision by the company. I assure my hon. Friends that I shall ensure that the points they raised in the debate are brought immediately to the attention of English Sewing Ltd.

It is for the company, having received an offer, to decide whether, if there are new circumstances, it wishes to proceed with the project as originally conceived; but the offer has been made and evaluated. On balance, those who evaluated the offer came to the view that there was a threat that all the jobs available in the company may have been lost to the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West asked whether the company might have moved anyway. The advice that I have been given is that the Scottish Industrial Development Board accepted the advice of

officials in the Industry Department in Scotland that assistance was needed to make the investment proceed in the United Kingdom rather than overseas.

My hon. Friend also asked about the net creation of new jobs. I have done my best to extract as much information as I can within the restraints of commercial confidentiality, but the company has undertaken to provide a substantial number of new jobs at the new plant in Scotland and to safeguard more jobs. I cannot reveal the exact number. It is believed that jobs in England are at risk whether or not the new Scottish jobs are created. The information that is in the public domain was printed in the magazine *British Business* on 29 November, and that information on the grant and the company is all that I can reveal tonight.

I hope that my hon. Friends, having fulfilled their obligations to their constituents, will at least be reassured that we have considered the matter thoroughly. I repeat my acceptance of their invitation to spend some time in Derbyshire to take a close look at the local economy and to see whether any of the Department's national schemes can be deployed to tackle some of the economic difficulties of a below average number of unemployed constituents, but which nonetheless are worth an airing in their constituencies.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 December 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Monday 16 December at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

1. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a further statement about the implementation of the agreement between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

7. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date he expects the Anglo-Irish Agreement to come into force.

10. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what he expects will be the date and time of the first Intergovernmental Conference to be called in accordance with the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

14. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will report on the progress in setting up the conference referred to in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

17. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will hold its first meeting.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): The Anglo-Irish Agreement entered into force on Friday 29 November when formal notifications of acceptance were exchanged between Her Majesty's Government and the Irish Government. The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference took place in Belfast on 11 December. The conference discussed relations between the security forces and the minority, the enhancement of security co-operation, the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice and economic development. A joint press statement was issued after the meeting. I have placed it in the Library and the Vote Office.

Mr. Canavan: Now that the Secretary of State has let the cat out of the bag by claiming that the agreement virtually guarantees that there never will be a united Ireland and has made a fool of himself by claiming to speak on behalf of the Taoiseach, is it not clear that the agreement, far from being a lasting peaceful settlement, is hardly worth the paper that it is written on and that the only good that might come from it is if the good people of South Down get themselves a new Member of Parliament—that is, provided that the present incumbent has the guts to resign?

Mr. King: The last matter is obviously not for me. I made a statement in the House on the first matter raised by the hon. Gentleman. I stand by my view that the acceptance of the principle of consent by both Governments is an important development and should give considerable reassurance in those quarters where there has been some concern that the agreement in some way presages a slippery slope to a united Ireland. I made clear my view that the acceptance of the principle of consent by the Government of the Republic is important, and I gave my judgment that I did not think that that consent would be forthcoming.

Mr. Stanbrook: My right hon. Friend referred to the principle of consent. For how long does he think an agreement can last so long as the majority of the people concerned refuse to give it their consent?

Mr. King: There have been some wild rumours about some of the implications of the agreement, but I hope it will be understood that, for instance, while it provides an opportunity for the minority views to be heard, there is no question of excluding the majority community from opportunities for their views to be fully taken into account. That is one of the fundamental misunderstandings that has been expressed. Real benefits will flow to the majority community if we can get enhanced co-operation on security as well. I hope that when that is understood there will be increasing acceptance of the merits of the agreement.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Secretary of State agree that for the success of the proceedings to be ensured it would be better if there were not to be an excessive concentration on security matters to the exclusion of all else, because that is how it has been seen by the press and the public, certainly over here? Furthermore, will the Secretary of State say how the House can be of influence in what is discussed at the meetings?

Mr. King: I accept that the purpose of the agreement is to seek to help in peace and reconciliation. I make no apology for emphasising the importance of tackling the problems of terrorism. On today of all days, and with the recent outrages in Northern Ireland, the House will understand exactly what I mean. That is an important objective. We wish to achieve more reconciliation to help isolate the men of violence.

With regard to the ways in which the House and others may be kept informed, I have, as I said, put a press statement in the Library and I shall be willing to enter into discussions on ways in which proper communication can be established.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my right hon. Friend remind the Unionists in Northern Ireland that many of us who support their position from this side of Great Britain believe that the agreement is the best way forward in terms of security and politics? Will my right hon. Friend tell us

that the best way to convince the Unionists in Northern Ireland of that is to pursue the joint enhancement of security first?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right. I repeat my statement that I am anxious to see ways in which the allegations of secrecy and lack of communication with the majority community can be defeated. If I am met by refusal to talk—a refusal that has existed since before any agreement was signed — it is difficult to establish better communications.

Mr. Mason: If the agreement is to be implemented, what steps does the Secretary of State intend to take to regain the confidence of the Ulster Unionists?

Mr. King: It is important to understand the merits of the work that has been done under the auspices of the agreement at the conference and to understand the role of the conference, which is to deal with cross-border security co-operation and cross-border economic co-operation, which is a matter between two Governments. It also gives an opportunity for the minority voice to be heard, but it is in no sense a substitution for the opportunity for a majority voice to be heard. I want to make that absolutely clear. I hope that we can get a positive approach and that it will be possible for the benefits of the agreement to come forward. I accept the right hon. Gentleman's point. It is obviously an important requirement.

Mr. Gow: If, in the months ahead, it becomes increasingly clear to the Government that the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement are completely unacceptable to the majority in Northern Ireland and to all Unionists there, what will the Government do? How can they then renegotiate the terms of the agreement?

Mr. King: I understand my hon. Friend's feelings on the issue, but I do not think that that problem arises. The most amazing stories have been told about the agreement, involving the disbandment of the Ulster Defence Regiment and changes of uniform for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They are all wholly untrue and without foundation. They have stirred up much alarm and concern. I believe that the agreement does offer benefits and can be helpful to the community. I hope that those benefits will be increasingly recognised.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Secretary of State repudiating without cavil the remarks of Mr. Seamus Mallon this morning that the UDR will be disbanded following yesterday's meeting?

Mr. King: I have paid tribute to the essential role played by the UDR. They are men of considerable bravery, conducting a key role in security. One of the most recent developments announced by the commander of the UDR is an enhancement of the regiment, including improved training facilities, which I hope all who support the UDR will welcome.

Mr. Hayes: While I fully understand that my right hon. Friend has to consider the possibility of establishing joint courts, will he take into account the patent absurdity of having a Southern Irish judge dispensing Her Majesty's justice? That may not give a great deal of reassurance to the Unionists, whom we are seeking desperately to reassure.

Mr. King: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. He may know that while the matter can be examined under the terms of the conference, we have made it clear publicly and officially, and to the Irish Government, that we see no early or easy prospect of that being achieved, that there is no commitment to it whatsoever and that, in any case, we require scrutiny by experts, who will include the Northern Ireland judiciary. If it did apply at all, it would have to apply to both jurisdictions. Let me make it absolutely clear that there is no commitment to it whatsoever.

Mr. Flannery: Now that the Minister has changed his mind, under pressure, about the border lasting in perpetuity, does he visualise it lasting for the next 40 years, until the children of the Catholic minority, who have more children in school at the moment, have grown up? Does the right hon. Gentleman visualise the killing going on throughout those 40 years, or does he have a plan, other than what has been done for the past 17 years that will stop the killing?

Mr. King: I have not changed my mind at all. I gave my opinion frankly to the House, and I stand by it. The hon. Gentleman is committing one of the easiest errors to make, by assuming that no Catholics are Unionists. A significant number of Catholics are Unionists, and would wish to belong to the Unionists. Merely to identify Protestants and Catholics as if that determined who might be in support of or against the Unionists is incorrect. My judgment, for historical, attitudinal and economic reasons, is that the majority for staying part of the United Kingdom will remain. That is my view, and I welcome that.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my right hon. Friend not do himself and the Government a great injustice by suggesting that only now, because a Minister of the Irish Republic is installed in the inner councils of Northern Ireland, the voice of the minority can be heard? Have not the House and the Government been listening to the minority for years and been trying to help them and adjust any grievances that they might have? In this dangerous situation, is not the morale of the RUC all-important? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that no code of conduct was agreed with another Government, having regard to the splendid record of the RUC in hunting down the so-called Loyalist murder gangs and acting in a non-sectarian and proper fashion?

Mr. King: What my hon. Friend said at the start of his question was correct. Of course Governments have tried. The query, and the concern, is whether we have managed to achieve the confidence that is necessary for reconciliation. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the latter point. It is entirely a matter for the Chief Constable. It is well known that the Metropolitan police have introduced a code of conduct, and other United Kingdom police forces are doing so. It is made clear in the communiqué that the Chief Constable advised the conference that for some time he had been preparing, and would introduce as soon as possible, a code. That is the position. I was interested to hear that from the Chief Constable. It is entirely in line with developments in United Kingdom police forces.

Mr. Archer: Will that proposed code of conduct be made public, unlike the code of conduct that followed the Bennett recommendations? Reverting to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), since the conference discussed how it should

approach its future programme of work, will the Secretary of State give the House an idea of the subjects likely to be discussed over the next few months, in addition to security and legal matters?

Mr. King: Those matters are contained in the communiqué and in the statement that we produced after it. The work on cross-border co-operation will continue and develop. The work referred to in the programme includes measures to improve relations between the security forces and the minority community and the creation of a working group of officials to establish machinery for further discussions on legal matters. The publication of the code of conduct is a matter for the police authority, but I should have thought it very desirable for it to be published. It is a matter for the authority, but I assume that it will be published.

2. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he is currently having with representatives of the Unionist community about the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

13. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent consultations he has had with representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Conference provided for under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Unionist elected representatives decided on 14 November, in protest at the agreement, that they would not communicate with my right hon. Friend or other Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office. We deplore this decision, which cannot serve the interests of the majority community. However, the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend discussed the agreement with a delegation of Unionist Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly on 25 November.

Since the agreement was signed, my right hon. Friend has met both the leader of the Alliance party and the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party twice. We stand ready to listen to the views of the elected representatives of all constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hunter: Will my hon. Friend give a yet further and more specific reassurance that, in the event of discussions reopening with the leaders of the Unionist community, and in all the discussions that take place about the agreement, it will be made abundantly plain that it will be taken fully into account that there are legitimate Unionist aspirations and understandable Unionist concerns, and that this has always been and always will be the case?

Mr. Scott: We have been at pains to make it clear that our respect is accorded to both traditions in Northern Ireland. We bitterly regret that the Unionist representatives are not making use of the many channels that are open to them for communicating their views to this Government. We shall persist in our attempts to persuade them to do so.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister recognise that it is not very helpful simply to deplore the action of the Ulster Unionists, and that he might do better to recognise that the setting up by the Government of the Intergovernmental Conference is being opposed by constitutional means?

Mr. Scott: I welcome that, certainly, and I would expect nothing less from elected Members of this House and from other representatives of the Unionist community. I am sure that that is something that we look forward to being continued. I understand the worries of the Unionists, but I wish that they would come and discuss their worries with us.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: If, as seems probable, the Assembly comes to an end in the fairly near future, would it not be a good idea to give Northern Ireland a Select Committee in this House so that Unionist Members and others from Northern Ireland could go over the details of such policies as are required for the Province, particularly those that will spring from the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend raises essentially a hypothetical question. I very much hope that it will be possible for the Assembly to continue. Since its establishment it has done a very useful job in Northern Ireland and I hope that it will be able to continue to do so.

Mr. Nellist: What is the point of the Anglo-Irish Agreement if it provokes sectarian murders and increases the risk of civil war?

Mr. Scott: Frankly, I do not believe that that is the case. I hope that there will be a sensible implementation of this agreement so that we are able to reflect the views of the minority in the decision-making process in Northern Ireland, and so that we can establish improved security co-operation. That is the only basis upon which we shall be able to move forward on the political, the security and ultimately the economic front in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it later.

Mr. McNamara: On that question, Mr. Speaker. Did an Ulster Unionist not seek to catch your eye on that question?

Mr. Speaker: No.

Security

3. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

19. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement about the security situation in the Province.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 14 November two civilians and five members of the security forces have died as a result of the security situation in the Province. I am sure the whole House will join me in condemning these murders. Although they continue to bear the brunt of terrorist attacks, the security forces carry out their duties with great courage and dedication. As a result of their efforts, since the beginning of the year a total of 495 people have been charged with serious offences, including 24 with murder, and 216 weapons, 12,826 rounds of ammunition and 7,706 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend say whether he considers that co-operation on security matters may come

to include advance information from the South and advance intelligence that may help us to head off tragic attacks like last night's attack?

Mr. King: Before the conference met, I believed that there was scope for benefits to come from enhanced security co-operation. We had a detailed discussion yesterday and I am now more than ever persuaded that there can be real benefits. It simply cannot make sense, with the problems posed by the border, that we should not have the closest possible co-operation when terrorism presents a very serious threat north and south of the border.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people who are most violently opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement are the members of the IRA? This has been clearly illustrated by the terrorist attacks in the past few weeks in the Province. How does my right hon. Friend expect greater co-operation with the Irish Government to improve security?

Mr. King: The figures that I have cited on the outrages, including the more recent incidents, the scale of success in recovering weapons and ammunition and the people charged show the size of the challenge that we still face. I would rather not go into detail about how I see particular approaches developing this co-operation. The statement contained a welcome announcement of the increased resources that the Garda will deploy on the border.

Miss Maynard: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that all the evidence shows that there is no solution to this security problem? Does he agree that the real cause of the problem is the British presence in Northern Ireland and that there will never be peace while that presence exists? Does he agree that there must be a declaration that Britain intends to withdraw from Northern Ireland and to stop treating Ireland as a colony? Only a united Ireland will bring peace. Why do the Irish people not have the same right to self-determination as people in this or any other country?

Mr. King: The hon. Lady holds her own particularly individual views on this matter. I could not disagree with her more. Her views are not shared by the Irish Government, either. They have recognised in the agreement that it is inconceivable that there should be a united Ireland without the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland. That is an absolutely accurate perception.

Mr. Winnick: Should it not be clearly seen that the terrorism in Northern Ireland over the years is completely condemned by hon. Members? All our sympathy goes out to the relatives of those who have been murdered, whether by the IRA or by the terrorists on the other side of the sectarian divide. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that many of us believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is a limited step forward in the right direction? Will the Government pledge that, whatever the position in the 1986 by-elections, they will stick to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that they will not back down or allow themselves to be blackmailed?

Mr. King: The agreement was reached between Governments. It has now been approved by both Houses of Parliament. Obviously we must respect that position.

Lignite

4. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest estimate of the amount of recoverable reserves of lignite in Northern Ireland; how soon he estimates that this will become commercially available; and what assessment has been made of the amount of coal currently imported from Great Britain for use in *(a)* power stations and *(b)* the domestic sector in the Province which could be displaced by the exploitation of lignite.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): It is estimated that there are 130 million tons of lignite recoverable from the onshore portion of the deposit at Crumlin and substantially more in other deposits which have not yet been fully assessed. Large-scale mining of lignite is unlikely to begin before the early to middle 1990s, although smaller quantities of processed lignite could be produced sooner. The impact upon the Northern Ireland solid fuel market of any form of lignite cannot yet be assessed.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for that full reply. What plans does his Department have to convert power stations to lignite? How many jobs will be generated in that industry and in support industries by the extraction of lignite?

Dr. Boyson: Arrangements have been made for plans to be drawn up for a lignite-fired power station at the mouth of the mine near Crumlin. About £1 million was allocated to the Northern Ireland electricity service to make those plans ready. Arrangements have been made at Kilroot, which has transferred from oil to coal, to convert, if necessary, to lignite. It is difficult to assess how much employment will be generated. Building the new power station will provide considerable employment over three or four years.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present level of unemployment in the Province; how that compares with May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

16. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently unemployed in the six counties.

Dr. Boyson: At 14 November 1985 there were 120,563 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, representing 20·7 per cent. of employees. This compares with an estimated claimant figure of 58,100 at May 1979, representing 10·1 per cent. of employees. The number of unemployed in November was 1,259 lower than in October, due mainly to a fall in the number of unemployed school leavers.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that sectarianism, like racism, breeds in conditions of mass unemployment, especially when it is coupled, as it is in Northern Ireland, with low wages and poverty? Is he further aware that all Socialists and Marxists would condemn the recent death threats against the thousands of building workers in the North but, rather than any programme for building Royal Ulster Constabulary stations, the North needs a massive programme of building houses, schools and hospitals, a

reversal of the closure of the gas industry and means of improving the conditions of daily life for Catholics and Protestants alike? That is the way to defeat sectarianism.

Dr. Boyson: I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman regrets the loss of employment because of IRA threats to those building new or replacement police stations. The police stations exist to protect people in both communities in Northern Ireland. They are not there to protect some Marxist Government that might take over one day. We deplore the high rate of unemployment. The Government are doing all that they can. With Government money, the Industrial Development Board provided 5,000 more jobs last year. The Local Enterprise Development Unit provided 4,000 more jobs, and another 15,000 jobs were kept going by Government money. Unemployment has not been created by lack of Government money. We want more private investment. I would welcome anything that the hon. Gentleman could do in that regard within his philosophical bounds.

Mr. Brown: As Northern Ireland is essentially a class issue rather than a religious one, what efforts has the Minister made to secure the presence of John De Lorean —one of his whizz kids—to face justice there and to explain why he created so much unemployment and havoc in the Province?

Dr. Boyson: I cannot agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. There is obviously a religious factor in Northern Ireland, and anybody who does not believe that cannot have been there. We can deplore it or accept it, but it most certainly exists. As for John De Lorean, investment was backed initially by a Labour Government and the decision was supported by the Conservative Government because of massive unemployment in the Catholic sector of Belfast. I pay tribute to the Government of the day for trying to introduce investment, although it was undoubtedly the wrong investment and we do not want any more De Loreans or Lear Fans. We want gilt-edged firms, which can provide employment for all sectors of the community.

Mr. Pawsey: What success has my hon. Friend's Department had in developing interest in the United States and securing investment from the United States? How many jobs have come to the Province as a result of his Department's efforts in America?

Dr. Boyson: One in eight people employed in manufacturing in Northern Ireland are employed by American firms, of which we have 26. Only three weeks ago we announced that DuPont, one of the most advanced firms in the world, is investing £45 million, which will provide an extra 350 jobs. I went over to America in September to try to get more investment. I trust that one of the fruits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement will be more American investment in both parts of Ireland, and more employment.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Does the Minister agree that one of the prime objectives of the new accord with the Republic is an improvement in the economic situation in the whole island of Ireland? What is happening at Harland and Wolff, and what are the hopes for new orders at the yard?

Dr. Boyson: John Parker, the managing director of Harland and Wolff, tries regularly to get orders from all around the world. His order book is very creditable. With Shorts, Harland and Wolff is a flagship of the Province. The Government will give both companies all possible encouragement and support in their search for orders.

Kinsale Gasfield

6. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in the light of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, he will seek to reopen negotiations with the Irish Government on the supply of gas from the Kinsale gasfield; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: No, Sir. The Government announced in September 1984 that the Kinsale gas project would not proceed as it would not be economically viable for Northern Ireland. There have been no changes in the economic factors determining the viability of the project for Northern Ireland which would justify reopening negotiations. Price and particularly demand factors remain clearly detrimental. Many of the undertakings have decided to close, and consumers are aware of the level of assistance available to them to convert or replace town gas appliances.

Mr. Archer: If the Anglo-Irish Agreement is intended to provide a framework for discussing matters of serious concern to the people of Northern Ireland, has the Minister not grasped the fact that both employees and consumers are intensely worried about the future of the gas industry? If the Government of the Republic make proposals to discuss again the price of Kinsale gas, will the Minister at least respond by inquiring what captial may be made available, whether private or public, from Lloyds Bank or elsewhere, and meanwhile suspend the closures? Or is this one more subject where the Government have abdicated any attempt to govern the course of events?

Dr. Boyson: The worst form of co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic would be if we were to agree immediately to a project which is not economically viable in Northern Ireland. By all means we shall discuss——

Ms. Clare Short: But Northern Ireland is not economically viable.

Dr. Boyson: The Government are responsible for Northern Ireland. If our first economic co-operation initiative is not successful for Northern Ireland, it will spoil the whole atmosphere. The gas industry in Northern Ireland has been considered for closure for about 10 years, which includes the period of the Labour Government. There is no sign that it can be made viable. At present all the gas companies are moving towards closure.

Garda and RUC

8. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Chief Constable of the Garda and the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary last met; and what further plans they have to meet.

Mr. Scott: The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana met on 2 December and both attended the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference held yesterday. Plans for further meetings are a matter for those concerned.

Mr. Alton: Is the Minister aware that we welcome the new relationship between the Garda and the RUC, and

believe that it will enable long-term security to improve in Northern Ireland? Does he agree that the scenes yesterday in Northern Ireland, with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) featuring in news reports last night, can do nothing to improve security in Northern Ireland? Will the Minister say what will be done to improve longer-term co-operation in Northern Ireland, including the establishment of the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier?

Mr. Scott: The Anglo-Irish interparliamentary tier is a matter for the House. There is a motion on the Order Paper, and that is the concern of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. If the House responds, I am sure that the Government will feel able to respond to that. I agree that in the co-operation between the two police forces we are looking, not for overnight improvements or solutions, but for a long-term pattern of co-operation. That, primarily, must rest with the heads of the two police forces.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

9. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the public response so far in the United Kingdom to the terms and implications of the Anglo-Irish Agreement on consultation on Northern Ireland matters.

11. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received opposing the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: The Prime Minister and I have together received comments from 662 members of the public in response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The majority of them expressed reservations about or opposition to the agreement, and come mainly from correspondents in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our impression of British public opinion in the United Kingdom as a whole is of a strong commitment to the sense of the agreement, and of a hope that the Government will not be deflected from pursuing it resolutely, despite what happens in the Province? In that context, and in the context of yesterday's riots and disturbances, could someone in the Province take the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) aside — he is a busy member of three parliamentary institutions—and suggest that he must be too busy to indulge in demonstrations with street hooligans, which can do nothing to further the cause of peace in Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I hope that the House will deplore the scenes of violence yesterday and the injuries suffered by several RUC members. There is widespread support for the agreement on the mainland. I recognise also — I have said it frankly to the House—that there is great anxiety among Unionists in Northern Ireland about the implications of the agreement. However, those anxieties are exaggerated. The agreement has merit and will operate in a way that is not detrimental to the majority. I trust that the majority do not oppose the views of the minority being heard. If that is the case, I hope that we can achieve a better understanding of the agreement and greater sympathy between the views of some in Northern Ireland and those in the rest of the United Kingdom on the merits of the agreement.

Mr. Parry: The Secretary of State will be aware that many Labour Members who voted against the agreement did so because it legitimises the border for the first time in international law. Will he explain his recent statement on the stance of the Taoiseach on Irish unity and partition?

Mr. King: Both Governments affirmed in the agreement the principle of consent: that there would be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the agreement of the majority. I have made absolutely clear my judgment that its consent for change will not be forthcoming and that it will be the desire of the majority to remain part of the United Kingdom. Others take a different view, to which they are entitled. I stand by my previous statement.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searches)

12. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there are any plans to change the strip-searching regime in Armagh prison.

Mr. Scott: No, Sir.

Mr. McNamara: Why not? Is the Minister aware that although it is acceptable to strip-search people leaving and entering prison when they have been outside the control of the authorities, be they the prison authorities or the RUC, any other strip-searching is vindictive and oppressive and will do nothing to help to improve relations between prison authorities and prisoners?

Mr. Scott: It is worth recalling the facts. During the six months from May to October 1985 there was only one strip-search of a remand prisoner attending Armagh court house. It is worth drawing to the attention of the House the fact that the Whitaker committee of inquiry into the penal system in the Irish Republic concluded that there appears as yet

"to be no acceptable alternative means of guarding against bodily concealment of contraband."

That is why strip-searching is important in ensuring the security of the prisons in Northern Ireland.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

15. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what effects he estimates the Anglo-Irish Agreement will have upon industrial co-operation between the two countries.

Dr. Boyson: The Government believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement will create conditions which will foster the industrial progress of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Intergovernmental Conference will provide an additional forum in which opportunities for mutually beneficial industrial co-operation may be identified.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Can he assure me that the success of companies such as Shorts will not be hindered by developments following the Anglo-Irish concord?

Dr. Boyson: I certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. I trust that co-operation between the Irish Government and the United Kingdom Government over Northern Ireland will attract more contracts, not only to Shorts, but to other businesses, throughout both parts of Ireland.

18. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision has been made to publish the conclusions arrived at in Intergovernmental Conference meetings.

Mr. Tom King: The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference took place on 11 December and we released a joint press statement recording the subjects we discussed. I have placed the statement in the Library and the Vote Office. This will be our general practice in future.

Mr. Ross: Does the Secretary of State intend in due course, perhaps when times are a little quieter, to hold joint press conferences after such meetings?

Mr. King: Although the original discussions on the agreement took place in circumstances of confidentiality, I have made it clear that I want maximum openness about the matters being discussed. The views of the minority are important, but the views of the majority are crucial, too. There must be frank discussion of all the issues. I do not yet know whether we shall achieve that aim by holding joint press conferences. We shall have to develop the practice that seems most appropriate. I am anxious to keep the House and all the parties concerned well informed.

Security

20. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) earlier today.

Sir John Farr: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that essential repair work to police stations and the building of new prisons will not be held up in the Province because of terrorist activities? If necessary, will he get the job completed on time by bringing in labour contractors from the mainland?

Mr. King: We are determined to ensure that terrorist intimidation does not triumph, and we shall be anxious to take every practicable step that we can to ensure that proper attention is given to the restoration of necessary protection, where it has been damaged or destroyed, and that it is carried out as effectively as possible. My hon. Friend will not expect me to go into details, but we are most anxious to ensure that that happens.

Mr. Dalyell: How is it that Senator Noonan, the Irish Minister for Justice, could tell a huge American audience about a major and substantial role for Dublin in the day-to-day running of Northern Ireland? Have not different things been said to different people on the same subject, and is this not a geological flaw in the agreement?

Mr. King: The great beauty is that after all the words have been said there is an agreement, which speaks for itself and makes the position clear.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Ashley: Is it not time that the Prime Minister stopped prevaricating about fraud in the City of London, especially as the Bank of England has just admitted that Johnson Matthey Bankers was involved in fraud? Will she take the opportunity to adapt the words of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who condemned the unacceptable and unpleasant face of capitalism? Will she condemn the unacceptable face of the City?

The Prime Minister: If there has been fraud, no one is more anxious than the Government that it should be tracked down and those responsible for it convicted and sentenced. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, it is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether to bring a fraud case, and it is vital that the decision should not be made by politicians. We shall do everything possible to ensure that the resources are available, and any inquiries such as that by Lord Justice Roskill will be put into action. We hope to have this report and publish it fairly soon.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who call for cuts in interest rates to reduce the pressure on, and the costs for, industry should also have regard to the pressures on industrial costs from the rise in the cost of importing raw materials, which flows from the deterioration in the sterling-dollar parity?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend has made a powerful point. We always need to have regard to the cost of raw materials, and if the exchange rate goes down, the cost of raw materials goes up and into the next round of costs, which makes exports less competitive in the following year.

Mr. Hattersley: Last night the Prime Minister publicly speculated about the prospect of tax cuts. Will she therefore answer the question which she avoided answering on 19 November? Will she confirm that, as the Government expect to receive £4·75 billion from the sale of British Gas and other assets next year, the proposed tax cuts will be wholly financed by the sale of those resources?

The Prime Minister: I said that tax cuts must be secondary to holding down inflation. Now is not the time to decide whether there are to be any cuts, and, as I pointed out about the proceeds of privatisation, even if there were none, and one treated the same amount as being borrowed, during the year the total amount of borrowing as a proportion of national income would be the lowest for 14 years.

Mr. Hattersley: If the right hon. Lady is saying, as she seems to be, that tax cuts next year are by no means certain, will she admit that, without an income of £4·75 billion from the sale of British Gas and other assets, there would be tax increases next year, not tax cuts?

The Prime Minister: I do not wonder that the right hon. Gentleman works so hard, knowing the Labour Government's appalling record on personal income tax. Even if we treat sales from privatisation as borrowings, we find that the PSBR this year will be the lowest since 1971-72 as a proportion of national income. The

privatisation programme will continue because it is good for business, for employees, for shareholders and for Britain.

Mr. Onslow: As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has referred to speeches that were made last night, will my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will have an early opportunity to make the speech which he was prevented from making by a deplorable, orchestrated and deliberate campaign by the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench?

The Prime Minister: I hope that my right hon. Friend will have an early opportunity to do so. I am sorry that the Opposition could not take his cogent remarks. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will continue with his customary robust style.

Dr. Owen: Does the Prime Minister realise that by continuing to defend a wholly unrealistic exchange rate she is putting British manufacturing industry in the same position in which she placed it in 1980-81 and risking the loss of a great part of our industrial capacity?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman wants to talk sterling down. I do not and I will not. I wish sterling to stay strong, and I am anxious that were it to go down the cost of raw materials would increase, which would have a damaging effect on British industry in the next round of its costings.

Mr. Hirst: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House that it is thanks to the Government that Ravenscraig will continue producing steel? Does she agree that the future and the interests of the Scottish steel industry are ill served by Opposition Members abdicating their responsibilities in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I agree with both my hon. Friend's assertions. It is this Government who have done everything possible to save production at Ravenscraig over the current three-year plan. That is the only period on which we have pronounced, and we shall stand by that undertaking.

Q2. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Is the Prime Minister aware that her reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) will be extremely worrying to many outside the House who are perturbed at the apparent lack of concern and action by the Government regarding fraud in the City? Will she give a specific commitment that the Government will bring forward proposals in the Financial Services Bill to improve the regulation of the City and of Lloyd's?

The Prime Minister: The Government have done a great deal to improve the facilities that are available to combat fraud. It was this Government who set up the fraud investigation group. The Financial Services Bill will be introduced shortly by this Government. It was this Government who set up the Roskill commission to consider the future of juries in fraud trials. We shall continue to do all that we can to ensure that those who are guilty of fraud are brought to justice.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: In view of the references to the unacceptable face of capitalism, did not the House see last night the unacceptable face of Socialism — the giggling, smirking face of Socialism — giggling and smirking in a debate on the serious problems of the inner cities? Will the country not draw its own conclusions?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the country will do just that.

Q3. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Penhaligon: Does the Prime Minister recognise the contribution made by Cornish mining to the economy of Britain over hundreds of years, typified by today's announcement that English China Clays, operating in my constituency, made a profit of £75 million? Will the Government be offering some assistance to Cornish tin to prevent it being wiped out, and is she prepared to meet a delegation?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made it clear some weeks ago that steps should be taken to enable the legal commitments of the International Tin Council to be met. The latest meeting of that council is still in progress. We want an early return to orderly trading, with other countries meeting their proper commitments. While that meeting is in progress we cannot make any further statements.

Q4. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Leigh: Will my right hon. Friend refuse to accede to the advice given to her last week by that first-rate comic and SDP groupie, Mr. John Cleese, to extend proportional representation from Northern Ireland to the mainland? Does she accept that PR has given Italy no fewer than 35 Governments since the war, has handed whole countries into the clutches of one-interest parties and would break the historic link between a Member of Parliament and his constituency? Does she further agree that if we must listen to comedians, "Yes, Minister" is preferable to "Yes, Manuel"?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend, and I assure him that this Government have no intention of introducing legislation to change the present electoral system, which has served this country well.

Mr. McCusker: Has the Prime Minister had a chance to consider the carefully drafted words of the communiqué that preceded the announcement that the Irish Republic had already taken action on security on the border, in which it was said that they were taking those measures as a precaution and for reassurance, with no acceptance of the fact that they needed to take action against terrorists? What did they mean by that? Who were they trying to reassure and against whom were they taking precautions?

The Prime Minister: The meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference was a good start to the Anglo-Irish accord. Both sides are trying to do all they can to improve security, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will look at matters in that spirit.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to have discussions with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry with a view to referring to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the bid by Argyll for the Distillers Company, which represents more than 50 per cent. of the entire Scottish whisky industry, which has enormous implications for employment throughout Great Britain, and which company provides about £1 billion to the Treasury, making this a matter of national interest?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. and learned Friend will be aware, my right hon. Friend will take advice from the Director General of Fair Trading and anyone else whom he wishes to consult. I shall draw my hon. and learned Friend's remarks to his attention, but in the end the decision is solely for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Duffy asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duffy: May I refer the right hon. Lady to yesterday's mob violence in Northern Ireland and the incitement by certain Loyalist Members of this House? Their public statement suggests that they are bent on making Northern Ireland ungovernable, and they say that they will stop at nothing. What steps will she take, if necessary, to keep Northern Ireland governable?

The Prime Minister: I hope that we will give the new agreement a chance and say nothing that inflames opinion anywhere in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will take all steps possible to maintain law and order and to fight terrorism. I believe that as a result of the agreement greater steps on security will be taken. Having said that, the best thing is to give the agreement a chance.

Q6. **Dame Jill Knight** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware that women widowed during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth are banned from receiving maternity allowance? Does she agree that it is tragic enough to lose one's husband at such a time, without being denied a benefit that all other mothers receive? If so, will she see our right hon. and mutual Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and ask him to reconsider the matter, as he has not so far proved sympathetic to it?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that point. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will give her a complete reply. If she looks into the matter, she will find that since the beginning of national insurance there has been something called "overlapping provisions" under which the same person cannot draw two benefits for maintenance. Under the circumstances that my hon. Friend has drawn to my attention, where there would seem to be a claim for widows' benefit and maternity allowance, the rules are that the person involved can take whichever is the higher of the two allowances. That rule has existed under the overlapping provisions since the national insurance scheme was introduced in the 1940s.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 16 DECEMBER—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Remaining stages of the Education (Amendment) Bill.

Motion on the Education Support Grants (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER—Estimates Day (1st Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock, consideration of the following Estimate: Class II, Vote 7 (Overseas Aid in respect of Famine Relief in Africa).

The appropriate reports will be shown on the Order Paper as relevant. The House will be asked to agree the civil and defence Votes on Account and the winter Supplementary Estimates.

Afterwards, there will be a debate on the first report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests (Session 1984-85).

Motion relating to the Water Authorities (Return on Assets) (No. 2) Order.

WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER—Motion for the Christmas Adjournment. It will be proposed that the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Friday 20 December until Monday 13 January.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Building Societies Bill.

Motion on the Legal Advice and Assistance (Prospective Cost) Regulations.

Motion relating to the Legal Advice and Assistance (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations.

FRIDAY 20 DECEMBER—Adjournment motions.

Mr. Hattersley: I wish to ask the Leader of the House three questions. First, may we be assured that there will be no change in visa regulations for Commonwealth citizens whilst the House is in recess, and that before any such change is made the Home Secretary will make a statement to the House?

Secondly, may I repeat the Opposition's request for a general debate on the conduct and character of the City of London? The Prime Minister re-established her anxiety about those matters this afternoon. The House is entitled to a full statement of the Government's position on issues which go far wider than the Financial Services Bill.

Thirdly, will the Leader of the House give urgent consideration to finding time, ideally before Christmas, for a debate on the future of the Scottish steel industry? The Opposition have a genuine fear that the BSC management and the Government may take advantage of the shabby tactics employed by some Conservative Members on the Select Committee this week to take irreversible decisions about the Scottish steel industry whilst the House is in recess. For the sake of the future of Select Committees in general, the Leader of the House should regard that as intolerable and best pre-empted by a statement on the subject.

Mr. Biffen: I shall take the three points in the order in which the right hon. Gentleman presented them. I shall, of course, take account of what has been said about changes in visa regulations for Commonwealth citizens. I shall draw the right hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Secondly, there will be a debate on the Second Reading of the Financial Services Bill to which the right hon. Gentleman quite properly referred. I note his wish that there should be a general debate on the wider aspect of affairs in the City. Perhaps that could be considered further through the usual channels.

Thirdly, I note the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I think that deep feelings have been aroused by recent events, and perhaps a little time would do no harm in making a measured judgment on how best to proceed in the present position. I should be heroic, but wholly unrealistic, if I were to suggest that there was a prospoect of a debate on the steel industry before the Christmas recess. Doubtless we can consider the matter further in the new year.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Can my right hon. friend say when the Financial Services Bill is likely to be published? If it is published before Christmas, will we have an early opportunity to debate it when we return from the recess?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that it will be possible to publish the Bill before we adjourn for Christmas. I certainly hope that we will debate it shortly after our return.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that before telling the City to put its affairs in order this House must be seen to be doing the same? Does he further agree that the debate on Members' interests should be on a substantive motion, that it should be amendable and that it should include within its terms the question of lobbyists?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there should be a debate in the new year on the vexed problem of law and order?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will find that the debate on Members' interests will arise on a substantive motion, that it deals with the topics to which he has referred and that it is amendable. I hope that in that state of initial fraternity we can proceed on that delicate topic.

There is, of course, a general interest in law and order matters. The House has had opportunities in the recent past to discuss that matter on the initiative of private Members. However, I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Can my right hon. Friend say when a restriction on the length of speeches to 10 minutes will be introduced? Will that restriction be at the discretion of Mr. Speaker, will he decide when it is imposed, and will it apply to Privy Councillors?

Mr. Biffen: I very much hope that the matter will be brought before the House for resolution fairly soon after we return from the recess. It will be presented in the terms of the recommendation of the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On the debate on the Register of Members' Interests, will the right hon. Gentleman note that the leader of the Social Democratic party said in a statement published today that it would be

a good idea to stop all Members of Parliament from moonlighting? That is an excellent idea, and one which I have canvassed for many years.

However, I find it strange that the SDP should put forward that idea because, having checked on the number of moonlighting jobs undertaken by the 20 or so alliance members, I find that they have more than 20 such jobs between them. I reckon that the leader of the SDP is in trouble.

Mr. Biffen: One thing is certain: if an argument is jointly shared between the hon. Gentleman and the leader of the SDP, one or other of them is in trouble.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend seriously consider the request by the Opposition Front Bench that the House should debate the steel industry in Scotland at an early date? Will he bear in mind the fact that there have been problems in the debates of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Conservative Members have supported the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) in his wish that the Committee's report should not be published.

Mr. Biffen: I should like to confine myself to the question of a debate upon the Scottish steel industry. I realise that that is an important topic, but it was originally suggested to me that the debate should take place next week and I simply do not see how time can be found for it then.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Leader of the House appreciate that I want to do him a favour in underlining the considerable importance of an early statement from the Home Secretary about the intentions of the Home Office on visa requirements, bearing in mind the fact that in evidence to the Select Committee this week the Minister of State said that the Home Office was considering visa requirements for citizens of Bangladesh seeking to visit Britain?

May I also draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to an extremely important ruling yesterday by an immigration appeal tribunal which upheld the right of the children of British citizens who seek to enter Britain, if refused, to appeal and, pending appeal, to remain in Britain? It is estimated that a large number of children seek to enter under the terms upheld yesterday by the tribunal. If visas were introduced, that right would be effectively frustrated.

Bearing in mind the allegation of the Minister of State against Members of Parliament, including myself, that we were abusing immigration procedures and rules by giving advice to our constituents, and bearing in mind that our advice will be sought by constituents who are British citizens who originate from Bangladesh as to what their children should do in that situation, will he arrange for an early statement to be made so that we can seek the advice of the Home Secretary and do not upset the Minister of State any more?

Mr. Biffen: I said in response to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that I would raise the matter with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and, of course, I shall also draw to my right hon. Friend's attention the points that have just been made by the hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that he too will have noticed that on both Wednesday and Friday he may well have the opportunity to raise exactly the points that he is seeking to make today.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): I have just learnt that it is the Government's intention that the first meeting of the Standing Committee on the Gas Bill should take place next Tuesday morning. As it had been arranged for the Secretary of State for Energy to give evidence to the Select Committee on that morning, is there any possibility of that meeting of the Standing Committee being postponed until Thursday?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure whether it falls within my terms of responsibility, but I shall most certainly look into it.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the legislation which provides anonymity for women who are victims of rape does not apply when they seek compensation in civil courts and that that will naturally undermine the intention of that legislation and deter women from applying for compensation? Will he discuss that with the Home Secretary and see what can be done next week?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the point that the right hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): My right hon. Friend will have heard the Prime Minister say during Question Time in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) that the Government feel unable to make a statement on the tin crisis until the meeting of the International Tin Council comes to a decision. Bearing that in mind, can he give me an assurance that the Government will make a statement on the crisis as soon as that meeting is over, particularly as Ministers have said nothing about the situation to the House in the past seven weeks while this serious crisis has been with us?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes and his constituency interest in it. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the desirability of making a statement as early as practicable having relation to the factors mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Will the Leader of the House give us a sensible answer about the independent colliery review procedure? He wrote a letter to me about it last week which was totally unhelpful. Is he now aware of the fact that three pits are due to be closed soon after Christmas and that unless the procedure is understood by the Government and the coal mining unions it will be impossible to have any hearings before that date? I have asked the Leader of the House on several occasions to arrange for a debate on this important topic, which is now very urgent indeed. Can he tell us—the Secretary of State for energy just does not know—when the tribunal will begin to sit to hear the appeals against the closures, including the closure of Bate's colliery in Blyth where 1,400 jobs will be lost if the pit is closed?

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not found our correspondence satisfactory hitherto. Perhaps on the basis of the business that I have announced for next week he will have as good an opportunity as he is likely to have to raise the matter on the business for Wednesday or on an Adjournment motion on Friday.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): Does my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor

[Mr. W. Benyon]

and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) mean that the other recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure, particularly those appertaining to Committee procedure, will be laid before the House?

Mr. Biffen: Certainly, but I want to make it clear that it will not be immediately on our return from the recess; it will be fairly soon afterwards.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the answer that he gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about the Scottish steel industry vis-à-vis the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the decisions taken yesterday? Is he aware that there is a great deal of bitterness in the steel industry about the attitude and the actions of some of his hon. Friends, and that the steel workers from my part of the country feel that the shenanigans of the Tory party in Scotland should not result in punishment for steel workers in Gartcosh?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman puts forward the case persuasively, as ever, but I cannot recognise the behaviour of my hon. Friends who are on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in the terms that he has described. I know that feelings have been aroused by the recent events on the Committee, but I think that it would be helpful to have a little time to reflect.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Has my right hon. Friend seen reports that teachers in Hereford and Worcester are to refuse to enter pupils for A-level, O-level and CSE examinations next year and that teachers in other parts of the country are to be asked to follow suit? Will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to come to the House at an early date to publicise the fact that pupils can enter themselves for public examinations if they wish to do so, and that they are not dependent upon the teachers' whims and strike tactics?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that subject and bringing it to the attention of the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will be before the House at Question Time on Tuesday and perhaps that will prove to be an appropriate occasion for the matter to be further considered.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that he is creating difficulties by not offering time to debate Gartcosh before the recess? There is a widespread fear in Scotland that the British Steel Corporation will take irretrievable action during the recess, particularly in the declaration of redundancies. It would be inappropriate for Ministers to make up their minds on the evidence submitted to the Select Committee before the House had had an opportunity to debate it.

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. The request for time has been made in the context of Government time. I think that I am entitled to point out that it is perfectly possible for that topic to be suggested for the debates that follow the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Are there any plans for a Government statement to be made on mergers and competition policy? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the light of the recent spate of announcements about mergers, with some being referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and some approved, there is, to say the least, some confusion as to the parameters within which the policy is operated? It would be helpful to know whether market share is to be the principal criterion or whether, in addition, the interests of the shareholders and the employees are taken into account.

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the point that my hon. Friend raises.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): May I force a much more definitive answer from the Leader of the House on the future of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Does he honestly believe that the Select Committee can continue to work on the basis on which it was working yesterday? The draft report was available for a whole week and, with the exception of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), no other Member submitted a written amendment to that draft report. At the last minute, under pressure from the Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries, (Sir H. Monro) submitted an amendment that wrecked the report——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask for a debate on the matter, not give us the history of it.

Mr. Ewing: I have to give the history to justify my asking for a debate, Mr. Speaker. Having given the history, may I ask the Leader of the House whether he believes that such tactics under pressure from the Secretary of State lead to the effective working of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. Biffen: No doubt in the spirit of being helpful, the hon. Gentleman has given the history of the events, but, like so much of history, it is open to more than one interpretation. I appreciate that there has been a drama in the Committee. I believe that the best thing that I can do is to stand back for a short while and let passions calm before we see how best to proceed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will my right hon. Friend resist the request for a debate on the future of the steel industry in Scotland, because Opposition Members, out of pique—because their own side voted down the report as they were unable to reach a conclusion—are now trying to get themselves off an embarrassing hook, the Committee having clearly established that there was not a shred of evidence to link the future of Ravenscraig with Gartcosh?

Mr. Biffen: I note what has been said. Next week's business shows the considerable extent to which the Government are already committed to having debates upon matters of the utmost importance to the House. I have observed—it is a perfectly valid observation—that it might be possible for the matter to be debated on the Consolidated Fund Bill, although not on a substantive motion.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Speaker. I am aware that you cleverly pretended to forget my name last week so that you could get a bit of publicity on Radio 4.

Does the Leader of the house recall that for the past few weeks I have raised the subject of the imprisonment of members of the Turkish Peace Association, and the appeal

—*[Interruption.]* May I say to the Leader of the House that I do not think that it is a laughing matter. The Supreme Court of Military Appeal will make its decision within seven days. You said on each occasion that I raised it that you would bring the matter to the attention of the Foregin Secretary. I am not suggesting that you have not done so, but I have not heard a word from the Foreign Secretary. In view of the fact that people's lives are at stake, do you not think that at least the Government should——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall not forget the hon. Gentleman, but he should not be using all those "yous".

Mr. Boyes: Does the Leader of the House support my contention that on such a serious matter the Government should have a point of view, and that it is about time the Foreign Secretary spoke about it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall defend myself against the sneering innuendo in the hon. Gentleman's remarks that I was laughing about what he was saying about the prisoners in Turkey. I was distracted by the A1 barracking which is a constant feature from below the Gangway and which happened to have a humorous content. I am not complaining about that, but I understand the seriousness that the hon. Gentleman invests in that topic and the problem. I have been in touch with the Foreign Office and will go back and continue my representations.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): With Christmas less than two weeks away and with many office parties in full swing, will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on drunken driving, in particular on the very worrying fact that during the last 12 months 1,000 people have lost their lives because they have driven their cars after drinking alcohol? May we have a debate next week? May we also have a policy statement that one does not drink and then drive?

Mr. Biffen: No provision has been made for a debate next week in Government time. However, there are ample opportunities for initiatives by hon. Members, and it is in those initiatives that my hon. Friend is so skilled.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware that over 170 right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have signed early-day motion 51 dealing with the Open University?

[That this House confirms its belief in the Open University and regrets the repeated grant reductions imposed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, which involve cuts in real terms for seven years up to 1987 and which ignore the recommendations of the Visiting Committee; furthermore acknowledges the excellent and vital work of the Open University in providing educational opportunities, especially for the unemployed, disabled and those in remote areas; applauds its work in science, technology and professional updating; recognises the cost-effectiveness of their provision; and urges the Secretary of State to reconsider the grant allocation to recognise that investment in the Open University will enable it to realise its full potential and bring much-needed economic benefits to the United Kingdom.]

In view of the widespread concern about the future well-being of the Open University, may we have a debate on this subject soon, or does a magic number of names have to be added to an early-day motion before one is allotted a debate?

Mr. Biffen: If there were a magic number of names that then earned an entitlement to a debate on an early-day motion, our pattern of debates would be somewhat bizarre. I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science the interest that the hon. Gentleman has expressed. He in turn might like to try to make the point at Question Time next Tuesday.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that if the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs had reported to the House it would have intensified the argument for a debate on the Scottish steel industry? However, as the Committee, led by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) decided not to report to the House, it diminishes the feeling that the House should urgently debate this matter. Does my right hon. Friend believe that it would be more valuable to debate the Rural Forum report which made some important suggestions about improving the situation in the rural areas of Scotland?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of all contributions, particularly those from Members of the Select Committee, but they do not help me to understand the problem that much more clearly. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not go beyond what I have already said.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the numerous references during the last hour or so to my constituency, will the Leader of the House accept from me that the people of Monklands, West are not daft? They recognised, when they saw it, an attempt first to weaken and then to sabotage the Select Committee's report. Above all, will the Leader of the House accept that when it decided unanimously today to continue the fight for Ravenscraig and Gartcosh it reaffirmed its commitment to the parliamentary democracy that appears to be missing on the Government Benches and that will be well reflected if we have the debate which the Committee and Opposition Members want to take place?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents are among some of the wisest and most perceptive people in Scotland, if not in the United Kingdom. Therefore, they will see that there is perhaps a certain amount of drama and high passion this afternoon about the affair, which will abate into a better perspective if we leave it for a little while.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): When we have our debate next week on Members' interests, we expect and hope to have robust speeches from those hon. Members who have interests explaining exactly the value to Parliament and to the country of having those interests outside their parliamentary work. May we also hope that we shall hear similar speeches from Opposition Members who have outside interests but who tend to try to hide them?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that I could make any such judgment, but I join my hon. Friend in hoping that there will be a balanced and vigorous debate because this is a matter not merely of great concern to the House but of very great public interest.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. An important debate is to follow business questions. I shall allow business questions to continue for 10 more minutes. During that time I hope that every hon. Member who has been standing will be called.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Harking back to the question that was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) on the colliery review procedure, this is of course a matter of desperate urgency for Polkemmet. What is needed is not a Wednesday or Friday Adjournment debate, or a Consolidated Fund debate, but a statement of policy from the Government and decisions. After the Leader of the House has been to the Foreign Office, will he please go to the Department of Energy and try to get an answer out of it on this Byzantine question?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly refer the hon. Gentleman's point to the Department of Energy.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, my constituents face redundancies and short-time working. Before the summer recess, I tabled a question requesting that no statement be made during the recess about the corporate plan. The Government reneged on their promise. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that in no circumstances will the position be aggravated for Gartcosh and Ravenscraig and that the matter will be held in abeyance until we return from the Christmas recess?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's points and their significance for his constituency. I shall draw those points to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In view of the growing volume of press speculation surrounding the placement by the Ministry of Defence of orders for three diesel electric submarines, will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement in the next few days on the placement of those orders? This issue is vital to my constituency and several others.

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly convey that request to the right quarter.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 225, which has been signed by 135 hon. Members?

[That this House, recognising Human Rights Day, congratulates Amnesty International Campaign on behalf of prisoners of conscience; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to make its views known to all countries which repress human rights, carry out torture and imprisonment without trial, and to monitor carefully the sale of arms which may be used to repress human rights and prohibit the export of instruments which could be used for the torture of prisoners.]

Will he arrange for a debate after the recess on the general question of human rights, especially the sale of arms which could be used to repress human rights and the export of weapons or instruments which could be used against political prisoners?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to that early-day motion. I shall get in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman take time out to discuss with the Home Secretary the question of making a statement or arranging a general debate immediately after the recess on staffing levels in the prison service? As there is gross overcrowding in all our remand prisons, some of which have reached crisis point, and prisoners are not being produced at courts throughout the metropolitan districts to stand trial or to appear on remand, does the right hon. Gentleman consider that a statement should be made or that a debate should take place as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Biffen: I realise that this is a topical matter. I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, since the Government introduced temporary visa requirements for Tamil applicants in May this year, their immigration policy has been one of subterfuge and deception? We require a clear statement from the Home Secretary before the House rises for the recess to the effect that the visa requirements for Sri Lankan entrants will be withdrawn, that no decision will be taken during the Christmas recess on visa requirements for anyone from the subcontinent and that extra staff will be sent immediately to all the high commissions on the Indian subcontinent to remove the fear of the queue? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Minister of State, Home Office withdraws his scurrilous accusations against 23 hon. Members and ends the worry among the Asian community that Members of Parliament can no longer take up immigration cases because of deliberate misreporting by the press?

Mr. Biffen: It is offensive and inaccurate to suggest that Government immigration policy proceeds by deception and subterfuge. I responded to a request on this matter from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and I do not think that I can reasonably go beyond that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The City Takeover Panel has just announced that Scottish and Newcastle Breweries has failed to take over Matthew Brown. Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that there are many lessons to be learnt from that takeover, both in the way in which the Department of Trade and Industry handled it in the early days and in the way in which City institutions reacted? Could not these matters be raised in an early debate — a debate on which the right hon. Gentleman can decide? May we have a general debate on City institutions?

Mr. Biffen: I have not yet seen the report of the City Takeover Panel because it has only just come out. It would not, therefore, be appropriate for me to comment. As to the wider matter of a debate on City institutions, I cannot go beyond what I said in my reply to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. From the point of view of private initiative, next week's business gives a good deal of scope.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Minister responsible for consumer protection make a statement on the grave danger of innocent people being

wrongfully arrested for shoplifting due to a moment of forgetfulness? As this peril is at its height during the Christmas period, will the Leader of the House treat this as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw those points to the attention of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister with responsibility for consumer affairs.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the Ministers who reply next week to debates will reply and that we will not have a repetition of the occasion when the chairman of the Tory party was deeply insulting and offensive to all those people in the inner cities suffering from great housing hardship? Is there any truth in the rumour that the Secretary of State for Defence was celebrating last night?

Mr. Biffen: The circumstances surrounding the reply to that debate, which touched on serious social, economic and political issues, deserve better treatment than that question and, above all, better treatment than that displayed last night when the Minister seeking to reply was not given a hearing.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Prime Minister speak in the debate on Tuesday on the Register of Members' Interests to reassure the House that her enthusiasm for pursuing local authorities in the inner cities, especially Labour authorities such as that in Liverpool, compared with her lack of enthusiasm for pursuing the inner city gambling exchanges of Johnson Matthey Bankers and Lloyd's, has nothing to do with the fact that one in eight Tory Members of Parliament is a member of the gambling syndicate, Lloyd's?

Mr. Biffen: I hope, even if I do not expect, that we shall conduct the debate at a slightly higher level than low-grade McCarthyism.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Marlow, as a Christmas present.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): A merry Christmas to you, too, Mr. Speaker from all of us.

When we are debating procedure, will it be possible to look at the Standing Orders so that we can prevent a repetition of what happened last night when there was a premeditated tactic of controlled giggling by the Opposition Front Bench? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be regrettable if the political tactics of Mr. Bernie Grant came to the Chamber before we had the misfortune of seeing him?

Mr. Biffen: Conduct in the House and its control are, happily, not matters for me.

Consolidated Fund Bill and Adjournment (Debates)

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Wednesday 18 December.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later then 9 am on Tuesday 17 December. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later that day. Normally the time allocated will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of hon. Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 20 December up to eight hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

British Steel Corporation (Gartcosh Works)

4.9 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of British Steel's Gartcosh works following the decision of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs not to make any report on the threatened closure of the plant."

I need hardly delay the House by establishing the importance of the issue. The steel industry is a fundamental bulwark of Scotland's economy. We believe that the closure of Gartcosh would seriously damage the future of that industry and leave Ravenscraig weakened and exposed. If Gartcosh were to close, there would be a direct and immediate loss of more than 700 jobs in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) who has fought hard and valiantly on this issue.

The wider implications for the Scottish economy and the steel industry would be frightening. I submit that this matter is specific because the threat to Gartcosh is naked and real. It has been sharpened by yesterday's unfortunate events in the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. To the dismay of almost everyone in Scotland, a draft report positively recommending a new lease of life for the plant was suddenly wrecked by an apparent U-turn by certain Conservative Members.

The matter is urgent because there was an understanding on both sides of the House that the Select Committee report would be taken into account and be an important influence on the Government's decision whether Gartcosh should be linked with Ravenscraig and be covered by the admittedly short-term, but still important, guarantee given to the main plant.

The Select Committee's decision not to report may encourage British Steel management to take steps over Christmas which could bury all hope for the plant.

I appreciate that there are opportunities to raise these questions on the Floor of the House next week but it is essential that the House has a chance to express its views on this matter in the Lobby. This is a vital matter—not just what happened in the Select Committee yesterday, although that is important. It is essentially about the future of the steel industry in Scotland. We face a massive unemployment problem today and we are determined to continue the fight for jobs in Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of British Steel's Gartcosh works following the decision of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs not to make any report on the threatened closure of the plant."

I listened yesterday and today with great care to the exchanges across the Chamber, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which the hon. Gentleman has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and therefore I cannot submit his application to the House.

Severn Bridge (Tolls)

4.11 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the judgment of the High Court regarding Severn bridge tolls."

It appears that a judgment has been made which declares that the recently increased tolls for lorries and cars are unlawful. Tens of thousands of Welsh people have paid between 20p and 50p extra on their cars and an extra 40p to £1 on lorries. That is an increase of up to 150 per cent. We, and especially my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) have protested at these increases. What do the Government propose to do? Will the cash that has already been paid out be refunded? When will those who paid the increased tolls be recompensed, and how? Will Ministers apologise for the procedural impropriety of the public inquiry? There is good reason to abolish all Severn bridge tolls, for which many industrial concerns and commuter organisations have called.

Gwent county council has played a leading part in fighting the proposed increases. It has been vindicated. There have been damaging and expensive delays at the bridge for the industrial companies of Wales. The tolls have made matters financially worse. It is extraordinary that the Secretary of State for Transport's legal department has perpetually been proved wrong in the British courts. Will the Secretary of State for Wales ensure the building of a second Severn crossing?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the judgment of the High Court regarding Severn bridge tolls."

The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point and I have listened carefully to what he has said, but I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and therefore I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the ruling that you have just given. Do you appreciate the difficulties with which people are confronted when they know that the tariffs being charged on the bridge are now illegal? To clarify matters, is it not possible for the Secretary of State for Transport to come to the House tomorrow morning and make a statement regularising the situation?

Mr. Speaker: This is not a matter for me, but I am sure the comment has been noted.

Autumn Statement 1985-86

4.15 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th November; welcomes the prospect of continuing low inflation and steady growth as the basis for maintaining the trend of rising employment; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the continuing reduction in the share of national income pre-empted by public expenditure.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lawson: Let me start by apologising to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). In our last debate I praised the right hon. Gentleman's writings for *Punch*. I had not realised that this harmless compliment would be used by the SDP to cast doubt on the right hon. Gentleman's working class credentials. Apparently, a Mrs. Shirley Williams declared on television last week:

"You aren't working class Roy — you're a very good writer."

Could I make it clear that we on this side of the House, who do not suffer from these class hang-ups, entirely accept that the right hon. Gentleman is every bit as working class as he feels it necessary to be.

Exactly a month ago today I presented my autumn statement to the House. In it I described a satisfactory outlook for growth, inflation and the current account of the balance of payments. I set out this Government's public expenditure planes for the next three years. In the intervening month inflation has fallen back further, to an annual rate of 5·5 per cent., as I predicted, and last week's figures appear to confirm that the long and seemingly inexorable rise in unemployment has at last come to an end. The whole House will, I know, welcome this.

I have read with interest the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. Once again, I congratulate the Committee, under the skilful chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) on the speed with which it has been produced.

It is useful to recall what the autumn statement is and what it is not. My predecessor presented the first autumn statement to the House in 1982. It contained then, as it does now, three principal elements. The first is a projection of the Government's expenditure plans. This year I have expanded the information available on public expenditure by providing plans not just for the immediate year ahead but for each of the next three years. The second is a new forecast of economic prospects, as required by the Industry Act. The third is the rates of national insurance contributions for the coming year. That is what the autumn statement is.

It comes at the end of the annual public expenditure round and gives the House an early indication, before publication of the public expenditure White Paper, of the Government's spending plans.

The autumn statement is not and has never been a sneak preview of the budget. It is essentially for this reason that I decided this year not to publish either the so-called estimated fiscal adjustment for 1986-87 or the inevitably highly uncertain revenue forecast from which the fiscal adjustment figure could be conventionally derived. I am genuinely sorry that the Committee has not felt able to endorse this common sense decision. I found its arguments on this point distinctly unpersuasive and we shall simply have to agree to disagree. There will be no fiscal adjustment or revenue forecast published this autumn or any subsequent autumn.

Indeed, there could have been no swifter vindication of the decision not to publish a revenue forecast at the time of the autumn statement than the latest developments in the oil market, following the OPEC meeting in Geneva. The dust has not settled on that yet, and it is too soon to form a view of the likely level of oil prices during the coming year, but, in so far as the prospect now is for a lower oil price than was assumed at the time of the autumn statement, it follows that, other things being equal, tax revenues in 1986-87 will be correspondingly lower and the scope for tax reductions in next year's Budget correspondingly diminished. The House and the country should be in no doubt about that.

While it is possible to conceive of a sudden fall in the oil price so great as to cause serious disruption and dislocation to the entire world economy, I find the prospect as unlikely as it is undesirable. Short of that, there is no threat to the British economy. Even now, at its peak, oil accounts for only 6 per cent. of GDP, and we are a substantial oil consumer as well as a substantial producer. What we stand to lose on the swings, we stand to gain on the roundabouts.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that he has missed out the fact that we are also a substantial oil exporter thanks to the fact that we are currently producing as much as the Saudis— *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but we are producing 2.7 million barrels a day, which is much the same as the Saudis. The Chancellor has access to much more information than I, and I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong. What does he predict will be the oil price in February and March next year when we are likely to be in great difficulties and his fiscal and budgetary strategy is likely to be in ruins?

Mr. Lawson: I will no more make predictions about the oil price in the spring than I will give a fiscal adjustment for 1986-87.

Government policy in this area remains unchanged. I recall a rather similar state of affairs some three years ago, when I was Secretary of State for Energy. The oil price was weak, and the nervous Nellies, if I may borrow a phrase, were talking about "free fall". OPEC decided to hold its meeting, for the first time, in London — in order, so it was said, to bring pressure to bear on Britain to curb its oil production.

I had the very great pleasure of receiving visits from several eminent OPEC oil Ministers, all of whom wanted us to do just that. I explained how that was impossible and how we in the United Kingdom maintain the freest oil province in the world in which decisions on how much to produce are made not by the Government but by the oil companies. That remains so today, and there is no way round it—not even by the back door.

As it happens, United Kingdom oil production is now at its peak, and from now on is likely to be on a gradually declining path, but there is no way in which the United Kingdom will become a country member of OPEC.

[Mr. Lawson]

I return to fiscal policy. There is one respect in which the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee could have been of great assistance to me, and for which it has no need of uncertain revenue forecasts to help it form a view. It could have said what, in its judgment, would be the right PSBR to aim for in 1986-87. I have read its report very carefully, but I cannot find its view on this central issue—the central Budget judgment from which all else flows—anywhere.

It would be unfair to chide the Committee for that omission, however. As it is composed of independent-minded Members from three different political parties, I suspect that there are as many views as there are members of the Committee—perhaps more. No such excuse will wash for the official Opposition, though. They, if they are to be taken seriously at all, are obliged to have a single view on the great issues of the day. I have to confess that it is not always entirely clear what that single view is, but I am sure that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will be only too happy to clarify it for us today.

For example, I read in *Tribune* the other day an interesting interview given by the right hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who was described, I am sure accurately, as Labour's trade and industry spokesman. In it he complained that the Treasury has been too dominant over economic and industrial policy and declared that, in the unlikely event of there being another Labour Government, they would

"build on the Department of Trade and Industry as the powerful economic and industrial ministry".

Perhaps the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will, either now or when he rises to speak, tell us whether he shares the view that, under Labour, the Department of Trade and Industry would be the powerful economic ministry. Is this the official view of the Opposition? I am happy to give way now. Evidently he has to take advice.

I return to more important matters, the Budget judgment and the right PSBR for 1986-87. What is the Opposition's view on that? What in the right hon. Gentleman's opinion should it be? The whole House will expect the right hon. Gentleman to tell us.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Gentleman is trying to get all views in the House, from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee to the Opposition Front Bench. It was some time ago that I was a member of that Select Committee, but there was a time when the Chancellor professed a close interest in monetarism when everybody knew that there was division in the Treasury. Why does the right hon. Gentleman assume unanimity in the Select Committee when he did not have unanimity in his own Department?

Mr. Lawson: There is certainly unanimity in the Treasury. I have made it clear that I do not expect unanimity in the Select Committee. However, I expect a single view from the Opposition. That might be too much to expect, but I pay the Opposition the compliment of expecting it. Let me help the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook by giving him a point of reference. In the Red Book published at the time of the Budget last March, I indicated a provisional figure of £7·5 billion. Does the right hon. Gentleman consider that figure too large, too small or just about right? Which is it? I am happy to give way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Go on."]

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): What does the Chancellor think?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman cannot dodge the question by muttering about the iniquities of privatisation. I accept that there is a difference between the two sides of the House on privatisation.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The right hon. Gentleman has noticed.

Mr. Lawson: It is a profound difference. We believe that businesses do better for themselves, their employees and for the nation when they are in the free enterprise sector of the economy. The Opposition still believe in nationalising everything that moves. Or do they?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I wish they did.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) says that he wishes that they did, but let us try to find out. Once again, I shall give the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook the opportunity—I am in a generous mood today; perhaps it is because Christmas is coming—to set the record straight and tell us what Labour's policy is.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: Which of the privatised companies does Labour propose to renationalise, and on what terms, should it ever be given the chance? British Telecom? British Gas? British Aerospace? Britoil?

Mr. Skinner: Lloyds.

Mr. Lawson: Enterprise Oil? Cable and Wireless? Amersham International? Associated British Ports?

Mr. Skinner: Lloyds.

Mr. Lawson: The National Freight Company? Jaguar? Let us take those 10 for starters.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I shall gladly give way to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook if he will now tell us which of those he wants to renationalise.

Mr. Skinner: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry that the right hon. Member is unable to answer the question.

Mr. Skinner: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: I shall give way to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Mr. Skinner: The Chancellor has left the sensitive ones off the list. What about a nationalised JMB?

Mr. Lawson: The argument about privatisation is about whether those companies, and others yet to be liberated, will do better and make a greater contribution to our national economic performance in the private sector than in the hands of the state. It has nothing whatever to do with fiscal policy and the scope for reductions in taxation. The right hon. Gentleman appears to believe that the proceeds from privatisation should automatically be invested in additional public sector capital projects. A moment's reflection should demonstrate that that cannot make sense.

Spending on public sector capital projects—which Labour when in office ran down just as fast as it could—has to be justified on its merits, project by project. There is no more reason why the transfer of businesses from the state sector to the free enterprise sector should be matched by an increase in spending on public sector capital projects, than that the cost of renationalisation, to which the Labour party is committed, should be offset by an equivalent reduction in spending on public sector capital projects. Is that what the right hon. Gentleman is proposing?

Let me commend to the right hon. Gentleman two recent studies by a source which he should find congenial. Mr. Gavyn Davis, an economic adviser to the last Labour Prime Minister, entitled "*—Selling the Silver and Other Bogus Arguments—*" and "*—More on the Privatisation Debate—*" which expose all too cruelly the right hon. Gentleman's confusion on this issue. The plain fact is that privatisation is a policy which is justified on its own merits, is successful and popular, and, at the same time, enables us to bring about a great leap forward in wider share ownership, not least among the employees of the companies concerned. Moreover, we shall continue that policy for many years to come, throughout this Parliament and the next.

Only today, more than 200,000 investors have been allocated shares in Cable and Wireless, and three quarters of that massive public offer has gone to those who applied for up to 1,000 shares. When at the end of the day, some time in the 1990s, the privatisation programme comes to a successful conclusion, with the vast bulk of what was once the state sector of industry safety in the free enterprise sector, it may well be right to permit an offsetting increase in public borrowing. But it will, by then, be an increase from an extremely low level.

Already this year public sector borrowing is likely to be far and away the lowest it has been as a proportion of GDP for 14 years. Indeed, it would still be the lowest for 14 years, even if there had been no privatisation and the proceeds had been replaced by additional borrowing. In short, however one looks at it, the Government's fiscal stance is and will remain prudent. It is hard to imagine a greater contrast with the profligate and irresponsible spending and borrowing plans of the Opposition.

Mr. Skinner: During the past three months I have been puzzled that the Government, who for six years have been on record as saying that the Labour party and a future Labour Government would borrow money to get rid of the dole queues, eight weeks ago sent the Chancellor of the Exchequer, authorised by the Prime Minister, to the currency markets where he borrowed the biggest sum ever borrowed in one day by any Government since the end of the war. He secured $2·5 billion, not to get rid of dole queues or to save the National Health Service, but to rig the currency markets for Ronald Reagan and to save the pound when there are troubles with OPEC. Is it not a scandal, a cheek and hypocritical to attack us for wanting the borrow money to reduce the dole queues?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman refers to the strengthening of the reserves by a $2·5 billion floating rate issue. There is an interesting difference between what happened with the Labour Government and what happened with us. The Labour Government had to go on their knees, cap in hand to borrow everything that they could, whereas we asked the market for $2 billion, but as everyone was so anxious to lend us money we accepted $2·5 billion, instead. That is a fact.

Whether there will be scope for reductions in taxation in next year's Budget, and if so by how much, is, for the reasons I have made clear, particularly uncertain at present. But when tax reductions do come, they will come as a result of our continued success in keeping public expenditure under control, and they will be permanent.

The statement that I presented to the House last month shows that the Government intend to achieve cash totals that will keep public spending broadly stable in real terms. Therefore, as the economy grows, public spending will continue to fall as a proportion of national output. By 1988-89 the proportion is planned to be down to 41 per cent. To achieve that reduction will be a major prize. It will represent the lowest proportion since the early 1970s.

The Treasury Select Committee properly sought to probe the realism of the figures. To hold public expenditure broadly flat in real terms is a demanding objective, but as I explained to the Committee, I believe that it is one that we will achieve. A number of specific factors will help.

First, the period of substantial real increases in defence expenditure has now come to an end, although we shall maintain and improve our defence capability through the pursuit of greater efficiency. Secondly, we are now expecting much slower growth in the massive social security programme. Thirdly, the particularly rapid fall in inflation since 1978-79 led to a sharp increase in real terms in the interest payable on Government debt. That phase has also come to an end. Those three factors together account for the lion's share of the increase in Government expenditure which we have seen during the past six years. They will not be generating pressure for further increases during the next three years.

The Treasury Select Committee also seemed to complain about what it saw as a major but unannounced change in the Government's economic policy or monetary policy. It is mistaken on both counts. There has been no major change in the Government's financial strategy. Indeed, its continuity is a great source of strength. The evolution that has occurred in the light of changing circumstances could scarcely have been more clearly enunciated, both in my Budget speech and in my speech at the Mansion house.

In my Budget speech I said:

"significant movements in the exchange rate, whatever their cause, can have a short-term impact on the general price level and on inflationary expectations. This process can acquire a momentum of its own, making sound internal policies harder to implement . . .

That is why I have repeatedly argued that it is necessary to take the exchange rate into account in judging monetary conditions . . .

There can be no doubt about the Government's commitment to maintain monetary conditions that will continue to bring down inflation. Short-term interest rates will be held at the level needed to achieve this".—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 789.]

All that has happened since then is that the Government have demonstrated once again that we mean what we say. Not least by resolutely resisting the blandishments of those who would have us seek some opportunistic window through which to depart from that policy. It remains as firmly in place as ever.

The results are impressive.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): My right hon. Friend said that he did not expect unanimity from the Select Committee, but our report is unanimous. He also said that we did not express a view on the PSBR, but in paragraph 26 we point out that if the fiscal stance is to remain the same, it will be necessary to reduce the PSBR substantially to offset the increase in public expenditure planned since the Budget.

Mr. Lawson: With great respect to my right hon. Friend, for whom I have great respect, that is not a view on what the 1986-87 PSBR should be. That is the only answer which would have been of assistance to me in trying to reach my conclusions.

I am confident that inflation will continue to subside. No one seriously doubts that. *[Interruption.]* The Government will stick to their strategy to ensure that that happens, and, as the Prime Minister said, we shall take no action, on taxes or on interest rates, to put that paramount objective at risk.

What of the results of our policies so far? Let us compare the past six years, from 1979 to 1985, with the previous six years, from 1973 to 1979. This is an interesting comparison for many reasons. One period was dominated by a Labour and one by a Conservative Government, and both 1973 and 1979 were peak years in the economic cycle. Therefore, it is a fair comparison, and I always like to be fair, as the House knows. On the record on output, there is little to choose between the two periods, whether we take total GDP, or GDP excluding North sea oil. But there is one fundamental difference. Since 1979, we have closed the gap with our competitors. Our growth since 1979 has been virtually the same as that recorded by France and Germany, whereas during the Labour years France and Germany grew twice as fast as we did. At the same time inflation has been substantially reduced. The average inflation rate since 1979 has been 9 per cent. compared with 15 per cent. during the previous six years.

The years of misery were the years before we came into office, when soaring costs, financial irresponsibility, escalating controls and declining profitability produced the fastest peacetime inflation on record and sapped the foundations of employment. There the responsibility lies.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will no doubt spend a good part of his speech bemoaning the performance of manufacturing industry. He will argue that, even though output as a whole is well up, manufacturing output is still lower than it was when the Government came into office. Since the first half of 1979, manufacturing output has fallen by 5·5 per cent., but that is scarcely new. Listening to the right hon. Gentleman, one would imagine that under Labour manufacturing output was expanding fast. The House will be interested to know that between the second half of 1973 and the first half of 1979, manufacturing output fell by 4·5 per cent. —not much difference there either.

But, in reality, there is a big difference. In sharp contrast to what the inherited in 1979, manufacturing industry is now in a much stronger position from which it can compete in world markets. In 1979, manufacturing —indeed, industry as a whole—was stripped of its profits. No wonder it had trouble weathering the storm when the second oil shock arrived.

Today, manufacturing industry's profits are back to levels last seen before the first oil price shock in 1973. This Government wish manufacturing industry to succeed and we have created the conditions for it to do so.

Probably the most striking difference under this Government has been in the growth of manufacturing productivity. That has risen by almost 25 per cent. since we came into office. During the previous six years, the growth in manufacturing productivity was a meagre 4 per cent. The resulting inefficiency and overmanning was, of course, the main reason why there was such a shakeout of labour after the second oil shock. We are still living with the consequences of that inheritance.

What of the performance of the economy since 1983? The right hon. Gentleman still seems to be engaged in the sterile task of refighting the last election, and keeps harping on the effects of the 1980 recession.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: No.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seems to forget that he lost the election. The electorate judged our record and chose to renew our mandate.

What matters now is an assessment of what has happened since then. Take the period from the first half of 1983 to the second half of 1985—the period since the general election. Total output has risen by 3 per cent. a year and manufacturing output has risen by 3·25 per cent. a year. Our output growth has matched that of Germany, and exceeded that of France. Inflation has averaged 5 per cent., compared with 15·5 per cent. under the Labour Government. Manufacturing productivity has risen by more than 4 per cent. a year. Profitability is up, taxes have been reduced, public expenditure has fallen as a percentage of GDP, Government borrowing has been cut and the number of people in work has risen by about 600,000.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I have listened to what the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said and especially to his last point. Will he tell the House in specific terms what impact the autumn statement will have on unemployment?

Mr. Lawson: That is a foolish question. The important thing, as I said earlier, is that the whole House should welcome the recent figures, that show that the long rise in unemployment has come to an end. I would expect the hon. Gentleman to welcome that, rather than try to slander it. What the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook finds most galling is that we are well poised to continue that performance up to and beyond the next election.

I began by apologising to the right hon. Gentleman, so I end on the same note. I am sorry that he suffers such visible anguish at having to acknowledge that the economy is growing strongly. I deeply regret that he has had to eat his words about inflation rising to double figures and to accept that it is down to 5·5 per cent. and set to fall much further next year. I am sorry that he cannot stomach the fact that manufacturing exports are 14 per cent. higher in real terms than when he left office. My heart bleeds for the right hon. Gentleman as he ties himself painfully in knots arguing that our policies are simultaneously deflationary and reflationary.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that our privatisation programme was not intended to impale him on the horns

of a dilemma—whether to renouce Socialist dogma or popular support. However, the right hon. Gentleman's problems are of his own making. He and his party base their philosophy on the belief that the British people cannot prosper without more state direction, more state ownership, more state spending and higher taxation. They firmly believe that the desire to own property or to spend one's own money is essentially immoral, so Labour are bound to find themselves decrying both the achievements and the aspirations of the British people.

The autumn statement is a record of achievement by the British people, assisted by a Government who work with the grain of the nation, not against it, and of popular aspirations towards ownership and independence being steadily fulfilled. The good news that it contains has been widely welcomed by all who wish this country well. I commend it to the House.

4.46 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"declines to approve a Statement of economic policy which further damages the interests of manufacturing industry, makes no proposals for a substantial reduction in unemployment, neglects necessary investment in public sector housing and other capital sector programmes, and is based on the sale of national assets for the primary purpose of raising revenue to provide temporary finance for cuts in income tax.".

Those who have had the privilege of listening to the Chancellor regularly during the past two years will know that he always blusters most when he is especially worried about the economy. They will agree, as those outside the House agree, that there is no more demeaning sight than that of a Chancellor of the Exchequer desperate to talk about anything other than his policies. If there is a more demeaning sight, it is that of a Chancellor basing his arguments on completely phoney statistics that have been exposed as such.

A simple example is the Chancellor's repeated claim of 600,000 more men and women in work. The right hon. Gentleman knows that since his Government were elected—he may believe that the world began in 1983, but they were elected in 1979—there has been a net loss of 1 million jobs. The recent claim of 600,000 extra jobs is based on the inclusion of part-time jobs as though they were full-time, and a completely bogus estimate of the self-employed sector.

If that is the best that the Chancellor can do, we are again going through what can only be described as the annual Lawson cycle. That cycle begins in November with the announcement that the economy is set fair for tax cuts and a reduction in unemployment. This year, the upswing in brag and boast was especially pronounced. The speaking note circulated by the Chancellor's acolytes refers to a Tory economic dream come true. In his speech, the Chancellor modestly proclaimed the clearest vindications of his policy.

In the second phase of the cycle, more objective observers question the Chancellor's claims and, I fear, his veracity. This year, *The Daily Telegraph* described the autumn statement as

"a combination of dodgy accounting and electoral cynicism".

That is how the cycle began and how the Chancellor continues to put his case today.

Let me give another example. The Chancellor drew my attention to what Mr. Gavin Davies said in his professional capacity about the asset sales, as though it were a commendation of the policy that the Chancellor has adopted. One thing that Mr. Gavin Davies said in the business circular was that selling £4·75 billion of public sector capital assets was exactly the same economically as issuing £4·75 billion of extra gilts. Is that a commendation of the Chancellor's policy? Is that what he thinks he is doing? Is that what his more misunderstanding Back-Bench Members think he is doing? Is that the Gavin Davies judgment which he endorses today? Of course it is not. It is a sign that the Chancellor wanted to make a cheap point about Mr. Davies's origins and assumed that no one in the House would have read the document. It simply will not do.

The third stage in the Chancellor's autumn cycle is when he turns on his critics and abuses them for being prejudiced, ignorant, or both. The fourth stage in the Lawson cycle is the stage when the critics are proved to be completely right in their assessment of his policies.

Let me remind the Chancellor what happened last year. Last year, the Lawson cycle, which began with so much boasting and bragging, ended in the January sterling crisis. The pound fell almost to parity with the dollar, and that fall was accentuated by the Chancellor's performance. He seemed to welcome depreciation as a way of increasing the fiscal adjustment and financing tax cuts. He seemed to believe in the free float, even when it turned into the free sink. That is clearly why the Prime Minister determined yesterday not to allow him to talk down the pound again, and intervened in these matters, as the Bank of England has been intervening for the past fortnight, by announcing that she intended to keep interest rates high and the pound high at the same time.

In any case, the Prime Minister's intervention was largely unnecessary, because, as the Select Committee report makes clear in paragraph 19, the free float is dead. The Chancellor could not bring himself to mention any aspect of those paragraphs in the Select Committee's report, but what they say, and what is clearly true, is that the free float was formally buried at the New York G5 meeting, when the Chancellor had to make a humiliating recantation of his old beliefs. Although the Chancellor no longer believes that sterling should find its own value in the international market, we are still paying the price for the Chancellor's folly in the years when he did. Interest rates stand at 12 per cent., and real interest rates at 7 per cent. That is still largely the result of the damage limitation which the Government had to introduce after the financial fiasco of last Janury. The result of a 12 per cent. interest rate and a 7 per cent. real interest rate is a catastrophic effect on manufacturing investment and the real wealth of the country.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that it is possible for a central bank to hold up the value of its currency for a prolonged period against market forces?

Mr. Hattersley: If I am wrong to believe that, the error is compounded and shared by the Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman, who studies the Prime Minister in all her works, will recall that she said last night that rates would be held up for as long as it was necessary to protect the pound and to hold down inflation.

Mr. Budgen: What is the right hon. Gentleman's view?

Mr. Hattersley: I believe that it can be done for a substantial period, and that the Chancellor is doing it now.

Mr. Budgen: How?

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Drop him a line and tell him.

Mr. Hattersley: If the hon. Gentleman believes that interest rates at 11·5 and 12 per cent. are not a manipulation of the short term, he misunderstands not only what is happening, but what the Chancellor said this afternoon. The Chancellor made it clear—this was one of his tough passages — that he would ensure that, whatever the consequences, the exchange rate would be held at a level which he thought right to keep down inflation. That is why the Prime Minister was wrong to believe it necessary to bolster the Chancellor's resolve yesterday. I do not believe for a moment that the Chancellor will make the same mistake as he made last year. He will make a different mistake from the one that he made last year, although it will result in similar intolerably high interest rates.

The confusion has meant that commentators have found it difficult to give an adequate journalistic description to the change in Government policy. The Government have made an O-turn. They have gone round in a circle and arrived back at the same place—high interest rates, low manufacturing investment, high unemployment and deteriorating public services.

In his Mansion house speech, about which he spoke so proudly this afternoon, the Chancellor made the second recantation of Government policy, which we shall have to examine in the year ahead. In that speech he formally disowned the basic tenet of monetarism. He now admits that there is no systematic relationship between the various definitions of the money supply and the nominal gross domestic product. That was his central admission. It would be unworthy of me or the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who at least agrees that that was what the Chancellor said, to assume that that admission was made because the Chancellor was singularly incapable of meeting his M3 target throughout his stewardship. However, he said that his failure to meet his M3 target did not matter.

I hope that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury can give me a capable and understandable answer to my next question. How does he justify the bland announcement that M3 targets no longer matter when, in the name of pursuing M3 targets, so many companies have been made bankrupt, so many public services have been cut, and so many jobs have been lost?

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the money supply is growing too quickly, or too slowly?

Mr. Hattersley: It was growing about 10 per cent. faster than the Chancellor intended.

Mr. Maples: Answer the question.

Mr. Hattersley: I will. Within the parameters of the Chancellor's policy, it was growing far too quickly. Our intention is, was and will be in government to run an economic policy which, while paying proper respect to monetary control, does not believe, as the Chancellor once believed, that monetary control is all that matters. That was the Chancellor's error.

The Chancellor believes that his error has been absolved by the announcement that inflation will be controlled by an over-valued pound, supported by high interest rates. That policy is bound to cause long-term damage to the economy. What is more, the Government know that it will cause long-term damage to the economy, but they pursue such a policy wilfully and knowingly in the hope of snatching a brief political advantage. That brief political advantage is the pretence of economic recovery. The Government now have a wholly short-term perspective. Just as the world began for the Chancellor only in 1983, for this Government the world will end on polling day at the next general election. Even before that date, all that matters to the Government——

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is worried.

Mr. Hattersley: I repeat what I said during the debate on the Queen's Speech. I am worried, but not about the Tory party. I am worried about the economy and the unemployed.

Even before the general election, all that matters to the Government when they determine policy is the voter whom they believe might be persuaded to rally to their cause. That is why, since the Government were elected and in terms of this autumn statement, the unemployed have been written off.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): That is not true.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Chief Secretary believes that I am wrong, he will correct me when he replies to the debate. I have no doubt that even on the Government's official figures—the massaged, manipulated and bogusly low figures—3 million men and women will be out of work on general election day.

Last Friday we rightfully welcomed the reduction in the November total of unemployed—seasonally adjusted, a reduction of 8,100. The document that announced the reduction stated that the underlying half-yearly trend was a reduction of 2,000 men and women on the unemployment register each month. That 2,000 reduction in unemployment each month is less than half the reduction of the register that is caused simply by entrants into the new special employers' schemes — schemes which in the past the Prime Minister derided as not real or proper jobs and as proposals not worthy of the then Government's intention.

If the underlying trend supported by the Government continues, unemployment will still be higher than 3 million in 1991, and we shall be back to the 1979 total of unemployment some time towards the end of the 21st century. Cynics in the Government will say that the unemployed do not matter and that their votes are lost already, but those who say that misunderstand the British people. It is now understood that a Government who made a reduction in unemployment their first priority could begin to put this country back to work. When it is convenient to do so, the Government admit that money spent on public sector capital is cost effective and a socially beneficial way to reduce unemployment.

Three months ago, at Question Time, the Prime Minister said, when I complained to her about how little was being done in the north of England, that more capital was being spent in the north than in any other region, as if that were a great achievement of the Government's policy. When there is a popular point to be made about public works, the Government cleave to it, just as during

the debate on the autumn statement the Government were proud to make a wholly bogus boast about how much extra money was being put into housing capital investment. They make those boasts because they know that there is now a national consensus in favour of building houses, renovating old schools, replacing old hospitals, repairing roads and beginning to put Britain back to work.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that there was a Government who placed the reduction of unemployment as their top objective quite recently? That was the Government of which he was a distinguished ornament from 1974 to 1979. Regrettably, their record was that unemployment went up by 115 per cent.

Mr. Hattersley: That Government had a level of unemployment which at its highest, was more than 2 million less than it is today. They did not have the uncovenanted bonus of North sea oil, which should have been used to transform the nature and character of this country.

I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is among the cynics about whom I have been complaining, who say that the unemployed do not matter. Some say that, but they are wrong. However, the optimists who pretend that the trend of 2,000 fewer people unemployed a month will improve are also wrong. The trend will not improve, because reducing unemployment is not the Government's greatest priority, nor their intention.

The prospects for the unemployed are revealed by the nature and content of the autumn statement. Whatever growth we enjoy next year will not be investment-led, but will be consumption-led. The increase in consumption by £6·4 billion will be greater than the total increase in the gross domestic product. Exports will grow next year by only 2 per cent., which is more slowly than the rate of growth in world trade. On the other hand, imports will rise by 6 per cent.—faster than the growth in world trade, and faster than domestic expansion.

The intended tax cuts will finance some of that extra consumption, but will result in creating jobs in foreign countries, not here in Great Britain. The result, we hypothesise, the Treasury hypothesises and the Chancellor hypothesised in his autumn statement—even though he seems to be shaking his head, or at least his jowls—will be a deterioration in our balance of payments, just at the time when oil surpluses, on which we have lent so heavily during the past six years, begin to decline. As the Chancellor does not recall the prognosis in his autumn statement, I shall remind him again. The prophecy is the deterioration in our balance of payments at the same time as the oil surplus on which we depend so heavily is beginning its rapid decline.

We should now be encouraging the renovation and revitalisation of manufacturing industry in anticipation of the day when the oil runs out. However, the prospect revealed by the autumn statement is quite the opposite. Soon——

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Again, I shall give way at the end of my paragraph, which is quite long. Soon, it will be too late. The imports will be entrenched, the export market will be lost and the collapse of manufacturing industry will no longer be masked by oil revenue.

In that context, it is important to remind ourselves of the unanimous conclusion of the House of Lords investigation into our external economy, a report which the Chancellor derided and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry abused, and a report largely written by peers who have either infinite experience in industry or have served in Conservative Governments. The most distinguished contributor to the report is both an ex-Conservative Minister an ' a senior figure in industry and the City.

The report, about which the Chancellor laughs, says:

"After 1979 output of manufacturing industry fell and has not yet recovered to its previous levels . . . Much of the growth that has recently occurred in GDP is attributable to oil. Oil has become a major factor in Britain's balance of trade and in the growth of the economy as a whole. But for how much longer can this be relied on? The oil trade surplus will have almost certainly reached its peak this year."

People worried about the prospects for oil contributions to our economy and prosperity must hardly have been able to believe their ears when they heard the Chancellor proclaim his oil policy. I confess that there was much conversation on the Opposition Front Bench, because none of us could believe that he had said it. I am sure he said that the output of oil, its extraction, was not a matter about which the Government had a view—it was a matter left wholly to the individual companies.

If the Chancellor wishes to recant those words, he will do so. Is he really saying, and are the Government really saying, that they have no depletion policy? That is simply nonsense. Are they saying that they have no conservation policy and no views about how much revenue they expect from oil next year? If we have a Government with no depletion policy, we have the only Government in the world who treat their national assets so lightly.

The Government should understand that all the oil revenues that they have received to date, every penny of them received last year, have been dissipated on the extra cost of unemployment incurred by the increase of 2 million under this Government. Those revenues should have been used to reinvigorate manufacturing industry and encourage new investment. Instead——

Mr. Freeman *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way at the end of the paragraph. I might forget the hon. Gentleman, but somebody will remind me.

Instead, manufacturing industry has been driven into a decline. The Chancellor was right in one thing, if in nothing else. I shall remind him of the facts of manufacturing industry, and I shall correct him on one of the sophistries by which he pretends he is offering these statistics. There have been four successive years when net investment in manufacturing industry has been negative. Total manufacturing investment is 20 per cent. lower than it was in 1979. Output is 6 per cent. lower than it was in 1979. The balance of manufactured trade, which was in surplus by £5 billion in 1978, is now in deficit to the tune of £4 billion. The Chancellor sets against all that the increase in manufacturing productivity.

Let me tell the right hon. Gentleman why it has happened. It has happened by what is called the batting average effect. If we put out of production, by record numbers of bankruptcies, the least efficient firms, the overall level of productivity improves, just as the average of a cricket team is higher if only the first five batsmen are allowed to go to the wicket. Total output, however, like

[Mr. Hattersley]

the total score of the entire innings, is lower than if the other companies had been allowed to make a contribution to the British economy. That is not a cause for congratulation. Rather, it demonstrates that more companies ought be doing business and contributing to the British economy.

Mr. Freeman: It is difficult to tell where one of the right hon. Gentleman's thoughts ends and another begins. He was dealing with manufacturing investment. Will he confirm that it is still the official policy of the Opposition to direct pension fund investment through a state investment bank into British public investment?

Mr. Hattersley: It is certainly the Opposition's policy to provide tax incentives and to repatriate institutional investment. The Chancellor of the Exchequer would be feeling more secure today if he could exercise the upward pressure on sterling which such a process would bring about.

It is Labour party policy to create an industrial bank of the sort that has been successful in Germany, Japan, Sweden and other Scandinavian countries. The Labour party would wish that some of the money brought back to this country—the Chancellor may have it either way, through tax incentives or the removal of tax privileges —should go to a national investment bank. Action of the type that I have just outlined would be hugely beneficial to the economy as a whole, and therefore to pensioners, about whom the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) is rightly worried.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has no idea when the oil will run out. Can he tell the House what will be the source of revenue to pay the Treasury bills when that day comes? The right hon. Gentleman has on previous occasions given a series of bland answers to that question. He once said that the economy would adjust to the new situation. He can mean only that the economy will learn to live with 3 million unemployed.

The right hon. Gentleman gave one answer to that question, and the Prime Minister gave another. The Prime Minister said that when oil revenues were no longer available the nation would be subsidised and would live partly off the interest obtained from foreign investments made during the years — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Conservative Members are not enthusiastic about what I have said. They are proud of creating a remittance man's economy, waiting for the cheques to come in from Tokyo and Frankfurt. I would not enjoy that position. A remittance man's economy would be low on employment, low on manufacturing and technology and, I believe, low on self-respect. Conservative Members will have to make up their own minds about that.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): That is not the case in Japan. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain his remark?

Mr. Hattersley: The idea that Japan is wilfully eroding its manufacturing base is a fantastic proposition, but that is the long-term prospect of conservatism.

Some comment should be made on the short-term prospects of that policy, which has made the country dependent on oil revenues. We are developing the vulnerability of a single-commodity economy. I know the figure that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has quoted as oil's contribution to our economy. I am aware of the size of that contribution, but I am worried about our dependence on it and our vulnerability to changes in the levels of its contribution.

If there is no vulnerability, why have there been so many alarms and excursions during the past three days? If we are not vulnerable to the slightest change in oil price, why does the Chancellor have to authorise intervention in the exchange markets, and why does the Prime Minister have to make her stern pronouncements? If we are not vulnerable to oil price changes, why did the Prime Minister say last night, and the Chancellor repeat today, that, despite the consequences, high interest rates must be maintained as this is not the appropriate time to change?

There is turbulence in the oil markets at the moment, and we are wholly vulnerable to it. Last night, the Prime Minister spoke as if our perilous reliance on oil revenues was not her fault. It clearly is. She spoke also as if the present level of interest rates was a temporary necessity. Unfortunately, it is a permanent feature of Conservative economic policy. Interest rates rose to 14 per cent. in January, and have been at least 11 per cent. since then.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): What was the Labour's Government's top rate?

Mr. Budgen: What would the right hon. Gentleman have done?

Mr. Hattersley: I would not have talked the pound down in the way that the Chancellor did in January.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Now that the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) has recovered his manners, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Dorrell: The right hon. Gentleman said that he would not talk down the pound, yet five minutes ago he was advocating precisely that course of action—a lower level for sterling.

Mr. Hattersley: There is a considerable difference between believing that we have lost competitiveness and blundering around as the Chancellor did in January and allowing the pound to reach dollar parity. It is inconsistent to say that the pound should be helping exports and not imports, and then to cause the two months of confusion which resulted in the crisis of 14 February 1985.

The Government hope that the collapse of manufacturing industry, the continued high level of unemployment, the increase in interest rates, and interest rates held at their intolerably high level, which the Prime Minister says damages mortgage holders as well as companies, can be forgotten during a period of increased consumption flanked by the tax cuts on which they are determined.

The Government believe that they can buy the British people and their votes by making temporary tax cuts. They are wrong. I do not believe that the British people want tax cuts when they involve penalties in jobs, public services and help for the worse off. The public know that tax cuts help only part of the population. Tax cuts will provide no benefit for the unemployed or for those families who are obliged to finance them. Likewise, they will not benefit those who receive lower child benefit, lower housing benefit and worse public services.

I have no doubt that tax cuts will come, but when they do they will be unsustainable. Whether the Chancellor cares to admit it or not, the cuts are to be financed by the

proceeds from asset sales. A contribution to Government revenue of £4·7 billion from asset sales must, by simple arithmetical necessity, be the place from which the tax cuts come. There is no possible alternative to that, unless the Chancellor has hypothecated his £4·7 billion for a totally different purpose. He has not, and tax cuts are supposed to be the electoral trump card, a frenzied scramble to keep the twice-made but constantly broken tax cut promise.

The Government would gladly sacrifice long-term national interest to achieve that end. They would gladly divide the nation, rewarding some while sacrificing others. They are willing to sacrifice long-term interests, to divide the nation, to help the better off and to penalise the poor. They are unwilling to invest in new jobs which could begin to put the country back to work. That is typical of the Government's approach. It typifies the discredited Chancellor and, above all, an attitude to politics——

Sir William Clark: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Certainly not—which is exemplified by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I can say nothing worse about the Government than that they are not fit to be in office.

5.19 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): First, I express appreciation to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his kind words about the report of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. It should be recognised that it is probably not in the nature of an all-party Select Committee on any subject to produce a report that states that everything that the Government of the day are doing is marvellous. It is natural that most Select Committee reports tend to be critical and to be given headline reports the day after their publication. However, it is important to appreciate that many recommendations — certainly those that the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service have made — have been implemented by the Government after a comparatively short time.

I believe that the Select Committee has an important, constructive and critical role to play. It must reflect the views of the official Opposition and perhaps those of the alliance, as it is an all-party Committee. I am bound to say in passing that the alliance's amendment appears to be based on an inaccurate and speculative preview of what the Select Committee's report would say rather than on what it actually states. It is rather unfair of the alliance to quote some of the Committee's recommendations while not quoting its views on subjects such as the EMS, on which it came to an opposite view.

I accept that the autumn statement is not a sneak preview of what will appear in the Budget. In the past —this was the view taken by my right hon. Friend's predecessor—it provided the House with a framework and expressed the Government's view of what would be in the Budget when duly presented. For that reason we regret that figures which were previously presented in the statement—for example, updated figures on revenue and fiscal adjustment—have not been provided.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has told us that he believes that last January's sterling crisis was precipitated by the publication of the so-called fiscal adjustment. The Select Committee's view is that the removal of the adjustment, coupled with the indication in the Gracious Speech of future income tax reductions, has not decreased speculation. There are fewer data on which to work, and to that extent speculation is likely to be wilder than otherwise.

Whether or not we have a fiscal adjustment, the Government last year tended to put great weight upon it, which tended to increase speculation. It was Treasury Ministers' statements on fiscal adjustment last year which caused the problem. This year we have references in the Gracious Speech to reductions in income tax. It could reasonably be said that that is a sneak preview of what is likely to appear in the Budget and that speculative pressures have increased as a result. Had we had the figures for which the Select Committee asked, and had they been in our possession over the past few days, with all the qualifications that are necessary, I doubt very much whether they would have increased the speculative pressure which has existed in markets during the past week or so. As my right hon. Friend said, we must agree to disagree on that, but it is important that the House should have as much information as it can when facts are available on which to form a judgment so that right hon. and hon. Members can express a view before the Chancellor of the Exchequer produces his Budget. Meanwhile, it would be wise if Treasury Ministers did not express views on tax cuts or anything else of that nature.

I believe that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has misunderstood profoundly what is happening. Alternatively, he thinks that it is better for him to present his case in the way he did. The Opposition amendment states that the Government's policy

"is based on the sale of national assets for the primary purpose of raising revenue to provide temporary finance for cuts in income tax."

The Select Committee has taken the view consistently that the proceeds of asset sales should not be treated as enabling a reduction in public expenditure and thus in the public sector borrowing requirement. The Government are wrong to take that view. The Committee's view is that it is a mistake to regard the proceeds of asset sales as revenue. The Committee has said throughout that the proceeds should be regarded as a means of financing the PSBR. I still believe profoundly that that is so.

If that is so, the position is similar to a sale of gilts. It is not precisely the same, but it is a means of financing the PSBR. I note that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is nodding; he may not nod in a moment. If my proposition is accepted, the Government have no more scope for cutting taxes next year than they would have if they were to borrow the money and finance the borrowing by the sale of gilts.

It is wrong to suppose that the proceeds of asset sales provide a miraculous way in which tax cuts can be financed and that the Chancellor's scope for doing so is greater than it would otherwise be. The wording of the amendment appears to be grossly misleading. It seems that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has come to the conclusion that he has found a convenient catch phrase with which to cast doubt on tax cuts that can be justified on an entirely different basis. The economic effect of the sale of assets is not the same as a reduction in public expenditure programmes. I hope that we shall not hear so much of the argument that has been advanced by the right hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to paragraph 19 of the Select Committee's report, which appears in bold type. In this paragraph the Committee looks into the abandonment of M3 as an indicator of monetary policy. When the Government first came into office, the be-all and end-all of their policy was the control of M3. The medium-term financial strategy was to be predominant, and it was argued that the exchange rate could look after itself. Attention is drawn to that in paragraph 17 of the Select Committee's report, and paragraph 18 refers to the change which has taken place to exchange rate policy. The Committee concludes:

> "All this represents a major change from the economic policy as it was originally explained to us when the present Government took office. In particular, a policy which centred upon holding the money supply to some specified target rate of growth seems to have shifted towards concentrating upon the exchange rate. We think it would be helpful if the Government were prepared to recognise this explicitly."

There is a problem because we have moved from a policy which was dogmatic in its approach to one where it is difficult precisely to identify its constituent parts. The Select Committee observes that it is difficult to ascertain the weight which is to be given to the effect on inflation of a high exchange rate as against the virtues which are to be found in lower interest rates.

We still have not had—we did not have it from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer this afternoon — a real exposition of the Government's policy. My right hon. Friend still insists that there is no exchange rate target, range or objective, and that it is merely taken into account in assessing monetary conditions. I do not believe that that is the general impression which common sense or commentary otherwise would lead one to believe. My right hon. Friend must recognise that there is now an interest rate-exchange rate policy. He has then to explain to the House precisely what that involves. It is certainly not the same as the policy which was pursued originally when the Government took office.

The balance between monetary and fiscal policy is the so-called fiscal-monetary mix. I am somewhat worried about monetary policy. When the previous Conservative Government were in office, I believed that the control of the money supply was important. I never believed that it was all important, and certainly not in the over-simplified versions of monetarism which one heard expounded. I still believe that control of the money supply is important and I have a slightly worrying sense of déjà vu, a sense of having been here before.

I believe that a programme entitled "The Writing on the Wall" has been receiving much attention recently. I have not seen it but I gather that it is directed to earlier periods. I can recall making speeches in which I stressed how important it was to control M1 and M3. At a later stage I made speeches in which I explained that M3 was behaving oddly because of structural changes in the economy. We had introduced a policy of competition and credit control and the consequence was that M3 figures were behaving strangely. My Treasury colleagues and I chose to under-emphasise M3 and to place greater emphasis on M1. It is difficult to avoid a sense of déjà vu. We heard originally that M3 was all-important and now it is M0 which is important. I recall that M0 was invented 10 or 12 years ago. M3 is not behaving well because of the structural changes that are taking place.

At that time it was important to distinguish between the money supply figures, the money supply and aggregate demand. In fact, the money supply figures were misbehaving and the money supply was going up, though most of it was siphoned off into the property market, so that aggregate demand was not greatly affected.

As I say, most of it went into the property market, and that caused the huge inflation in property prices. I am worried—given that at present we do not have a reliable indicator of what is happening to the money supply—lest what is happening to the stock market is somewhat similar, and there has been a substantial increase in stock market prices.

It is much easier to unwind money from the stock market than from the property market. Stock exchange investors have a higher propensity to consume than do property speculators, who at the end of the day run out and buy five or six Rolls-Royces. That is why, on the money side, I find things worrying.

The fiscal situation is also worrying. There has been talk lately of the Government adopting a policy of Reaganomics—a tight monetarist policy and a slacker fiscal policy—and in that context one must look at the passage in the report to which I referred my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in my intervention in his speech.

In the debate on the Queen's Speech, I expressed the view that there was a degree of reflation implicit in what was happening. The Chancellor seems at this stage not to have a fiscal stance other than what was announced in the last budget and what will be announced in the next. Meanwhile, there is no change. Nevertheless, as the Select Committee points out, there has been a substantial increase in public programme expenditure since the time of the budget. If that is not offset by a reduction in the PSBR at the next budget, I believe that there will be a relaxation of fiscal stance. The pressures making for that—unless the Chancellor takes the action which I suggested—mean that there has been a general change in that the planned public expenditure has gone up since the last budget.

There is some danger that the Government, in doing the right thing or at any rate in recognising reality, do not make the best case that they could make. For a long time we went on insisting that public expenditure should be cut. It was not—even now the Chancellor is not proposing to cut it but merely to maintain it—with the result that the Opposition were successful in suggesting that there had been cuts in the National Health Service, in the roads programme and all over the place, although such cuts were not taking place.

The policy that is now being pursued by the Government—although I have expressed concern about it not being clearly explained and have said that some of the variables involved seemed to be moving in a slightly dangerous direction—coupled with the overall position, means that we are managing to secure our inflation objectives and a reasonable rate of economic growth. The official forecast in the autumn statement is for a reasonable, by historic standards, rate of economic growth.

We should not be too afraid to say that that should lead to a reduction in unemployment—although not too fast a reduction — because the unemployment that has

has been a once-for-all shakeout of people who were, in a sense, in non-jobs. It will be difficult to generate new jobs for them.

Despite all the misgivings that I have expressed, I believe that the Government's basic line at present is right in terms of reducing unemployment. It is bound to be a slow process, and if the policy were expounded more clearly there would be greater acceptance of what is happening, and less speculation, bearing in mind the fact that uncertainty about what the Government are doing causes problems.

5.34 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It is always a pleasure to speak after the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) because one can immediately thank him and his Committee for the valuable contribution that they make to our debates by producing their reports quickly and thoroughly and by including in the appendices a number of points which help us in our consideration of these matters.

It is a pity that the Chancellor has withdrawn the assessment he made about what was possible in terms of taxation, because it was a move towards the Armstrong recommendation that one could look at revenue and expenditure in the same context and be able to make sensible decisions about what hon. Members wished to see achieved. Although it did not go as far as that, it was a move in that direction and I deplore its removal from the autumn statement.

The most important aspect of the report is contained in paragraph 19 — we must remember the restrained language that is used by every Select Committee — which says:

> "All this represents a major change from the economic policy as it was originally explained to us when the present Government took office. In particular, a policy which centred upon holding the money supply to some specified target rate of growth seems to have shifted towards concentrating upon the exchange rate. We think it would be helpful if the Government were prepared to recognise this explicitly".

The Committee asked the Government openly to acknowledge the fundamental change from a monetarist policy to an exchange rate policy. I wish the Government would do that. The confession of error is good for the soul, though it may not be quite so beneficial to the theme of political consistency.

I find an agreeable coincidence here in that this is taking place at a time when Professor Minford has urged that monetary considerations dictate a reduction in interest rates. Professor Minford was the academic who came immediately to the mind of the Prime Minister when she was asked in the House which economist she respected most. The danger in academic life, as Sam Brittan reminded us the other day, is to tie oneself too closely to the economic actions of any Government. I am sure that that view will be endorsed by many who now regret that they ever took the Prime Minister's shilling.

Dominating the discussion of the autumn statement are the three factors of oil prices, exchange rates and interest rates and the way in which they affect unemployment and growth in the economy. The major objective of the Government is the preservation of the one success that they can claim — the reduction of inflation. That is an objective that any Government can achieve if they forgo the true goal of economic policy, which should be the predominant, overriding and major task of improving the prosperity of the nation.

In pursuit of their single and limited aim of keeping down inflation, the prime determinant of their economic policy is the exchange rate. It follows that the defence of the pound is now as important as at any time in the past and that the consequences are likely to be as ill-starred as on those previous occasions.

The problem is — as it always has been — that the Government listen more to the City than to manufacturing industry. Sir Winston Churchill once said that finance should be less proud and industry more heeded. From the time of his ringing declaration to the demands that we now hear from manufacturing industry that their needs are being neglected, the problem in Britain has remained. The City of London is near, is wealthy, has friends in Whitehall and Westminster, knows which doors on which to knock and speaks the same language. On the other hand, manufacturing industry is distant, is widely dispersed and speaks with different voices that are seldom heard in all their full regional diversity in the unaccustomed corridors of Government activity.

As a result, we have a high pound, freedom from exchange control and the sale of Government assets at cheap prices, and the City chalks up yet more multi-millionaires while manufacturing industry languishes. The gates of more factories are padlocked and more jobs are lost. In my constituency, more than one third of firms have closed their doors and skilled engineers, formerly the cream of industry, have seen the loss of 30 to 40 per cent. of their jobs.

The Manchester chamber of commerce has specified in detail what is happening in the real world. It is not a shake-out of non-jobs. They were genuine jobs. I must ask the right hon. Member for Worthing to understand that those were small to medium-sized firms producing medium-tech articles for the export and home markets. They have shut. The jobs have been lost. They will never return. If we had a boom now, they would not come back. That has been the greatest condemnation of the Government.

It might be thought that the Government are being neutral between different companies operating in Britain today, that the Government like success, and that if success is to be found in financial operations conducted by individuals rather than in industrial successes employing large numbers of our people, that has nothing to do with the Government. If we have financial success, that is OK. It might be thought that industrial success is OK but has nothing to do with the Government. I believe that it has to do with the Government. It is the Government's actions which make the one prosperous and the other bankrupt. It is the Government's actions which produce the high pound that make exports dear and imports cheap. It is the Government's actions which produce interest rates which, in real terms, are at the historically high levels which benefit the lenders and penalise those who borrow for investment. It is the Government's actions which result in wealth passing from industry to the City. It is the Government's actions which have produced the millions of unemployed people and the silent and bleak factories which disgrace my town.

The current price of oil is prompting fresh consideration here and elsewhere as to the basis of our economy which,

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

at one time, was our ability to produce and sell our products but which has been distorted by the North sea economy.

I have a simple view about our attitude to oil prices. It is like that of the potato farmer. The potato farmer likes high prices. If we try to explain the sophisticated economic arguments for low potato prices, all he will do is feel for the assurance of his well-stuffed pocket. By all means let us have a depletion policy—it is shameful that we do not have one—to keep some of our wealth in the ground, but as we produce it let it be sold for the highest price we can obtain.

The effects of sales which lead to higher prices are the easiest things in the world to deal with. It is easy to spend wealth wisely rather than to squander it on consumer imports which can ruin our industry. We can arrange matters so that we have a higher level of industrial activity which will consume industrial raw materials and equipment for our manufacturing and employment industries. Such imports could result from a more sensible economic policy.

The saddest and most grievous waste of opportunity has come in the past few years. Since 1945, the major constraint in limiting growth—limiting the creation of wealth and prosperity—has been our balance of payments. For 35 years we have lived with that problem—frequently more of a nightmare than a problem. Suddenly, at a stroke, the ordeal disappeared. The policies of expansion which had been constrained by our payments deficit could have been revived in a new form, to use profitably that wealth which had arisen from the waters of the North sea. It is that waste, neglect and abuse of such a unique opportunity which ranks among the most woeful of our recent peacetime history.

One of the diversions of those of us who spend our waking days discussing economic and financial matters has been the argument about the nature of the anticipated tax handouts in the Budget. The expectation was that the main aim was the reduction of thresholds with the intention of reducing the poverty gap. We understood from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that that was his chief aim.

Recently, we have discerned glimmers of expectation that the weight of tax relief is to be diverted to the reduction in the basic rate. Our Nigel would hardly be our Nigel if he did not intend to reduce the higher rate as well as the basic rate. What are the Chancellor of the Exchequer's real intentions? I am sure that he would regard a basic rate of 25 per cent. and a maximum higher rate of 50 per cent. as his great achievement. Even if I agreed with that kind of tax system, I should hardly regard it as the acme of economic achievement. The achievement must be and can only be the prosperity of the whole nation. It is to that that he should have turned his attention.

The solutions that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had in mind will not start the long road back to reality. He is unlikely to be able to have his 25 per cent. and it would be nonsense to do so. He might try to reduce the basic rate by 2 per cent. to 28 per cent. and the higher rate to about 56 per cent., and claim some credit from his supporters. That will do nothing for the nation as a whole, and that should be his priority. The long road back to reality still lies before us and that task still remains.

5.45 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): It was interesting to listen to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I had hoped that he would be able to answer some of the questions that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked him. It was disappointing that the right hon. Gentleman did not answer one of the three major areas of questioning. I hope that when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) replies—I know him to be an honourable man who likes to have the full picture—he will respond to those questions. They are crucial. It is not sufficient for *Labour Weekly* to talk about a great rip-off and £62 million raised from asset sales without at least telling its own followers what their policy is. Once they have been told, perhaps the rest of us will know what the Labour party's policy on privatisation is.

I broadly support the Government's economic strategy. I work closely with business. I know that our manufacturing industry and the whole of the economy have no greater interest than the counter-inflation policy. An inflation rate of 3 per cent., or somewhere near, is a goal to which no industrialist in this country would object. He would enthusiastically support it.

Mr. Budgen: No, he would not.

Mr. Morris: Yes, he would. My hon. Friend is a lawyer, not an industrialist. I have a close relationship with industry, and I know that that is the view of the CBI and chambers of commerce.

Mr. Budgen: Yes, but they are not prepared to take the medicine needed to achieve it.

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend puts his finger on the problem. We see evidence of genuine growth in the economy. If my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury were to take a trip to the east midlands, he would see a real increase in employment. That has not occurred simply in the past three months. It probably goes back six or seven months. Last Friday, I had an opportunity to spend time in the Northampton jobcentre. It is interesting to see that we are making progress with part-time employment. It is apparently derided by the Opposition, although my female part-time employees want such jobs. They help the family budget and they are delighted to have them.

Progress is also being made in respect of the long-term unemployed in Northampton. That is crucial. As hon. Members are aware, it is often the east midlands with its industrial base that is the precursor of progress in the rest of the midlands and forward to the north.

There is some evidence after six or seven months of some progress in reducing unemployment, but I have one or two anxieties. The first relates to training. It is extremely worrying that we fall abysmally behind relevant training levels in Germany, France and United States.

Hon. Members will have read the leading article in a newspaper about the Coopers and Lybrand report, which not only criticised this country's level of training, but said that too many manufacturers and employers were not aware that this country falls lamentably behind its competitors. I must tell my right hon. Friends that, if we are to remain competitive and become even more competitive, we must tackle that problem before we can move forward.

I make no apology for reiterating the problems with exports. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor rightly said that there was a 14 per cent. increase in manufactured exports during the past 12 months, and my hon. Friend the Minister was wise to criticise the over-exaggeration in the House of Lords report. However, my right hon. Friends should take note of the 36th report of the Public Accounts Committee. Indeed, it is nice to see the Chairman of that Committee sitting on the Opposition Benches today. That report delved with some depth into the issues. It took evidence from the Northern Engineering Industries and other interested parties. It showed clearly that the Treasury's internal inquiry—the so-called Byatt report—which was challenged by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Export Credits Guarantee Department, was a superficial report. However, it raised one real point—that manufacturing industry should demonstrate to all taxpayers that the help given to it to obtain exports has a beneficial affect on employment in the United Kingdom.

I draw the attention of my right hon. Friends to paragraphs 44*(g)* and 44*(h)* of the Select Committee report. They read:

"We accept that UK exporters should not be disadvantaged on soft credit for exports."

It continued:

"though the UK's capital goods exporters should not be undermined as regards their competitiveness."

I welcome the move on the aid and trade provision. However, I do not believe that the budget of £60 million contained in the autumn statement is adequate. The Minister may ask me where the additional money should be found. I suggest that it is not before time that the Department of Trade and Industry considered a transfer of money from internal United Kingdom orientated support to external export support. Evidence is coming in thick and fast that, in terms of job production, the beneficial effect on manufacturing—especially in the midlands and the north—comes from our major exporters. I would like the Government to do something to support them.

There is, of course, the problem of interest rates. Many of my hon. Friends are not bankers and revolt against a policy of high interest rates. I work alongside industry and I recognise that for years industrialists have asked for stability in exchange rates. In a sense, before the current oil position, there was a strategy to achieve stability in the exchange rate at about $1·50 to the pound, with a declining pound-deutschmark rate. In many ways, the pound-deutschmark rate is the key element to the future success of British exports.

The current position in the oil industry causes some concern. If the price reduction means a sterling decline pari passu with the rate at which oil prices decline, that could have a double benefit for this country. First, sterling would come back to a level that many manufacturers believe would make them more competitive, and, secondly, it would increase the world economy.

If oil prices decline and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor decides to keep the sterling exchange rate at about $1·50, he must take account of the warning signals that Britain may end up with the worst of all worlds. I understand that the Treasury has said today that it envisages the effect of the present decline as broadly neutral on inflation because the fall in sterling is cancelled by lower oil prices—and thereby we obtain growth in the world economy. If that is the position, we can live with it.

It has been suggested that the oil will run out and that we should have a depletion policy. There is no better man to handle the oil position than my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. He has been the only Secretary of State for Energy—and I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell)—who has listened seriously to the arguments from the oil companies about what would achieve maximum oil production from the North sea. He moved, on the second occasion that he was asked to do so, on that proposition.

The Budget that introduced the many changes to the tax regime for North sea oil has been highly successful. Opposition spokesmen suggest that North sea oil is about to run out and that there should be a depletion policy and a consolation policy. I wonder why they have learnt nothing during the past 10 years. North sea oil and gas enterprises have provided major employment in some of the most hard-pressed areas of Britain. They have provided the major technical advances that have enabled a number of our industries to be in the forefront in their areas. Above all, they have sustained the unemployed through a difficult period while we begin to re-enter what I hope will be opportunities for virtually full employment —*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) can laugh if he wishes. I recognise the problems of Grimsby. I invite him to come to Northampton to look at what is happening in the east midlands, where things are turning round. He will then be a little more cheerful.

5.57 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I hope that the Government note carefully the remarks of the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) about the importance of training, and especially skill training, and support for exports. I am sure that his anxiety in that area and his proposals to alleviate the problems will be echoed throughout wide sections of British industry and on both sides of the House.

I was hoping for an explanation of the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the inflation rate policy that he described. He appeared to suggest that he would pay any price for a low level of inflation. I fear that that is where the Government have already gone wrong. It is no use looking only at one dial on the dashboard, thereby letting the other dials become out of tune. It would be most unfortunate if the Government continued on that course.

I am also pleased to speak after the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) because I agreed with most of his comments. Indeed, his Select Committee's report has been of considerable help to the debate both in this House and in the country. His remarks about the money supply position rang a loud bell with me. We have always advocated a firm monetary policy. His references to the early 1970s—to competition, to credit control, and to what happened then—awaken fears that matters may be going awry in a way that the whole country may regret in due course.

I also agree with the right hon. Gentleman and the Select Committee in their strictures of the Government for not producing the revenue forecasts and for not providing an estimate of the fiscal adjustments. Let the House be clear why that is the case. It is straightforward politics, not for the reasons which the Chancellor gave. If he can cut taxes in his Budget, he has decided that he wishes to pull them like a rabbit out of the hat, not have them discounted

[Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth]

by being publicised beforehand, despite references to them in the Queen's Speech. He also clearly wants, as he would put it, to kill speculation.

But another term for speculation is open debate about the Government's economic strategy and whether cutting the level of income tax is the appropriate thing to do at present. We would have a much more intelligent debate in the House and the country if those figures were available and if criticisms and support of the Government's economic policy and proposals to cut income tax were made with the figures available rather than in the dark as we are doing as a result of those figures not having been put in the autumn statement.

Mr. David Howell: I admire, with the hon. Gentleman, the work of the Select Committee and I have listened to a good many criticisms of the absence of the figures. But I cannot understand what he is asking for if, understandably, no fiscal judgment has been reached in official sources with the Government's stamp on it. There may well be guesses in the Treasury and the hon. Gentleman may have guesses, but why does he seek an official revenue projection when no such thing exists and when the events of the last few days show how silly it would be to put any firm figures on the situation?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: It is rather curious that it has been possible for the Treasury to make estimates in the past but not now. The circumstances are no different from those existing in the past and it would be helpful for the Treasury and the Government, with all the resources that they have at their disposal, to make an estimate so that the debate before the Budget can take place in the light of those figures. We have figures from the national institute and various other bodies, stockbrokers and other economic forecasters of what they think the fiscal adjustment may be. Those are revised in the light of economic circumstances. The view of the Select Committee, which I support, is that the autumn statement should help to provide us with a "green Budget" so that there can be an intelligent debate about the strategy to be adopted come the spring when the final judgments have to be made. That is an intelligent way in which to conduct our business in the House and to conduct the debate in the country.

Central to the autumn statement is the judgment whether the Government have changed their economic strategy and whether the statement implies that there has been a move towards an expansion of the economy. The Chancellor has stoutly maintained that the statement and his Mansion house speech which preceded it do not imply any easing of the Government's strategy. In evidence to the Select Committee, the Government's chief economic adviser said that there is no conscious easing of fiscal policy and nor has there been any significant easing of monetary policy. Later, he went on to point to the continuing downward pressure on the PSBR as a percentage of GDP. The Chancellor himself pointed with pride to the lowest borrowing requirement in relation to our national income since 1971.

But as the Select Committee has helpfully pointed out, as have other commentators, the additional proceeds of some £2·5 billion from asset sales, together with the allocation of part of the 1986-87 reserve next year to departmental programmes, means that an additional £4 billion has been added to spending programmes since the 1985 Budget. Indeed, looked at since the January spending White Paper, the picture is even more dramatic. The change in spending programmes is up by £4·9 billion from £139 billion in the 1985 White Paper, excluding special asset sales, to £143·9 billion in the autumn statement, an increase of some 3·5 per cent. That is a pretty substantial increase and means that under the Government the planning total has risen by around 9 per cent. which clearly shows a change of strategy.

The asset sales and the raid on the contingency reserve both expand demand. That is in contrast to what the Chancellor said in his 1984 Budget speech when he pointed out that the higher level of asset sales which the Government were planning as the privatisation programme gathers pace is a further reason for reducing the PSBR significantly in the coming year. He said that asset sales reduced the Government's need to borrow, but that their effect on interest rates may be less than the effect of most other reductions in Government spending programmes. That was when asset sales were increased from £1 billion to £2 billion, not by their existing substantial amounts, and there is no similar coyness from the Chancellor this year and no intention to reduce the PSBR.

Therefore, the possibility is that actual spending may overrun the remaining contingency reserve for next year, pushing the PSBR up from £7·5 billion to around £9 billion or £10 billion. When asset sales are added the Government will run down their capital or increase debt by between £13 billion to £14·5 billion next year to produce a true borrowing ratio similar to that of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in 1983.

What is the Government's scope for tax cuts? The Government prefer not to have open debate, as I said earlier, because of the weakness of their stance, hence the decision not to include the revenue forecasts and give a clue as to the fiscal adjustment. But the oil revenue forecast in the autumn statement is based on a nine-month forward price of oil of $26 and on the assumption that the exchange rate will not change much from its average level since March. In the light of recent events, both those predictions could look over-optimistic. The weakening in sterling oil prices through the rising pound has already knocked £1·5 billion off prospective North sea oil tax receipts, and that will be counted, as sterling falls, at the rate of approximately £150 million for each 1 per cent. depreciation in the currency. However, as the dollar falls in the oil price it could knock £500 million off oil revenue. That suggests that if the oil price falls below the forecast suggested by the Government's chief economic adviser, the Chancellor's scope for action on cutting taxes will be even more severely limited.

It is clear from the Queen's Speech, as has been said earlier, that the Government's intention is to have a consumer rather than an investment boom. The Treasury forecast for growth is 3 per cent. in 1986. That is higher than the weighted average of forecasts of various institutes that I mentioned earlier which is some 2 per cent. The Treasury forecast is 4 per cent. growth in consumer expenditure and if tax is cut by only 2p in the pound, that assumes an increase of real pre-tax earnings of more than 3 per cent., double the average for the 1980s. That is consistent with a high rate of growth in average earnings and falling inflation. It suggests that the Government are clearly hoping to ride into the election on the back of improved living standards for those in work.

In contrast, the investment position is much worse. The London Business School predicts an increase of only 1 per cent. next year, compared with the Treasury forecast of 3·5 per cent. The Chancellor has admitted that the bulk of the rise in investment in 1986 is expected to be in the private sector. That figure will be well down on the 7 to 8 per cent. likely to be achieved in 1985, which was boosted by the boom in anticipation of the ending of capital allowances, to which industry is clearly looking forward and is getting its investment out of the way in order to obtain those allowances before they end.

Export growth will slow down markedly and a number of forecasters are predicting current account deficits after 1987 despite the substantial contribution being made by North sea oil. Phillips and Drew predicted a £1·5 billion budget deficit, but with an alarming increase in non-oil deficit to £16 billion. That is the price that will be paid by industry for the Chancellor's pre-election consumer boom.

The Chancellor has admitted that despite an increase in capital spending in the public sector, the mix between capital and current spending is much as before. That may seem surprising, given the exaggerated reports in some of the newspapers and the media when the autumn statement was published. The extra £500 million spent on council housing, hospitals and road building appeared to be quite substantial. That inspired leak at the time of the publication of the statement suggested that between 40,000 and 70,000 jobs could be created, at around £10,000 per job.

That remarkable conversion to the cost-effective virtues of capital spending is a surprise. Nevertheless, it is to be welcomed. It was only in December 1984 that the Prime Minister was condemning such proposals for investment in the infrastructure as not being cost-effective. The truth is that the shift from capital spending to current spending is still dramatic, and in our view there should be a further switch towards capital spending.

It has been estimated that the Chancellor's £2 billion spent on public sector capital spending will create 175,000 jobs. What is the actual position? Simulations in the report of the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service show that the equivalent of 2p in tax cuts would create 112,000 jobs on the London Business school model in four years, compared with 159,000 with increased Government spending. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research is more favourable to Government spending—199,000 jobs compared with 35,000. The parliamentary unit at Warwick university suggests, in the Select Committee report, that the Treasury model would also give a better outcome for public spending than for tax cuts.

The balance of advantage is clear. The Chancellor would do better to try a combination of a £1 billion targeted increase in capital spending and a 1 per cent. cut in the employers' national insurance contribution, which would directly help industrial competitiveness and increase the number of jobs created.

It seems that there is a fundamental incoherence at the heart of the Chancellor's economic policy. The medium-term financial strategy is clearly in shreds. We are left adrift with no compass to navigate between the financial rocks. If sterling M3 is no longer the overriding target of monetary policy and just one of a number of intermediate targets, what lies behind the Chancellor's monetary calculations? If there is no relationship between broad money and PSBR, what is the framework for the Chancellor's budgetary calculations?

There is no exchange rate target, only a suggestion that interest rates are set to bear down on inflation and hold the pound to around the average of the past two and a half years—about 81 on the basket of currencies. That has now been blown off course. The Chancellor is operating with no framework and running the risk of the crisis which gave rise to the over-reactions of the market earlier in the year. That could happen again as long as we are unclear what direction he is going in, what indicators he is looking at and the framework within which he is operating.

The recent events in the oil markets have inevitably drawn attention to the fact that we are all unclear as to what the Government's strategy is. Oil spot prices for North sea Brent crude on the European markets currently range between $21 and $24. There has been intervention on the foreign exchange markets and the pound has recovered to $1·43, with the effective exchange rate up to 78·6 and the pound-deutschmark rate at 3·61. The House will recognise that that is not a very stable situation. There is the possibility of a fall to $20 in the oil price and the risk of a precipitate fall below that. In our view, the Government must steer to avoid two dangers—first, the collapse of the oil price and, secondly, a free fall in the currency rapidly down towards parity.

In the past few months, industry has been buffeted by currency instability with the pound falling from $1·40 to $1·03, rising again to just above $1·50 and falling back to $1·41. Some of that instability is due to the market's perception of sterling as a petro-currency. Much of it is due to the Government's lack of strategy to deal with the problem. The effect of the oil price fall on revenues is not the most important issue, although it will pre-empt the Chancellor's scope for tax cuts. The Prime Minister is right not to put tax cuts before wider economic considerations. The danger is not that the scope for cuts in taxation and interest rates has been ruled out, but that the Government will launch another panic over-reaction and push interest rates up to prop up the exchange rate.

In our view, the Chancellor should use the opportunity to enter the European monetary system at a competitive rate. It was most encouraging to read the comments of the president of the Bundesbank when on 30 November in *The Times* he said that he would welcome Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism but that we should not enter at the "wrong" rate. He hinted at a realignment involving a further mark rise. Another possibility, which almost certainly would be necessary, is for the pound to enter in the wider 6 per cent. band.

Clearly, the movement in the market provides the opportunity for the Chancellor to reconsider his stance on full membership of the European monetary system and take the advice given to him by his chief economic adviser, the CBI and the Governor of the Bank of England, who all suggested earlier in the year that it would benefit British industry and the economy if the Government decided to go in.

Even if the Treasury's view is that the overall impact on the economy of the changes in oil prices is broadly neutral, the reality is that that neutrality is a roller coaster of upward lurches alternating with downward plunges. Obviously, OPEC will continue to exert a major influence over the price of our oil and therefore our exchange rate position. The only way in which the Government will be able to withstand the pressure and obtain greater stability is by international co-operation on the exchange rate and

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

oil prices. We urge the Government to work in co-operation with the European countries through the exchange rate mechanism in the European monetary system and with the OPEC countries in a way that the Government have not been prepared to do in the past, in order to try to get greater stability than we have had or which we shall have in the short-term future, in oil prices.

I hope that the Government will change the mix of their fiscal policy in the Budget in the forthcoming year. As I said earlier, all the current prospects are that the Government will, if they can, concentrate on cuts in income tax. We believe that a mix which includes investment in the infrastructure and cutting employers' national insurance contributions, and which acts directly to get the long-term unemployed and the less well-off back to work and on higher incomes, would be of greater benefit to the economy than the strategy pursued by the Government.

At the present time the Government's inflation strategy is being threatened by the higher pay settlements in the private sector. The other aspect that the Government have allowed to go by the board and to which they have simply paid lip service is any attempt to have incomes matching increases in productivity in a way that would stop inflation feeding on increases in pay. Such increases are simply not justified by the levels of productivity in British industry, although they are rising.

If the Government are to succeed in getting unemployment down, they will have to follow that strategy. They cannot get interest rates down unless they are prepared to allow the pound to come down and then to enter the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, in order to get greater stability, which would be welcomed by British industry and would provide extra export markets and extra growth at home. That would bring many more jobs to the country and help to reduce the unemployment figures, which the whole House, including all my hon. Friends, want to see in the very near future.

6.20 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), have mentioned the oil market, the speculation, mainly in oil futures, and the extreme volatility of oil prices.

My right hon. Friends are right not to be too exercised by what has been occurring in oil markets. We are seeing the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries at last beginning to face reality. It is having to face the long descent from politically rigged oil prices. It is facing a world in which there will be less demand for energy in relation to output growth, and in which oil prices will be soft for many years to come. The seeds of the problem were planted in the attempt to keep oil prices too high in the early 1980s.

There is no need for the British Government to consider production control. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear that that was the last thing that the Government intend. I welcome that. I am sure that it would be unwise for the British Government to become tangled up again in an attempt to control production, and force world crude oil prices to political levels, at which they would not stay.

There is no danger of a collapse in crude oil prices, although we shall see terrific volatility. The reason is that in the last resort the Saudis' interest in shooting themselves in the foot, by vast increases in production, is a limited interest. I do not think that they will do it. The Soviets, whose oil production has been a substantial influence on oil markets, are in some difficulties over their oil production. There is evidence that they are cutting back their sales on world oil markets. There is also the fact, which people overlook, that for the first time in the past 12 months or so oil has begun to become cheaper in local currencies in Europe. Hitherto, it has been much more expensive even than it was at the height of the oil price increases in 1979. We are now beginning to see the benefits of cheaper oil in local currencies in the European economies working through into European demand.

Therefore, the prospect is not of collapse but of a steady downward movement in oil prices from the ridiculous and unsustainable heights of the past. It is wholly beneficial to the industrial economies, including the British economy. Lower oil prices bring substantial benefits. They are part of a worldwide trend to lower raw material prices. We should not stand in the way of that development.

The pattern of lower prices of raw materials, including energy fuels, brings me to inflation. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear her view that at present it is important for us to maintain a policy of relatively high interest rates, with a base rate of 11·5 per cent.—not 12 per cent. as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) seemed to think, in an unfortunate and rather muddled speech. My right hon. Friend said that we need to maintain high interest rates to fight inflation, and we should not take any risks with inflation. There is no doubt that the struggle against inflation under the ministrations of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, combined with the Government's policies, has been going extremely well. Most people confidently look forward to inflation rates being considerably lower next year. My right hon. Friend's figure is 3·75 per cent. by the last quarter. Even that may be pessimistic. It might be considerably below that. The battle on that front is going well.

I suggest—indeed, I assert—to my right hon. Friends that the main influence on the rate of inflation here in the United Kingdom is the international influence. Of course, there are both domestic and international infuences, but it is on the international scene that the main influences are at work. They are powerful influences downwards. If we look at the staggering figures of international prices for commodities, we see that import prices have fallen by 10 per cent. since March, and that commodity prices are down 28 per cent. in sterling terms since February. Across the world, we see the pattern of raw material prices collapsing in on themselves — for example, in foodstuffs, where there are vast surpluses, ruining farmers. We have seen some of the ructions working through in the tin market, and there is a suggestion that they are working through into the rubber market. Across the world, the raw material scene is one of falling prices and weakening returns. The oil price is only part of that scene.

The danger is not inflation, but that disinflation may turn to deflation. There will be substantial benefits for the United kingdom on the inflation front, but one has to ask exactly what additional contribution the policy of high interest rates is making. Substantially lower inflation rates

are anyway in prospect—and a very good thing too. It is hard to argue that among the many reasons for interest rates being high, the inflation reason is the main driving force. It is clear that there are much more powerful driving forces at work, which is a good thing.

Must we have a policy of high interest rates to hold the pound? Again, there is some ambiguity. After recent events, it is self-evident that the level of the pound in the short term will be settled by conditions in the oil markets, and not by fine tuning or adjustments in interest rates. There might be violent movements in the oil market—I do not think there will be — when any interest rate pattern that my right hon. Friends try to set would have little influence on the pound. We have seen the pound fall by 5 per cent. in three or four days, while the interest rate policy has been unchanged. Therefore, in a sense high interest rates have not worked in keeping the pound at a certain level.

Does that matter? It does not. Many people feel that we would be comfortable with a lower pound against the basket of currencies, possibly against the dollar as well. The rate against the basket is 77.9. There would be no difficulty for the economy if it were 75 — if the deutschmark rate were lower than it is now, at 3.61, which is lower than it was a few days ago. Many people in industry, although with a little exaggeration, said that that was very much what they wanted. There would be no discomfort and a great deal of gain and enthusiasm if the rate were a little lower.

We have seen, first, that the policy of high interest rates does not determine inflation. This is settled by other forces. So is the proposition to keep the pound at an exchange rate of around 1.40 to 1.45 against the dollar and 3.60 to 3.70 against the deutschmark? Is that the purpose of high rates? Is that happening? There is doubt about whether the pound will keep to those rates. Even if it does, is it necessary? A lower exchange rate would be acceptable, provided there was reasonable stability. There is always a difficulty of enormous volatility for the Government. That is what is so unsettling. However, the economy could live perfectly well with a slightly lower dollar exchange rate, and very well with a lower exchange rate against the whole basket of currencies. Therefore, one has to conclude that interest rates are not decisive in terms of the exchange rate of the pound.

The Select Committee report, which was presented with his usual ability by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), expressed concern about competitiveness and the damage that is being done by high interest rates. However, the argument cuts against the Select Committee, too. Since it published its report, sterling has been devalued by 5 per cent. This shows that concern that is based upon the belief that a high interest rate policy is holding up the exchange rate, is based upon a substantial illusion.

Other arguments have been aired in the press about the need for a high interest rate structure. There is the argument that high interest rates are needed to maintain a tight monetary stance. Reference has already been made to the fact that Professor Minford says that the monetary stance is much too tight. Nobody, quite rightly, relies now upon the slightly absurd measure of sterling M3.

The new measure that has been put together that indicates the measure of the money supply—MO—is, according to Professor Minford, much too tight. He says that over a three-month period it has contracted and that this should be changed. It is difficult to challenge Professor Minford's view that if the worry is about the money supply, interest rates should stay as high as they are. He thinks that they should come down. That is a considerable argument.

Another argument that has been aired in the press is that interest rates are high because unit labour costs are too high. This cannot be denied. There has been a spasm of management feebleness of, I regret to say, the familiar kind. Substantial pay increases in key areas of our export industries and manufacturing have been conceded, and they will have the inevitable effect.

First, the recruitment of new people into jobs will be reduced. Secondly, de-manning will be accelerated. Thirdly, the export performance of some of these firms will be weakened. That is regrettable. Whether there is a connection between interest rates and industry's feebleness to face up to pay settlements, I very much doubt.

When I meet industrialists, I ask them again and again why they do not put very much more emphasis in their pay negotiations upon capital as well as income, upon profit sharing, upon share options and possibly upon share distribution schemes. I ask them why much more emphasis throughout British industry is not placed upon capital as well as upon income. In today's conditions, I believe that that would begin to take the heat off some of the very crude demands for more pay. At present, people just do not understand any other way of securing their position than to seek higher incomes.

If there were to be such a change of attitude, the urgings of my right hon. Friends, which are economically correct — that more wage flexibility is needed, that people should accept lower wage rates in order to clear the market, and that then there would be many more jobs and possibly jobs for all who sought them—would be right. However, when my right hon. Friends make speeches of that kind other people say, "Oh, I know what they are saying. They are saying that workers should take a cut in wages." It should be no surprise, therefore, if that is the interpretation of the message, that it is not received with great enthusiasm.

The other half of the message, in which wage flexibility should never be separated from anything that the Government, whom I support, say, is that, although it must be the aim of policy to go for wage flexibility and labour market reform, we must also aim at spreading capital ownership. We must ensure that capital and capital resources compensate for the fact that in many cases wages which clear the market will be rather low.

If hon. Members asked me to give an example of that, I should have to point to the vast growth in part-time work. Millions of people are prepared to take part-time work. It is convenient for them, and I see nothing wrong with it. However, part-time work inevitably results in part-time wages. The economy and our society are marching very fast in this direction, in a way that is almost unrecognised by economists, who consider only the formal, traditional, full-time employment sector of the economy.

In this new, completely different pattern of work, the case for wider capital ownership as a support and an additional resource — as it were, a second income support for the wage or salary—is very strong. I believe that the Government would be right to make wider capital ownership their primary social goal. I know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer believes in this. I know, too, that other right hon. and hon. Friends

[Mr. David Howell]

of mine have said in many speeches that this is the right way forward. He is not sitting on the Government Front Bench now, but I know that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is dedicated to this concept.

We are now at the point at which one can say that the time for this idea has arrived. We are moving towards a different pattern of society: one in which the inflationary pressures caused by excessive wage settlements will be greatly reduced. Therefore, I hope that we shall hear very much more about this concept when my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench speak, perfectly correctly, about the need for greater wage flexibility so that more people can price themselves into jobs. That should be the way forward. However, it should be supported by vastly wider personal capital ownership of all forms. We made a start with British Telecom, and I hope that we shall go further with British Gas, but it is only a start. There needs to be a greater change of attitude towards wider capital ownership, which would affect nearly every family in the land.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends not to allow any gyrations in the oil market to affect their view about interest rates. Nor should anything that has happened in the last few days affect their views and intentions concerning tax cuts. I thought that I detected in the comments of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer a change of emphasis: that he was revising his views about tax cuts and that he thought that in the next two or three Budgets tax cuts would be less likely. That would be a great pity.

The revenue outlook, which right hon. and hon. Members have demanded should be quantified, qualified and specified—I believe rather absurdly—has not, in broad terms, changed very much as a result of oil price movements during the last few days. If the pound is to move down in a perfectly manageable way, and if dollar oil prices are also to move down, the net effect on our revenues is virtually "even steven". On the other hand, tax cuts are absolutely essential if unemployment in particular is to be controlled.

However hard I listen to the rather high-minded views of people like the hon. Member for Stockton, South, I cannot understand why there is anything wrong with this argument. What the centralists—that is what they are, in both the Labour party and in the centre parties—will never accept is that people will help each other and will fulfil the obligation to give each other jobs and create employment if they are left with the resources with which to do so. If the hon. Member for Stockton, South is in any doubt about that, I urge him to visit countries which have smaller public sectors, lower income tax and lower levels of taxation generally than our own. I am thinking in this case of Japan, which delivers an unemployment rate of 2·4 per cent. How does Japan do that? Many people have the resources with which to offer jobs and create useful functions for others. They have the resources with which to pay them, provided that those resources are not taken away from them by taxation.

Apart from the social argument, it seems to me to be iniquitous that such a high rate of tax should be placed upon people on relatively low rates of pay. Furthermore, lower taxation is a powerful engine of employment. I am amazed that people, particularly those who belong to the Social Democratic party and who claim that they like to stand back and look at things objectively, cannot penetrate and understand the argument that this is the way in which, increasingly, the economy works.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: In that case, why has there not been a substantial increase in employment during the past five years when taxes have been cut?

Mr. Howell: That is a matter of dispute. Some taxes have been cut, but taxes are high for those on low incomes, for part of the corporate sector and for small businesses. By my standards, we have hardly begun to make tax cuts. I expect much more in the future.

My message to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is that he should stand by the stance that he has taken up, with characteristic robustness, stick to his former policy intentions and not be exercised too much by the gyrations in oil prices, which, at worst, will have a neutral effect and, at best, will be beneficial. I should like my right hon. Friend to bring down interest rates — obviously not rapidly, but at a gradual and steady pace. I believe that it is possible to do so without risking the other policy objectives. I should like my right hon. Friend to stick to the commitment to which we have aspired since long before 1979 to cut personal taxes substantially, to help those on low pay, to provide employment and to create a flexible, high-employment, fully occupied society.

6.40 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It is incredible that the Chancellor stood at the Dispatch Box for exactly 30 minutes at the start of the debate and not once did the word "unemployment" cross his lips. *[Interruption.]* The record will show who is telling the truth.

The autumn statement, like all the others delivered by the Chancellor, misses out what I believe economics is primarily about. I hope that I take my colleagues with me on that point. Economics is about people — their development, the use and application of their skills and talents, and the production and provision of the goods and services that they need. It is not about economic indicators and mechanisms because, at best, they should be the servants, not the masters, of the people in local areas and the regions.

We did not hear one word or see even crocodile tears about the plight of most of the regions where most of our people live rather than in the relatively cosy south-east. The Chancellor, with typical modesty, spoke of the highest rate of growth since 1973. His statement mentioned a substantial increase in the number of people in work since 1983. He then added:

> "This has now been reflected in a levelling out in unemployment".—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 434.]

Not in Birmingham, not in the west midlands—far from it. My constituents and those in Birmingham and the west midlands are surprised and insulted when the Chancellor and other Conservative Members claim that things are well and getting better.

I do not expect any Conservative Member to take my word for it, but perhaps the Conservatives will listen to the Chancellor's points—the points that will be made by the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) on Sunday on Channel 4 in the brilliant "Writing on the Wall" series produced by our former colleague, Phillip Whitehead, who will soon be a Member again. The right hon.

Gentleman will say, "I have to admit in retrospect that British industry took much more punishment than I expected." He could say that again, although it is no surprise to any Opposition Member. At least the right hon. Member for Waveney—I pay tribute to him—shows more sense and understanding than the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster showed last night or earlier when he made this fatuous comment about the west midlands:

"You have got problems, sure, but they are not the same as the problems of the north or of Scotland. The problem here is a recessionary one. The West Midlands is not a place where there is a long history of the rundown of old industry".

That gigantic and appalling ignorance stands the facts on their head. In the west midlands there is not a single nationally known company in the manufacturing sector that has not in the past six years been scarred by job losses, under-investment and lack of Government concern or cash. About 1,300 firms in the west midlands went bust last year. The increase in unemployment has been higher than anywhere else—3 per cent. above the national average, for the first time reaching 16·5 per cent. About 360,000 jobs have been lost in the west midlands—a drop of 16 per cent. All that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster can say in his paraded ignorance is that the problem is a recessionary one.

Some Conservative Members may be saying, "We know that that has happened, but this is now on the mend." I shall read a list of firms, mainly in manufacturing—some old, some new—which in the past five months have made people redundant in the west midlands: GKN Fasteners in Sandwell, 96 jobs; Metro Cammell Weymann in Birmingham, which makes buses when it is allowed, 40 jobs: Spicer Transmissions in Wolverhampton, 80 jobs; Accles and Pollock in Sandwell, 40 jobs; GEC Telecommunications in Coventry, 111 jobs; Dunlop Aerospace in Coventry, 86 jobs; Sankey Laminations in Wolverhampton, 125 jobs; BL Longbridge in Birmingham, 200 jobs; Cadbury Schweppes in Birmingham, riding on the backs of this so-called consumer boom, 350 jobs; Apricot Computers in Birmingham — new technology — 93 jobs; Massey-Ferguson in Coventry, 450 jobs; Lucas in Birmingham, 240 jobs; Birmal Castings in Sandwell, 100 jobs, and BSR International in Dudley and Stourbridge, 460 jobs.

Most of those job losses are in an already shrunken manufacturing sector which used to be at the heart of the west midlands' former prosperity. That list of casualties among major manufacturing names reads like the tombstones in an industrial graveyard, and more plots are being dug.

Last week, the Austin Rover Group announced that 600 toolroom jobs will go at its plant in Kingsbury road, in my constituency. These are the men whose skills and experience provided the tools to put British Leyland back on the tracks, to put new models such as the Metro, Maestro, Montego and Acclaim on the road. They built the tools to put the latest Roll-Royce Camargue on the road. Do we not need these skills any more? Are we saying that Birmingham, the west midlands or the rest of Britain has no need of these developing skills in machine tools? That is what the Government will say to those men when they go out of the door at the end of March.

Since 1979, jobs in the machine tool sector in the west midlands have decreased from 8,750 to 3,500—a loss of six in every 10 jobs. I beg Ministers to understand that, in talking about the machine tool sector, we are talking about the heart of the manufacturing and production process. If we do not have the skills and the men to make these machine tools, we shall not have a manufacturing base that makes any sense. It is no surprise that, against the background of the Government's reckless attitude to the manufacturing sector, we now have the distinction, for the first time in our history, of importing more manufactured goods than we export.

Worse is to come. Doubtless Austin Rover will use the excuse of the closure of its once famous toolroom to buy the tools that it needs for future new models from West Germany and Japan. Indeed there is talk around Birmingham of a £7 million machine tool order for the Sherpa van going to West Germany.

That means we are putting at least part of future volume car production in foreign hands, with whom we compete head on in the market. What kind of economic strategy is that? It is the economics of bedlam.

Lack of research and development and lack of skilled men helped to run the former British Leyland into the ground under its former incompetent private owners. Even after the Labour Government stepped in to rescue it, it suffered from lack of research and development for new models for many years. It is stupid to risk making that mistake again because it will mean increasing reliance on imported machine tools.

The Chancellor, in his autumn statement, referred to a "levelling out in unemployment". I have to tell him and any of his remaining supporters that, at the end of November, 8,364 men and women in my constituency were jobless. This Christmas, they will find it hard to understand the "levelling out". There is virtually the same number of people now out of work as there was a year ago. That might be a levelling out in pure economic terms, but there are still 8,364 jobless people with little prospect of getting another job.

I return to the subject of Austin Rover machine tools. In the area around the toolroom, unemployment is running at 23·5 per cent.—2,454 men and 1,776 women. The rate of unemployment among women is now 28·5 per cent. Next door in Erdington, unemployment is 18 per cent. among men and 21·9 per cent. among women. In Stockland Green it is 23·3 per cent. for men and 27·9 per cent. for women.

Mr. Budgen: All this blubbering!

Mr. Corbett: If the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) does not care, he should go to the Tea Room.

I know of many constituents in their mid-30s who are now in their fourth year of unemployment. Most of them will say that they do not believe that they will work again. Many of my hon. Friends know of similar people—and so should Conservative Members. What is the economic future for those people? I do not suggest that the Chancellor should have offered them jobs this afternoon, but his statement should have given them some hope that things will get better.

I do not understand the Government's so-called economic strategy. There is work that needs to be done in the city of Birmingham. One third of our housing is in urgent need of improvement and repair. With the present budget allowed by the Government and at the present rate of improvement, it will take 640 years to clear the backlog. The Chief Secretary should take note of that. No one can

[Mr. Corbett]

say that this work would not provide jobs for people in the construction industry and in the supply industry. Are the skills in Birmingham and the west midlands for bashing metal about and making it do everything except talk no longer needed? Are there no homes which need to be repaired? Do none need improvement or insulation? Today there are tenants in both the public and private sectors who are offered places with outside lavatories. That is not peculiar to Birmingham.

Are the hospitals so well staffed and so well equipped that no money needs to be spent on them? Can no more work be provided through re-equipping them? Are our buses and trains so modern and wonderful that we can lay off men at Metro Cammell Weymann on the rail and bus section? The answer to all of these questions is no and a thousand times no. These are the jobs which the Prime Minister, when Leader of the Opposition, demanded. These are real jobs and it is within the gift of the Government to provide them by spending people into work instead of spending them out of work. The Prime Minister's earlier pleas have been stood on their head.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman has given us a long shopping list of public expenditure proposals which are undoubtedly worthy. Which taxes would he raise to pay for them?

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Member does not understand. If he does not understand now——

Mr. Maples: Which taxes?

Mr. Corbett: —he does not understand a thing. There is a cost in terms of pound notes and Girocheques passed over post office counters for keeping 4 million jobless. The simple answer is to spend some of that money, perhaps a quarter or even a third of it, to put people back into work. They will then pay taxes and national insurance and do the jobs that need to be done. The Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) is shaking his head. I have no hope for him. He puts his paw in the air and supports a Government who wilfully find it better to pour money into the dole queues than to put it where it is needed and where it will do some good. I despair of him.

The Chancellor's autumn statement is not devoid of feeling, but he does not recognise that there are people at the back of these statistics. Never mind talking about fiscal adjustments. People cannot tip them over a bowl of corn flakes when they are jobless. They do not know what M3 is when walking around a market wondering whether they can afford fish or meat once a week. People who are jobless do not understand that—I am being in no way patronising. They look to this Government—many of them in June 1983 regrettably voted for the Government—to give them some hope and belief that there is a chance that they can retrieve some dignity by having a job. People do not matter to the Chancellor; they are put on the scrap heap. All that matters to him are the figures. The Government want to reduce inflation to 4 or 3·5 per cent. even at the cost of another 250,000, or whatever it may be, unemployed.

I wish that Conservative Members could understand what I have said. It is not just a question of the misery of unemployment; it is a question of the loss of dignity, of self-respect, and of hope. It is like cutting someone's legs off. The next Labour Government will alter the situation. We shall get Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands and Britain back into productive, wealth-creating work. We shall set about mending the hurt and harm inflicted by this wretched Government.

6.58 pm

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): The prospect of speaking after my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) is daunting for Conservative Members because his analysis is always so clear and correct, but perhaps I might add a postscript to his speech on the effect of a falling oil price. He talked of the pound strengthening against the dollar as in some way balancing the effect of a falling dollar oil price.

It is important to be aware of the equation, which is that for every fall of $1 in the oil price, which would result in the Chancellor losing about £500 million in revenue, the dollar must fall about 6 cents against the pound. If we fall by $6 from the $26 that the Chancellor might be assuming for next year, we shall require a 36 cent fall in the exchange rate. I therefore treat the argument that there is a balance with some caution. However, I agree with my right hon. Friend that there is no need for panic because the fall in the dollar oil price, moderated by a strengthening sterling exchange rate, has a beneficial effect on the British economy in terms of lower industrial costs.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris), I support the autumn statement because keeping public expenditure broadly stable in real terms is right. It is working in his constituency and in mine. My constituency has had the fifth highest fall in the rate of unemployment in the past 12 months. That is a good record and bears out what my hon. Friend said about the beneficial effects of the Government's economic policies for the east midlands.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Everything might be all right in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but the north-east of Manchester has lost 20,000 jobs since the late 1960s. Only one week ago, the last steel-producing mill in Manchester closed. There has been a devastating effect on the community, on the infrastructure such as shops, pubs and clubs and on the morale of people—so much so that the most recent closure resulted in four suicides. The Government's policy might be all right for Kettering, but there are other, inner-city, constituencies which are suffering.

Mr. Freeman: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the rate of unemployment. He is doing his job and I am doing mine. I am merely explaining what is happening in my constituency. I shall deal with the beneficial effects of public sector and private sector capital investment in creating jobs.

Paragraph 14 of the Select Committee report talks of the need to reintroduce information about future revenues in the autumn statement. It is important that the House has information in the autumn statement about predictions of revenue. That is not to say that the Government must disclose their hand on the PSBR or the fiscal adjustment. One would follow from the other if there was a projection of future revenues, but it is important for the House to have those projections for this debate.

In response to such a suggestion, the Chancellor told the Select Committee that the House can "make their own

assessments." It is important that the House has the benefit of work being produced by the parliamentary unit attached to the economic modelling bureau in the university of Warwick. I hope that its work will become more comprehensive so that the House and, perhaps, the Library, is informed of its findings before the debate on the autumn statement. We should be able to have a range of forecasts based on common assumptions.

Paragraph 31 of the Select Committee report draws attention to the fact that the Government's forecast of the increase in total investment in 1986 is 3·5 per cent. in real terms. A study of the Chancellor's answers to the Select Committee reveals that the private sector component will increase by about 5 per cent. and the public sector component will increase by about 2 per cent. I am well aware of criticisms made by the Confederation of British Industry and some sections of the business and industrial community about private investment. They argue that the ending of capital allowances has bunched capital investment and may end, let alone curtail, some investment schemes. Although there might be a bunching effect in 1985-86, what really counts when making private sector capital investment decisions is the level of corporate taxation. In four months' time, we shall have the lowest level of corporate taxation in the Western world.

Industrialists also consider the level of inflation. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, I believe that inflation might be 3·25 to 3·5 per cent. next year. Using the average indicators of growth in GDP shows that real growth will be about 3·5 per cent. next year. Those three touchstones are vital for business investment. They are the fundamentals. There is another factor—exchange rate stability, which I agree is important when planning capital expenditure. I favour our joining the exchange rate mechanism, as it will improve the stability of the framework in which industrialists decide to invest.

Public expenditure is forecast to increase by about 2 per cent. in real terms next year. I have three suggestions. The first is made by the Royal Institute of British Architects and other members of the group of eight. I hold no brief for them. I share their views because I think that they are right, not because I have any interest. They say that what really counts is the stability of public sector capital expenditure in terms of quantity and consistency. Local authorities, the construction industry, architects and others want stability and long-term planning. The economy will benefit if they are confident that a given level of expenditure will continue for several years. That is especially true for the construction of schools and the building or refurbishment of council houses.

My second suggestion concerns private sector capital in public sector works. I draw my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary's attention to the report of the steering group into water metering, chaired by Mr. Watts, published yesterday by the Department of the Environment. I believe that we are discussing expenditure of £1 billion to £2 billion to convert to meters for residential accommodation. I encourage my right hon. Friend to study the report, which I am sure he has not had time to read yet. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce private sector capital into a scheme which the report argues is a public good.

The companies in the industry would be only too happy to enter into a programme of conversion to water meters on the right terms, approved by the Government, so that consumers paid by consumption, not according to the rateable value of their house. Construction companies would be prepared to pay the capital costs, and would cover the costs for 10 years, through an increase in the tariff to consumers. Clearly public sector capital expenditure could not afford the £1 billion or £2 billion involved in a full programme. That would be too much to ask of it in three years, if major centres of population were converted, but if the private sector provided the finance and the expertise, the job could be done.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is shortly to make an announcement about the housing investment programme allocations. If there is still time, as I believe there is, it is important for the Treasury to come up with a more imaginative formula for local authority housing expenditure. I accept the need for control using the percentage mechanism of spending past capital receipts. Everyone accepts that in past years receipts were taken into national accounts as revenue. Therefore, when any of those receipts are spent, they score 100 per cent. as public expenditure. My point is that there should be an incentive mechanism so that local authorities which are still sitting on major public assets are encouraged to sell them. They should be given above a certain threshold level in absolute sterling terms the right to retain 100 per cent. receipts and spend them.

I welcome the strategy announced in the autumn statement. It is welcomed in my constituency, and I hope that it will be welcomed in the country.

7.11 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The note of anger which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) introduced into the debate will be heard increasingly in the country, and it would be foolish for the House and the Government to ignore it. It underlies the cold rational calculations which we need to bring to bear when our motives are in support of the human interests of our constituents. My quarrel with the Government is that they are not only cold-hearted, but addle-headed.

The Treasury Select Committee has done a valuable service to the House in considering the autumn statement and setting out the economic background to it. Paragraph 19, which notes the major change of economic policy, is the most important part of it. As the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was only a lad in 1980-81 when the policy was set out, I shall remind him what his predecessors in the Treasury said when the medium-term financial strategy was first defined in the 1980-81 Financial Statement and Budget Report. They said:

> "Control of the money supply will over a period of years reduce the rate of inflation. The speed with which inflation falls will depend crucially on expectations both within the United Kingdom and overseas. It is to provide a firm basis for those expectations that the Government has announced its firm commitment to a progressive reduction in money supply growth."

In paragraph 16 they said:

> "To maintain a progressive reduction in monetary growth in these circumstances it may be necessary to change policy in ways not reflected in the above projections. The Government would face a number of options for policy changes to achieve this aim, including changes in interest rates, taxes and public expenditure. But there would be no question of departing from the money supply policy, which is essential to the success of any anti-inflationary strategy."

In the whole of the Financial Statement and Budget Report there was not one mention of the exchange rate.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

In the Mansion house speech which the economic adviser to the Treasury told the Select Committee was the present definitive statement of the Government's monetary policy, there is no coherent definition of the nature of exchange rate policies. I hope that the Select Committee will continue to press the Chancellor of the Exchequer for such a definition.

The main content of the Chancellor's speech was, "Sorry, boys, about the tax cuts, but the promises are off." The reasons which the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) explained to the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), regarding the calculation about oil prices falling, and sterling falling against the dollar, and the figures balancing nicely, are phoney. The fall in oil prices will have a major effect on the scope for tax reductions, given the way in which the Chancellor sees the economy.

The practical effect on the economy is that there is today a more deeply rooted defeatism in British manufacturing industry than there has been for 30 years. We have had our crises and our long-term decline, but we have never before had the acceptance of that decline by leaders of Government and industry. One financial director told me:

"We have learned survival. We may expand, but we do not expect to."

The autumn statement reminds us that profits have increased, both as a share in non-North sea oil income, and as a return on capital. That has been achieved by a cut of 25 per cent. of capacity in 1980-81, and by the continuing sacrifices of innovatory expenditure, research and development and the development needed in marketing, product development and manufacturing technology to provide the basis for long-term growth.

Such investment as there has been, has been stimulated by the transitional effects from the abolition of investment allowances, and it has not increased capacity. Innovation is not catching up with overseas competition, which is continually moving ahead. We cannot merely aim to compete today. It is when our developments must compete with the fruits of overseas developments that the test will come. Research and development in industry is not broad enough to give a generally competitive edge to sufficient technological leaders. Today, enterprise and initiative, such as they are, find an outlet in takeover bids, rather than in growth.

Regarding electronics, any one of the measures, including the fall in share prices, the recession in personal computers and microchips, lower profits from public purchasing by British Telecom and the Ministry of Defence, and cuts in participation in Government research programmes, such as the Alvey programme, on its own may not matter. However, the whole picture of the decline in the electronics industry, which was dramatically highlighted by the pathetic bid by GEC for Plessey, is of the gravest concern.

The collapse of power station ordering in the 1960s led to the gathering together of AEI, English Electric and GEC. The collapse in profitability of BT's ordering is leading GEC to try to create a monopoly in the supply of system X to BT. If that is the best that GEC can think of doing with its cash mountain, it needs a change of management.

In engineering, the British Steel Corporation proposal to close the Gartcosh cold mill, and its effects in undermining the viability of Ravenscraig in my constituency and in the home town of the Chief Secretary, has led me recently to talk to many people in operating management across a wide sector of the engineering and steel-using industries. It is not only Austin Rover that is affected, but General Motors—Vauxhall, Lucas, GKN and Tube Investments — the great mass of British engineering industry. Shall we settle for contributing only 30 per cent. of value added to the production of motor vehicles registered in Britain? That is the height of the Government's ambition today.

The improvement in productivity is undeniable. It is set out in chart 1.6 in the autumn statement, but that chart gives the game away. Even after cutting out the least efficient and the most backward 25 per cent. of manufacturing industry — as occurred in 1980-81 — productivity in the remaining most efficient 75 per cent. is growing only at the average rate since the 1960s. The Chancellor's reply to that is, "Ah, but that is manufacturing; look at services."

Let us consider services and the apples of the Chancellor's eye—banking, insurance and finance. The review of United Kingdom services in the September *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* is sobering reading. It shows a general decline in the ratio of exports to imports of services just as has occurred in manufacturing. The review traces the reasons for that to a general lack of competitiveness. Even the ratio of exports to imports in financial services has declined since 1979.

Despite the growth of activity in the City of London, its share of international lending has fallen from 25·3 to 23·7 per cent. and the British banks' share has fallen from 23·1 to 20·4 per cent. I am not advocating an increase in international lending, even by British banks; I merely point out that, although there appears to be great activity in the City, it is not holding its world position.

We are told that there is no measure of productivity in the services sector, and there is much in that argument. We cannot eat, drink or wear banking, insurance and finance. Some may be entertained by them, but that is a somewhat kinky taste. For most people banking, insurance and finance are a means to an end, to obtain food, clothing, shelter. However, has the ratio of food, clothing and shelter served by banking, insurance and finance improved? Manufacturing output has fallen by 6 per cent., but employment in banking, insurance and finance has increased by 19 per cent. since 1979. That is a fall in productivity of 25 per cent. in terms of physical output served per person in banking, insurance and finance.

Banking, insurance and finance, however, it can be argued, serve not only manufacturing output, but GDP as a whole. There has been a growth in GDP of 6 per ent., but a 19 per cent. growth of employment in banking, insurance and finance. That represents a fall in productivity of the services that they provide to the community of about 13 per cent.

It is argued that the service industries provide not only material goods — especially finance — but freedom, security and consumer choice. Indeed those are important, but consider the state of the country. Can we say that the freedom, security and consumer choice of 4 million unemployed is a net improvement against the asset dealers

of the City of London earning £200,000 a year? That is a strange, perverted view of what is being bought in terms of the changes in our society.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) that the autumn statement is important for bringing together the expenditure and the revenue-raising side of Government decision-making in tentative form, in what the Committee called the green Budget. I share the Committee's regret that the improvement has not continued in that direction.

With my concern for science and technology on this side of the House I am thankful for small mercies. I am glad that there was a 2 per cent. increase in real terms in the science budget, which fulfilled the request of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. A mere £15 million is trivial in terms of overall Government expenditure, but, as the Minister of State, Treasury will know because of his former responsibilities, that investment is vital for our long-term future. I am sorry that the further increases requested for later years were not included in that decision.

I return to the main issues of the autumn statement. Here we must consider our old friend, the exchange rate. The Select Committee asked the Chancellor whether there was a target exchange rate. I believe that that was the wrong question. Whether it is a target, a target band, or a target band with soft margins is the wrong way to see it. When considering the relationship of oil prices, interest rates, the exchange rate and the Government's actions in the long term on expenditure and taxation, it is first necessary to distinguish the Government's time scale for decision-making.

There is the annual round of decisions on taxation and public expenditure totals. In some companies, there is an annual round of decisions relating to their economy—perhaps wages, budgeting, investment, and decisions are taken annually in most companies. In the shorter-term horizon of decisions and information, there are continuous variations in the exchange rate, asset prices, interest rates and in some key commodity prices such as oil. In the market, those vary from day to day and hour to hour.

In both the annual round and the continuous daily round, a set of objectives and a set of instruments are available to the Government. In the annual round an assumption is bound to be made about the short-term variables, like the exchange rate and interest rates. The autumn statement tells us that the assumption is made that the exchange rate is broadly continuing at the level of recent months. In the background forecast of the longer term, which the Treasury does not publish, there will be an assumption about the exchange rate and interest rates.

However, it is extremely unlikely that the short turn will turn out as assumed. Had a different exchange rate been assumed, a different interest rate would also have been assumed. The underlying decision, which the Government are beginning to recognise, is that there is a decision to adopt an underlying interest rate rule—on the way in which interest rates will be adjusted in response to changes in the exchange rate, and on the way in which the Government will intervene in the market in respose to short-term movements of the exchange rate.

The Treasury has improved its apparatus to consider the design of such rules in the medium term, in the annual decision-making round. I am sorry that Sir Terence Burns is no longer in the Box. He would confirm that the Treasury is using the methods and indeed the programmes that were written in the programme for research and optimum policy evaluation at Imperial college, which I had a hand in establishing about 15 years ago. It will not be news to him that that approach is also being developed in the International Monetary Fund, and that its international reviews will be considered by such means, in a developing context of international economic co-operation.

The ways in which the short-term intervention and interest rate rules and the longer-term decisions on taxation and expenditure are combined are set out in the 1983 report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. That special report was published during the general election. It was not agreed by the Committee, but it contained several seminal ideas which, to the Committee's credit, are being implemented. In March next year there will be a conference at Brookings. The preliminary conference took place in October and the Treasury contributed work to it. There is a progressive development. We are not told much about it in the House; I am not sure how much Ministers know about what is going on. Perhaps I should not tell them. The development will be of key importance to the Labour party when it begins to shift the goal posts and alter the objectives of economic policy.

It is sheer hogwash for the Chancellor to ask whether we shall simply accommodate inflation by devaluing. It is not a choice between accommodation and non-accommodation; it is a question of how much one accommodates, and how quickly the nationalised industries, which must consult the Treasury now on what the exchange rate will be in 1990, are being allowed to assume that there will be an improvement in competitiveness, which will be reflected by a movement in the index, and they are told that their assumptions are reasonable.

Complete non-accommodation may be a front which the Chancellor believes, from the traditional wisdom, it is necessary for him to maintain. It certainly exists in the structure of the European monetary system, but the real argument is about the extent and timing with which the changes in competitiveness between countries should be accommodated by the rate at which the exchange rates move. That becomes a properly formulated, sensible and practical question to ask. There will be differences in view and in priority among Governments, but the apparatus is there and is developing nicely.

I ask hon. Members to consider whether we are talking about joining the EMS of today or yesterday or the EMS of tomorrow. It will be rather different from the EMS of today, because it will contain an element of international economic co-operation. We shall have rules to say when parity adjustments are acceptable to take account of the underlying realities and different economies. I should like the Treasury to bring out of the back room some of its admirable work and put it into the negotiating process in the international organisations. Some people in those organisations—in the European Commission and in the IMF—are ready to listen.

On a more practical note, I have every sympathy with the Chancellor in trying to talk down the effect of the oil price on the exchange rate. Of course he is right to point to the fact that oil is only 6 per cent. of our GDP, and to the fact that Britain is a big consumer of oil, so that it will benefit from the reduction in oil prices as well as suffer a loss of revenues, but his argument would be much more convincing if he spelt it out more quantitatively than he

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

does, and if he were more practical in the way that he describes the intervention that he is making and is prepared to make in the economy.

I do not for one moment agree with or applaud the underlying direction of the Government's economic policy. The country has suffered from the most disastrous six years of economic management since the war, but the Opposition would be foolish not to take part in the necessary technical debates that will form the basis of a much more successful economic policy when we get rid of some of the hag-ridden prejudices on the Government Front Bench.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Several hon. Members still wish to speak, and it is clear that unless speeches are shorter, some of them will be disappointed.

7.35 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I shall speak briefly about the business expansion scheme, which in some respects needs reform. I should declare a small interest in that, before I was elected to the House, my company received venture capital funding through the business start-up scheme. As a result, 12 people are now employed who probably otherwise would not have been. Therefore, I am a friend of the scheme in general, because the business start-up scheme was excellent. I believe that the business expansion scheme is also generally excellent, but it has some severe problems.

Although farmland and property have largely been excluded, more than half of the investments being made through the scheme are still heavily asset-backed or retail-oriented. Pubs, hotels, restaurants, antique dealers and other such businesses feature largely in the range of BES investments.

I was told recently that a major multinational oil company wished to arrange business expansion scheme funding to allow petrol station operators to buy out their properties since, despite the huge multi-billion pound profits of the company, it believed that it could not afford the investment necessary in the property and equipment. That is not the sort of thing for which the business expansion scheme was intended, yet it would be legal and proper under the current rules of the scheme.

That sort of investment would be made anyway. The BES should help companies with good products and services which have difficulty in raising money and which would otherwise be unable to finance their operations. BES-oriented funds would be much more comfortable if such areas were excluded from the scope of the scheme.

While on the funds, may I say that I know of some feeling against them in the Department of Trade and Industry. However, they play a vital role in directing cash to the right areas and in helping start-up companies, especially with their management problems. Therefore, the funds should be considered far more favourably by the Government and they should be helped by being granted tax relief at the point at which the investment is made in the fund rather than, as is currently the case, at the point where the fund makes the investment in the relevant company.

However, at the same time, I recognise that some funds have been, to put it mildly, slightly dodgy. Considerable care must be taken in those areas. Many of the funds charge huge commissions on the money that they raise —commissions of about 20 per cent. are by no means unusual—and directors of many firms put themselves on the boards of companies in which they invest, often for large salaries. In addition, many of them take generous share options in the companies in which they invest.

Another abuse from which the scheme suffers is that some directors of companies that have raised funds through the business expansion scheme immediately take out large fees for themselves. Recently I heard about a managing director of such a company taking £50,000 out of the company as payment for his idea of setting it up.

I mention those matters as a friend of the business expansion scheme, not as its enemy, because there is a great danger that such abuses will discredit the BES and will be used against it by its enemies.

The BES should be geared much more heavily towards smaller manufacturing companies, and we could help it to move in this direction by excluding many of the sectors that qualify for its funding now, and by giving capital gains relief to investors in certain business operations. By doing we would go a long way towards dispelling the current feeling that many people wrongly have that the Government are somehow anti-manufacturing.

The pundits say, and many people believe, that we can look forward to a post-industrial service-oriented society, but manufacturing is vital to us. The service industries may be important, but the raw statistics of employment in the various sectors are misleading. They are distorted due to the failure of our manufacturing industry in the 1960s and the 1970s and to the tremendous growth of productivity in manufacturing. All this has given rise to the service industries taking a much larger share of employment than they would otherwise or than is healthy for the economy.

It must be recognised that many service industries are directly or indirectly dependent on the manufacturing industry. This explains why countries that have been most successful in their manufacturing sector have also seen the fastest growth in their service sector. Between 1950 and 1980, manufacturing employment has fallen by 2 million in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, service employment has risen by 5 million. In West Germany, over the same period, manufacturing employment rose by 2·5 million and service employment rose by 6·5 million. In Japan over the same period, manufacturing employment rose by more than 9 million and its service sector has seen a tremendous rise of 15·5 million jobs.

Vital though the service sector may be, over-dependence on it is a dead end, and our future must be largely as a manufacturing country. At the same time, I strongly believe that the way to become a strong manufacturing country is not through public investment. Anyone who has seen the recent television programme "The Writing on the Wall" will have seen how, in the mid-1970s, politicians and bureaucrats under the aegis of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) flung money at any ludicrous scheme that took their fancy. Politicians who have never worked in industry or run a business and civil servants are not the best people to direct investment. Surely Labour Members have learnt this by now. The French Socialists are now learning the lesson the hard way. The only way to get a strong manufacturing

centre is by making companies competitive so that they can produce what people want to buy, and not by pouring money into the economy.

It is tragic to see the tired, old, failed policies of public investment banks and boards being wheeled out once again by the Opposition. Will we go back to the mid-1970s when steel mills were built that the British Steel Corporation management warned the Government would not be needed, or are we to go back to the farcical old days of the National Enterprise Board, which pushed £38 million worth of taxpayers' money into an operation called Nexos?

Labour Members may well cringe of the mention of the name Nexos. It was dreamt up by Labour politicians and by civil servants as a company to rival IBM. The first thing it did was to give vast sums of public money——

Dr. Bray *rose——*

Mr. Oppenheim: I am sorry; I shall not give way as many hon. Members are waiting to speak.

The first thing that the company did was to give vast sums of public money to a Mayfair head-hunting firm to head-hunt management at vast costs. During most of the years during which Nexos was in operation, its losses exceeded its turnover. It set up ludicrous deals to import Japanese equipment through middlemen at costs far and above those at which they could have bought the equipment themselves. Most of the equipment that it sold was Japanese equipment, and it made cost-plus deals with other NEB-backed companies for equipment that was never delivered in working order.

When Nexos finally went under, it was found to have a stock of Japanese fascimile machines that would have represented two years of sales. The company sold off 1,000 of the machines, for which it had originally paid nearly £2 million, for £1.

My advice to the Opposition is that, if they are thinking of directing taxpayers' money into pet industrial projects, they should put it instead into wine, women and song. The return will be the same but hon. Members will have far more fun.

7.45 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) made an interesting speech, although it was almost irrelevant to the needs of the majority of people. He was right about one thing, which is not bad considering that that is one more than the Chancellor achieved. He said that the future of the country depends on manufacturing industry. However, he fundamentally blundered, in the same way as the Government, in believing that a return to the mid-1970s would be anything other than welcomed in the part of the country that I represent, and many other places. For example, were we to go back to the mid-1970s, 725,000 people would have jobs in manufacturing in the north. In my area of the north-west there would be 300,000 more jobs than there are now, and that would mean that the rate of unemployment in the worst parts would not be above 50 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who spoke about his area, was right. The utter failure of the Chancellor and his autumn statement and the ridiculousness of the motion that we are debating is that there is no real understanding of the problems of our economy. There is an almost Mr. Bumble-like arrogance from the Chancellor, who pretends that unemployment is not the issue that affects massive and important parts of the country.

It is hard to know whether the Chancellor is more like Candide with his simple-minded innocence and optimism about the future, or a much more devious and unpleasant character who has made a deliberate and cynical calculation. That calculation was accepted by the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), who said that he was representing his constituents and that we were representing ours. That is the Government's failure. They represent their narrow little interest in society and a narrow section of British society. They represent one region and have achieved that at the expense of the rest of the country, and of whole sections of the economy. They continue to destroy whole sections of the economy.

The statistics that the Government choose to parade as demonstrations of confidence do little for their credit. They must be able to do some things well simply on a random walk through the economy, but the rate of inflation in Britain is not significantly better, nor has the change in that rate of inflation been significantly better, than that of many of our trading partners. We depend on international trade, although the Government forget that.

Again, the improvements in productivity are not dissimilar to, even slightly worse than, those experienced by many trading partners. Some figures are devastatingly bad and ultimately dangerous, not simply for those who are unemployed but for those who face continuous unemployment into the future because of the ostrich-like policies of the Government. They are the figures that show how the Government have managed to turn a £3·8 billion manufacturing trade surplus in the mid-1970s into a deficit of £2·7 billion. In doing that, in their almost erratic lack of policy on sterling exchange rate, the Government have preyed on the manufacturing sector and all those who depend on it. That concerns not just employment but the long term skill base of our economy.

The Government have made the future so uncertain that manufacturers do not invest. The House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade examined investment. In the conclusions to the report, Sir Terence Beckett was quoted as describing the rate of net investment in all industries as

"a Cresta run, going down from 1964, right the way through to an all-time low in 1981."

The report went on to say:

"the Committee were concerned to find that of firms surveyed by the CBI in October 1984, 77 per cent. were investing to improve efficiency but only 20 per cent. were investing to expand capacity."

That is what happens in an economy that is essentially defensive and where manufacturers and virtually the whole of the commercial and trading sector have no confidence in the future put forward by the Government. The Government's approach has created defensive, job-destroying investment instead of the creative, expansionary investment which Conservative Members pretend is taking place.

The Government have talked about the bold new economy and the sunrise industries which will take the place of what the Government regard as the clapped-out industries but——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman retract or modify his

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

remark about the industrial Cresta run beginning in 1964? Will he tell the House which Government were elected in 1964 and why the Cresta run was so steep from then on?

Mr. Lloyd: That is a remarkably intelligent question for the hon. Gentleman. Little purpose is served in trying to score points on the decline of manufacturing industry. Conservative Members must face a more fundamental question: are the Government's policies even remotely relevant and are the policies sound which have destroyed jobs in manufacturing every year since the Government took office? Do these policies which are systematically creating a gap between the south-east and the rest of the country, offer a future for the country? If the hon. Gentleman would care to join that debate, we could discuss the issue now. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how to restore manufacturing investment and to reverse the trend that is revealed in the House of Lords Select Committee. We could try to find a solution to the failure of the so-called unrestricted business sector.

My constituency boasts a plant owned by GEC, the biggest private manufacturing company in Britain. It systematically destroyed jobs on an enormous scale simply because it would not replace the investment that was created in Manchester.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I shall give way in a moment.

Instead, it invested in different parts of the country. By its own chosen course, GEC has systematically destroyed jobs in one part of the company in order, to a lesser extent, to create jobs in other parts of the country.

Mr. Pawsey: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not denigrate GEC too much. GEC has secured the largest export order ever, the provision of turbines and allied equipment for Castle Peak in Hong Kong. The hon. Gentleman will also know that through its expertise, GEC is likely to obtain another substantial order from mainland China. With respect, GEC is one of our better industrial companies. It should not be denigrated as it is a company which provides substantial employment, not least within my constituency.

Mr. Lloyd: I join the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and pay the fullest tribute to the skills that my constituents have in the engineering industry. I deplore the scrapping of their skills by companies, either by GEC or others, in my constituency or in the country as a whole. I deplore the fact that this country is becoming a de-skilled nation.

It was skilled employees who created companies such as GEC and not financiers who treat companies as a merchant bank. Firms are created on a skill base which creates products within the engineering industry and elsewhere and allows us to sell to Hong Kong and China. We ought to be encouraging the engineers, not the merchant bankers.

Conservative Members talk about information technology, which is one of the newer industries and a great hope for the country's future. However, the National Economic Development Office reported that information technology may not be able to survive as a serious independent industry in Britain. Britain may have no role to play in the future of that industry because of the failure of the private sector to invest early enough and do the job which Conservative Members would have us believe they are doing.

The Chancellor talked about the value of privatisation and said that the extension of share ownership would turn us into a property-owning democracy. However, we have seen the failure of privatisation programmes. For example, we saw the failure of the privatisation of Cable and Wireless, which was grossly undersold and over-subscribed by a factor of 100 per cent. That is clear evidence that the Government have bumbled in the sale of precious national assets which should have been harnessed for the benefit of the nation and not against it.

Jaguar was one of the Government's acclaimed success stories and there were 125,000 shareholders. However, I am sure that the House does not need to be reminded that 125,000 form a small proportion of Britain's unemployed. I would hazard a guess that very few of the unemployed took part in that share deal. The proportion who did so became even smaller eight or nine months later when the number of shareholders fell to one third of its original number.

The reality of privatisation is that it involves flogging assets to the friends of Conservative Members. The Government are almost arrogantly disdainful of the needs of the rest of the nation. Their privatisation policy is based on the wonderful calculation that there will be tax cuts, and these are now jeopardised because of the Chancellor's non-policy on sterling exchange rates.

The Government want tax cuts that will favour those in society who already have at the expense of those who do not have. That is a nasty view of society. The Government are bribing a majority, a bribed coalition, and they are doing so at the expense of those who cannot afford to pay for the bribes. As I have said, the Chancellor may have forgone the ability to offer the bribes because of his non-policy on exchange rates, his non-policy on oil depletion and his non-management of the economy in any meaningful sense.

The tragedy is that the Government are stupid. They cannot understand the real economy in which ordinary people live. They are deliberately and unpleasantly cynical in their approach to the management of that economy and they ignore the real problems.

7.58 pm

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): The speech of the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) started very well. In fact, I thought that the House would be indebted to him for being remarkably frank when he talked about the importance to Britain of its trading partners. He stressed the word "partner", as opposed to competitor. That was an interesting new gloss to the Labour party's official policy on international trade. That is not quite the same as the "planned trade", about which we were told at the general election.

The hon. Member for Stretford talked about the problems faced by some of our manufacturing industries. He said that those problems, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) rightly observed, started from 1964. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that that trend was a long-lasting one embracing problems which have become deeply rooted which rather undermines the Opposition's challenge, who suggest that the problems started in 1979.

The pundits in the press have published comments on the autumn statement which have concentrated on what I regard as an absorbing but essentially uninformative debate about whether there has been an adjustment in the fiscal balance. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear that there can be no proper dispute about that because the revenue side of the equation is still missing.

A more interesting debate arose in the autumn on the need to consider the shift that has taken place since 1979 — it has been the subject of speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House—in the method of assessing monetary conditions in the economy and the implications of the changes and shift for the mass of economic policy. The shift in policy has been reasonably open despite the admonitions of the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service that the policies of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer were not clear. I believe that my right hon. Friend's policy has become relatively clear over the past few months. It is a shift of policy which I welcome warmly because the emphasis on the exchange rate, which has been re-stated, seems to be entirely right.

In his speech at the Mansion house, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer rehearsed some of the shortcomings of the different statistical measures of money supply on which monetary policy relied in the Government's early years. Those of my hon. Friends who know my views on these issues will not be surprised to hear that I agree with every word that my right hon. Friend said about the problems of monetary aggregates. He concluded the relevant passage of his speech at the Mansion House by saying:

"When, as now, signals from the various measures of money become difficult to interpret, the exchange rate inevitably assumes an increased weight in monetary policy decisions."

I wish that it were inevitable that the exchange rate took the strain when monetary aggregates became obscure. I do not remember a time since being elected to the House when the signals of the various measures of money were not difficult to interpret. I remember occasions when my right hon. Friend's predecessor found the signals difficult to interpret, but insisted on trying to do so, instead of doing what my right hon. Friend now happily regards as inevitable and concentrating on the exchange rate. I fear that on occasions my right hon. Friend's predecessor, who is now the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, was led to what I regard as false policy conclusions. I warmly welcome the shift of emphasis which is now apparent. As I have said, I regard it as entirely right.

I wish to consider the implications of the change of emphasis and the importance attached to stable exchange rates for the rest of the Government's economic policy. Before doing so, I shall repeat some of the arguments which I have advanced previously which outline why I believe that stable exchange rates are so important. First, I believe that the exchange rate is by far the most accurate measure of monetary conditions in the economy, and in any economy, at any time. It is a basic law of supply and demand. If excess credit is created, the exchage rate for that currency will fall as the supply of the currency exceeds the demand. By contrast, if there is excess tightness in credit creation, the rate for the currency will rise on the foreign exchanges. That is exactly what happened in 1980 and 1981.

Furthermore, I believe that a stable exchange rate is an essential prerequisite to a successful policy for controlling inflation and producing sound money. In reverse, fluctuating exchange rates have undermined successive Governments' attempts to control inflation. That was the position throughout the 1970s.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said that he found himself in sme difficulty, as the monetary aggregates appeared, certainly for sterling M3 figures, to be moving well outside the Chancellor's previously announced target. He felt that that might suggest that monetary conditions were becoming too lax. I suggest to my right hon. Friend and to the House that it would be right to be concerned about unduly lax monetary conditions at the moment when the exchange rate began to fall. For as long as the rate remains reasonably stable, as it has in recent months, there is little cause for concern.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) spoke about the 5 per cent devaluation in the exchange rate over the past week. I must remind him that the movement has been barely 1 per cent. when measured against the international trading basket, and nowhere near 5 per cent. My analysis suggests that at the moment monetary conditions are not unduly lax.

My second reason for supporting a stable exchange rate policy, apart from inflation control reasons, is, if anything, more important. Proper emphasis should be placed on finance being the servant of trade. A stable exchange rate underlies the ability of any private or public sector company to make reasonably long-term plans for the future of internationally competitive activity. Just as fluctuations in the exchange rate during the 1970s undermined Governments' attempts to control inflation, so there is incontrovertible evidence that fluctuating exchange rates have damaged the growth of world trade.

Between 1955 and 1973, when exchange rates were broadly stable in the Western world, world trade grew by 7·5 per cent. per annum. Since the breakdown of that stable exchange rate regime, the rate of growth of world trade has slowed to 3·3 per cent. per annum. Fluctuating exchange rates are the greatest and most important of all non-tariff barriers to international trade. The hon. Member for Stretford underlined the importance of trade, and so do I. Stable exchange rates are an essential prerequisite to reaping the benefits that can come from growing international trade.

If stable exchange rates are important, and if my right hon. Friend is right, as I believe he is, to shift the emphasis to secure a stable exchange rate, what are the implications of such a shift? It is important to recognise that the move to a stable exchange rate did not happen overnight on 17 October. The City pundits did not leave their offices at 5 o'clock that evening to dine with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and open their offices on the following morning to an entirely changed world. There has been a steady shift, which I have welcomed on previous occasions, and which I am happy to welcome again, away from the concentration on monetary aggregates towards a concentration on the exchange rate. My right hon. Friend's speech at the Mansion house is the most recent and strongest example of that move.

It was my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House who as long ago as 1980 described sterling M3 as a wayward mistress. Perhaps we can now describe it as a jilted lover. My right hon. Friend, like many men after a torrid love affair, cannot quite bring himself to cause the

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

affair to come to an end. I wish that he could conjure up the courage to follow his convictions to their logical conclusion.

There is suspicion in the markets that the Treasury will use any convenient argument to support its monetary policy of the moment. In the old days there was a clear policy of following sterling M3, and that has thankfully fallen away, but it is said that there is no clear policy in its place by which the Government have announced that they will determine their monetary policy. I prefer clarity, and it is in the interests of the Government and my right hon. Friend's policy to control inflation, to underpin the growth of world trade and to make it a clear policy commitment to maintain the present level of sterling.

I can think of no better way of taking a further step down that road and clarifying that objective than for my right hon. Friend to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. I do not pretend that that is a magic ingredient that will conjure away all the pressures in the foreign exchange market. Still less do I advocate that policy by way of Euro-enthusiasm. I support it because I believe that it would underline my right hon. Friend's seriousness in retaining the exchange rate at its present level. In the relatively short term it would allow him greater room for manoeuvre in easing down interest rates without undermining the exchange rate, which I regard as of great importance if we are to continue to control inflation and keep monetary conditions under control as well.

If we are able to maintain sterling at its present level, the key issue confronting policy makers in the Government and the private sector will be how to maintain and improve the competitiveness of our manufacturing and service industries. I draw no distinction between the two. To do so seems to me to be indulging in an argument about nothing. We must ensure that both our manufacturing and service industries are competitive and able to win increasing shares of world markets.

I have no doubt that in the short term the competitiveness of our manufacturing and service industries is a function of their wage bill, and that my right hon. Friend's policy of stabilising sterling is effectively serving notice on weak managements — which were, rightly, criticised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford — that the Government will not bail out managements which concede excessive wage increases, by allowing sterling to devalue on the foreign exchanges. The Chancellor is right to stress that in present circumstances and to insist that it is a key issue for industrial policy makers.

The statistics speak for themselves. Average earnings in Britain are now rising at between 7 and 8 per cent. per annum. In manufacturing industry — the sector that is supposed to be subject to special international competitive pressures—they are rising by 9 per cent., against 4 per cent. in Japan and 3 per cent. in Germany. If we are to concentrate, as we should, on international competitiveness, those wage pressures are a key priority in the short term.

In the longer term—assuming that we can maintain a stable exchange rate and control inflationary wage pressures — we must increase our ability to build businesses for the future that are internationally competitive. That is why the policy advocated by the House of Lords Select Committee based on a devaluation of sterling is wrong. The Committee argues that in 1980-81 the high rate of sterling killed off some activities that could have survived and made a contribution. I argued for the policy then and I still believe that it was right. I agree with that analysis.

The House of Lords Committee goes on to argue that we should now devalue the currency to allow that type of activity to re-emerge. I could not disagree more strongly with that point of view, because that policy would have us invest in precisely the capacity which was shown in the early 1980s to be at the margin of international competitiveness. It would be a fundamental misallocation of investment resources, and a devaluation policy, to the extent that it was designed to achieve that result, would be ill-conceived.

The House must accept that there is no going back—however we might have done things differently in the early 1980s—and that we have no choice but to concentrate all our effort on the creation of high value added industries that are able to hold their own and win in international competition. I do not have the time to discuss the methods by which such a policy could be brought about, but if the House of Lords was wrong to concentrate on devaluation as a way of achieving it, it was right to concentrate attention on these issues.

There is a tendency among some of my hon. Friends to say that private enterprise will supply these activities —that the hidden hand of the market will act and that these things will emerge naturally — but those who believe that are naive, and I hope that Ministers do not believe that it is so simple. If they do, they take a different view from comparable Ministers in comparable economies in the world.

A stable exchange rate at today's rate is a highly ambitious target for any Government to set. It requires a quantum leap in the value added that our industry can provide. Few British companies have at this time the scale necessary to secure the benefits of market leadership at an international level. In many fields of high value added economic activity, Britain not only does not have a leading company, but does not have a company that plays in the first league. Ministers have set the right goals, but they are ambitious ones. We have a great deal to do and little time in which to do it.

8.14 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) in his Roy Jenkins memorial lecture in favour of joining the EMS because that was the point at which his speech began to go wrong. That device would shackle our economy to that of the superior might of West Germany and reduce us to the periphery. I leave the hon. Gentleman's argument there.

I will concentrate on the autumn financial statement, which, in my brief period as a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee — it seems longer at times than is the case — is perhaps the worst autumn statement that I have ever seen and with which I have had to deal. It is a misnomer in every respect: it is not autumn but early winter, it is not financial because it is deliberately designed to conceal the financial mainsprings of the economy in the way that Victorians put shrouding round piano legs, and it is not a statement but much more a

confidence trickster's manual. The economics of the artful dodger is embodied in that document. It is essentially an exercise in fantasy.

It is interesting at this juncture in the history of the present Government to see what happens under the counterjumperocracy, as Julie Birchell called the leadership of the Conservative party. It is a brilliant word because it sums up the shallow self-made men and women who worship their creator and who have led the party, people of no class and background, people with a simple blinding idea which has turned out to be a busted flush. In desperation as they try to find a way out of the trap into which they have marched and have led the country so confidently, when their policies do not work, their true natures come out.

We have the Prime Minister running round the world like Reagan's clucking hen, clucking wherever she is able; last night we had the semi-housetrained polecat routine from another whose true nature was coming out; and in the autumn statement we have the politics of deceit — *[Interruption.]*—because it is essentially a deceit.

Last year the Chancellor found that his forecasts of revenue and expenditure were so fantastic and so disbelieved by the financial community that they led directly to the January financial crisis. His solution was not to give better and more sensible forecasts but not to give any forecasts, and that again will lead to problems because of the ignorance in which the market has been asked to operate. He has chucked overboard the compass—M3, which has led us from reef to reef, from shoal to shoal and from disaster to disaster—and, it having been chucked in the sea, it no longer counts after all these years.

The right hon. Gentleman has suppressed key information. He has suppressed information on Government revenues and on the fiscal adjustment, and we need to know both of those to judge the policies. He has concentrated throughout on over-optimistic assumptions about the economy, trade and exports. Exports will suffer and trade will become more competitive as the dollar goes down.

The Chancellor has made over-optimistic assumptions about productivity growth, which will not improve in the way it is said to improve; he has made over-optimistic assumptions about investment, which will not increase in the way it is said to increase; and he has made over-optimistic assumptions about the oil price and the exchange rate.

Lump all those over-optimistic assumptions together, put them with the techniques, and we have not an economic document but a confidence trick. It has been compared with Voltaire. As it has been panned and as it glosses over the facts, I suppose that we could call it Panglossian. That is about its only relationship with Voltaire.

The document tells us more about the psychology of the man who happens to hold the position for the moment of Chancellor of the Exchequer than it does about Britain's economic prospects. It tells us something about a cocky, brash personality who deep down is really shallow. It tells us, in the words of Dryden applied to Buckingham, about the economics of a man who has moved from devaluationist via Zurich to a high-wire act. Dryden said, and it is true of the Chancellor:

> "Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
> Was everything by starts and nothing long.
> But in the course of one revolving moon,
> Was chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon.
> Railing, praising were his usual themes
> And both (to show his judgement) in extremes.
> Squandering wealth was his particular art,
> Nothing went unrewarded but dessert."

That has gone unrewarded in this economy—the dessert of the real people who make real things, who occupy real jobs in real industry. All of that has been sadly neglected by the present Government.

Why should we have this sordid little document? My explanation is simple and, I think, accurate. The Government are changing course — at least, the Chancellor is changing course for them — but they cannot admit it because they have made a virtue of not changing, of not even turning, even when it is necessary to do so.

They have made the consistency of being wrong their main political virtue. However, the policies have not worked. Our average growth since 1979 — we must include 1979, regrettable though it may be for the Government—is about 1 per cent. Leaving out oil, it is 0·5 per cent. They cannot deliver that which was promised — the tax cuts and benefits — as a result of the new policies that were to turn the economy round. They cannot deliver so they must turn round, because not only can they not deliver; they have inflicted incalculable damage upon the economy, in particular manufacturing, on which this country depends.

There are 4 million unemployed people. We have the highest unemployment of any major industrial country. There has been a loss of 28 per cent. in manufacturing jobs — 1.8 million people — the hard core of our unemployment. There has been a wind-down in the basic drive motor of the economy which has produced a national decline.

Even the benefits that the Government claim will result from their policies have turned to dross. The productivity increase that really comes from shooting the last four or five batsmen in a cricket team to improve the batting average has now slowed down, but it was always lower than that of competing economies. It is now reduced to the rate at which it was increasing through the 1960s and 1970s, which was one of the slowest in the world.

Inflation, to which the Government have devoted so much effort, is still higher than that of most of our major industrial competitors. Our labour costs are rising faster than those of most of our major industrial competitors. The Treasury has now become completely confused about labour costs. It says that people should price themselves into jobs and that labour costs should be held down, but, in contrast, it says that to compete in the international trade sector price competitiveness does not matter; it is not important. If price competitiveness is not important, labour costs are not important. The Treasury cannot have both theories. The two are completely inconsistent.

To retain their market share and survive, our firms are now taking, and will increasingly take, cuts in profits. That will lead to cuts in investment, cuts in research, cuts in design and cuts in all the methods needed to improve the non-price competitiveness of our goods. That will all be thrown overboard to enable industry to survive the difficulties that it will face. We have already seen the trends in firms such as ICI which is investing overseas because it cannot invest in our economy given the over-valuation of sterling.

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

If our competing industry—the sector upon which we must depend for survival — were healthy, its health should be apparent at this stage in the cycle when the Government have had six years to remedy what they call the fundamental defects of our economy. How healthy is that internationally competing industry? We have a huge and increasing deficit in information technology. Imports are increasing and dominate the market. That sector is suffering badly. In chemicals, production is being transferred overseas. Engineering is a black hole in the economy for all practical purposes. With regard to electronics and telecommunications, we should consider GEC—a cash mountain rather than a major productive asset. Consider, in particular, Standard Telephones and Cables and its misfortunes. Let us consider Plessey which is reduced now to a tiddler. How healthy is the sector? What are its prospects for survival in a world that will become tougher as the dollar falls? Our exports will face increasing competition.

Services are supposed to be the answer to our problems. Our share of the world trade in services has been declining at the same rate as our share of world trade in manufactures. Services are healthy only because it is much more difficult to import them. It is difficult to import hairdressers, although some people may prefer that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) said, there is an increasing propensity to import in that sector. Our multinationals, the basis of our worldwide survival, as the book by Stockford and Turner shows, concentrate on the low-tech sectors—food, tobacco and drink. That sector is slow to change. We are not competing effectively in the sectors which are crucial to our survival.

All the sectors which should be leaping ahead, given the stimulus of what the Government are supposed to have done, have been weakened and are much less competitive and effective.

The Government's policies will not work. If the Government are to have any credibility, they must produce some benefits—some of the tax cuts that they promised. How can they do that with policies that will not work? The autumn statement is the answer. They will raffle off public assets to provide tax cuts. They are selling what belongs to all of us to give tax cuts to some of us. They promised that the tax cuts would come from increasing the productive capacity and the power of the British economy. They have not. But they are still giving the cuts. That is the essence of a confidence trick.

The Government must change in that fashion because the Prime Minister is incapable of change. She can change on things that do not matter—televising the House of Commons and conveyancing for building societies. On those she can say one thing one minute and another the next. On the basic issue of national survival she cannot change. She must pursue her policies. Change must be smuggled past mummy like a naughty boy smuggling a dirty magazine—the autumn statement—past mummy's bedroom when he comes in late at night. That is what the Chancellor is doing with the autumn statement.

The Prime Minister, with the certainty of the second-rate mind, will persevere with her policies. We shall have a reflation which the Chancellor hopes that the City, the financial community and international financial opinion will not notice but which he hopes that the voters will notice. It will be a selective confidence trick dangled before sections of the community.

We are to change to Reaganomics three years late. It is interesting to note that the United States and British Governments took office committed to the same lunacies. By August 1982, finding his policies impossible to pursue, Reagan changed his lunacy and went in for a massive Keynesian expansion. The Chancellor has, three years late, learnt a lesson. Three years after Reagan abandoned Thatchernomics we shall embrace Reaganomics. We shall have a loose fiscal policy — stimulation by flog-offs, resulting in a massive £4·75 billion.

Council house sales and all the other flog-offs must be added to that. They have been diligently researched by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield, (Mr. Blair). Those sales will double the amount raised to almost more than the public sector borrowing requirment. Flogging off has reached its highest level under this Government. Their policy is stimulation by tax cuts financed by the flog-offs, coupled with a tight monetary policy. Our economy has a limitless future of high interest rates strangling investment. In other words, we have a Chancellor who will combine the best Tory traditions of economic management. He will combine the fiscal stance of a Barber with the monetary stance of the Foreign Secretary, the former Chancellor. The two Tory elements that had the most disastrous results for the economy are to be combined by the Chancellor.

The Opposition welcome any expansion of the economy. The problem is that it is five years too late—five years of lost growth, production and investment and five years of descent into a nastier, more enbittered society. The Church of England speaks out and the Government resent that as an attack by hostile Marxists. Even the only religious organisation still on its knees—the CBI — criticises Government policy. There have been five years of misery and decline.

The Chancellor at last realises the folly of what has been done and is beginning to change. Even this Chancellor has learnt that we must be grateful for big-built but small-brained mercies. The problem is that the change is not enough. First, it is risky. He is gambling on oil prices and the exchange rate. Neither gamble is justified. As the oil price comes down, to try to safeguard himself the Chancellor will have to screw up the exchange rate with higher and higher interest rates. It would be all right if he let the exchange rate come down. We should have a stimulus for the economy from the bonus of cheap oil. He will not allow that to happen, so the gamble is risky.

Secondly, the change is irresponsible. The money is there for tax cuts. There is a chorus of demand from Conservative Members. They say, "Where is the money coming from?" They are simple-minded economists. The money is there for tax cuts from flogging off public assets. It is not there for doing anything useful such as expanding the British economy, for public spending, for housing, for rebuilding the infrastructure or for alleviating all the problems of this country. It is there to shove into people's back pockets. That is essentially wasteful and irresponsible. It does not provide the stimulus to the real economy that public spending would provide.

All such a technique achieves is to stimulate the purchase of imports. It is creating a position in which people will rush out and spend money on Japanese video recorders, German cars, French kitchen equipment, Italian

washing machines and all the other items whose purchase does not result in jobs in this country. The headline in *The Economist*—"Vote buying starts early"—was correct.

During one sitting of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, I accused the Chancellor of electioneering. He did not deny it. He simply said, "You are going to lose." The Chancellor is putting an aerosol gloss on the whole economy. He is not providing jobs, stimulating the economy or improving the infrastructure. He is doing none of the important things such as encouraging investment so that we can survive in a competitive world. All that he is doing is putting a nice gloss, a feeling of bounce, in the economy, based on the purchase of more imports. It is a gambler's throw financed by asset sales. We have now reached the nadir of election politics in this country.

There has always been a tendency for Governments to manipulate the economy in the hope of gaining votes at the next election. The Labour party has not done that, of course, because when it was in government we had the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) as our one Chancellor in a position to do that—but he did not. That is why he joined the SDP. He wants to make its members as miserable as he made Labour Members in 1970.

Of course, Conservative Governments always manipulate the economy. In 1983, when voicing those platitudes about sacrifice and endeavour, they were shovelling money into domestic credit expansion as though it was going out of fashion. There was an enormous boom in domestic credit. It worked, because they were returned at the next election. That sort of action is now to be supplemented by the Government buying popularity by selling what belongs to all of us to give tax cuts to some of us. That is the ultimate in election manipulation. That is the ultimate in irresponsibility. That is the economics of bankruptcy.

The Earl of Stockton said that the Government were selling the family silver. That was a rather silly description. A true comparison would be with a household in difficulties—and the Prime Minister is fond of using the image of a household in difficulties. That is no wonder considering the way in which she runs our economy. The Government's action is rather like a household in difficulties selling its tools, its car and any productive assets. The Government are sacrificing future revenue from those assets in return for a quick gain to help them survive. They are buying the people with the people'a money. It is Government survival by hire purchase. Fortunately for the country, but unfortunately for the Government, that policy cannot work. The consequences will be ruinous.

Central to the Government's strategy is the attack on inflation. The Government intend to keep the pound at a high level. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) played with the fact that the pound has moved during the past few days despite such and such factors. But it is not the exact position or the minor movement of the pound that matters; it is the Government's intention to keep it as high as possible through high interest rates to achieve their aim of defeating inflation. They want to defeat inflation by making imports cheaper, by destroying jobs in this country, and by making life so difficult for our companies through high interest rates and an overvalued exchange rate that, to survive, those companies must squeeze labour costs.

That has all the logic of mutually assured destruction as an economic policy. It will certainly destroy productive industry, be harmful to the prospects for jobs and to investment and will not improve research design and all the other things that make survival possible. The Government will turn our country into a low-wage, low-skill economy. That can be the only outcome of such a policy.

The Government must calculate when to time the election before the feeling of euphoria peters out and the harsh cold consequences of their actions begin to show, as they will by the end of next year. We are heading towards 1979 to 1981 revisited. There is no excuse for what the Government are doing. They might have had an excuse for blundering into over-valuation of the pound and high interest rates between 1979 and 1981 because they did not really know what was happening, but were merely incompetent. Now they are deliberately going into exactly that position again, but with their eyes open, and that can only be ruinous for this country and its economy.

In our economic assessments, we must never lose sight of the centrality of the exchange rate. Our problem since the war has been that unless our productivity increases at the same pace as that of our major competitors—and it has not—and unless our inflation rate is the same as that of our major competitors—and it has not been—the pound must be depreciated to stay competitive. The Government will not do——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Tell us what the Labour party would do.

Mr. Mitchell: The Government have been in power for six years——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: What is the answer?

Mr. Mitchell: I am just telling the House.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: No; we are still waiting for the answer.

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to come to the point.

If productivity does not increase at the same rate as that of our competitors, the pound must be depreciated if we are to remain competitive, or we will lose industrial capacity, lose markets, have a reduced share of world trade and become poorer and less capable of maintaining our high standard of living. Competitiveness is the problem, and loss of competitiveness has been the main reason why unemployment has increased, especially under this Government.

I believe that a competitive currency is the only way out. It is the only way for our manufacturing sector to revive and to have the stimulus to compete and to retake markets that it has lost. That is my message, my personal answer to the silly question asked by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo).

No one must go as far as I have in wanting a competitive currency to realise that to do the opposite of what I am recommending — to keep the pound artificially high through high interest rates—would be doubly crippling, doubly penurious and doubly ruinous for British industry. Indeed, it would be harmful to the long-term objective of the Government to improve the economy. It would defeat every attempt to expand the economy.

[Mr. Mitchell]

Every attempt to improve this country's position in jobs, investment, growth and the international trading sector is being thrown overboard by the Government in their squalid, sordid struggle to survive. Greater love of power hath no Government than that they lay down their country for their life.

The giggling, candy-loss economy towards which the Chancellor is leading us — and he treated the Select Committee with contempt — will leave us with a manufacturing base that cannot survive, cannot provide jobs, cannot help us to pay our way in the world. It will be a national disaster. It will fall to the Labour party, as it always has, to rebuild the strength of a country of which we can be proud because it satisfies the aspirations of the people — not some of the people, as the Government want, but all of the people.

8.38 pm

Mr. Robert Harvey (Clwyd, South-West): The Government will shortly face one of the most crucial choices of this Parliament—whether to continue to seek a reduction in the burden of taxation, or to channel much of the money made available through the success of Government policies in keeping Government spending under control into the direct task of bringing down unemployment. I welcome the steps in the latter direction announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the autumn statement.

It is hard to dispute the economic success of this Government. We have had five years of economic growth, reaching 3 per cent. in 1983—the highest growth in the EEC—and a further 2·5 per cent. last year despite the miners' strike.

We are growing this year at the rate of 3·5 per cent., higher than any EEC country and maybe the United States as well. Meanwhile, inflation has been kept down to an average increase of 5 per cent. over the past three years compared with 15 per cent. under the previous Labour Government. All the dire predictions of the Labour party at the last election that inflation would take off and that growth would peter out have been exposed as the cant that they always were.

Britain's remarkable and sustained economic success explains why the Labour party is also so demoralised in the House. Productivity has been rising by 4 per cent. a year and manufacturing output by 3 per cent. a year. Capital investment is at an all-time high. The grim years of stagnation and high inflation during the 1960s and mid-1970s are things of the past.

The Government's success in controlling their spending while increasing it on the things that really matter, such as the National Health Service and on education per pupil, has for the first time made available spending resources to give an added push to the recovery.

The question is whether most of the new money should go into a cut in the standard rate of income tax, into raising tax thresholds, into a programme of selective public spending targeted at specific area of high unemployment, or a combination of those. Which would be the most effective?

I recognise that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made great strides towards reforming and simplifying the tax system in his two Budgets, and large-scale tax cuts might help towards further reforms. But tax cuts alone are not enough. It is argued that tax cuts would help to ease unemployment. To some of us the connection seems an indirect one. It is far more likely that the extra demand injected into the economy through tax cuts would be dissipated in imports, in which case the only new jobs would be those created abroad.

It is argued that tax cuts would moderate wage claims. Again, that is unlikely. There is no evidence of greater moderation being practised by the unions in times of tax cutting. While wages are soaring, tax cuts will be barely noticed. It has been argued that tax cuts could provide incentives. I agree that tax cuts at the higher rate provide incentives because they can mean the difference between personal failure and success. But the kind of tax cuts that have been talked about in terms of the cut in the standard rate, especially if they were scattered across the board through such a cut, while providing a few extra pounds for everyone, will not make much difference to whether an industrial or office worker works more or less hard.

The argument in employment terms for raising tax thresholds is that it eases the plight of the lower paid and provides incentives for those on the margin between social security and low-paid employment. I accept that argument, but it does not apply to a cut in the standard rate.

A cut in the standard rate would be an expensive, inefficient and indirect way of coping with unemployment. Unless we get unemployment down, we shall pay the price. For years now unemployment has been stuck at about the 3 million mark. One does not have to go down the crazy reflationary path being advocated by the Labour and Alliance parties to understand that this is an appalling human loss. Of course there are scroungers and some people on the black economy, although many are there because they have to be, not because they want to be. But for the vast majority of the unwilling unemployed that means living standards of a half or a third what they ought to be, no security or prospects for the future, no hope of betterment or advancement, just quiet, patient misery and the despair of rejection. That despair hangs like a pall over the 18 per cent. of my constituents who are unemployed and the 130 workers facing redundancy today at the Muntz plastics factory in my constituency.

The causes of unemployment are blindingly obvious and have little to do with the standard reflation and deflation arguments that we hear in the House. They result from the technological revolution that is shaking out people trained in old fashioned assembly line manufacturing and requiring new skills which the old work force does not have. The new technology is replacing man with machine.

The long-term solutions are equally obvious. A proper long-term skills programme should be introduced with shorter working hours. Ultimately a shorter working week would help to ensure that all our people can enjoy the benefits of a wealthier and more leisurely society. The job release scheme, one of the best schemes introduced by the Government, should be extended and the retirement age ultimately lowered to 60 for those who want it.

Finally, in the short run, a carefully costed and targeted programme of infrastructure investment and support, in particular for construction and house building, should be drawn up to provide aid for those such as the redundant over-40s who are otherwise never likely to get a job again. Such a programme must complement a raising of tax thresholds and today there is room for both.

It would be a mistake if tax cuts and reform were put before the needs of a large and deprived group of people who have not shared in the greater wealth that the Government have engendered. It would be a pity if in the national perception the Government seemed to be handing out a further helping at the feast to the fortunate majority in work while the 3 million out of work watched hungry at the windows.

It would be a double tragedy if, after all the years of struggle to put Britain on its feet again, the public's concern with present levels of unemployment—the main concern of four fifths of the British public, so thank heavens that we are not an uncaring nation, however much better off we are becoming—should lead to the return of a Government who would destroy everything that we have achieved so far.

The Government, who have achieved so much, must now put unemployment at the top of the agenda, where 80 per cent. of the British people believe that it should be. Let us launch a national crusade against unemployment because at long last we have the resources with which to do so.

8.46 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Harvey) began his speech in a most interesting vein by saying that the Government were a remarkable success. He reeled off a number of statistics that looked encouraging. Then, like many Conservative Members who represent areas of a substantial unemployment problem, in 60 per cent. of his speech he admitted that for his constituents the Government had been a disaster. He referred to 18 per cent. unemployment and suggested a package of ideas that is largely that put forward by the alliance which earlier he condemned as crazy. He could conceivably be right, but if so he is condemning himself as well.

The most interesting aspect of the opening speeches was not so much what the Chancellor talked about but what he did not talk about, which often tells one a great deal about their train of thought. The Chancellor did not mention pay settlements throughout his speech, so determined was he to avoid that, although outside the House and during Question Time he has chosen to major on it in a fair way. I presume that his decision to do that was based on the fact that he does not know what to do about pay settlements.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke for his allocated time and, again, he did not mention pay settlements. I believe that he knows and appreciates what should be done about pay settlements, but he also knows that his party will not let him do it. Therefore, the only safe way out of that is not to talk about it.

The fear of what may happen to pay settlements if the Government's policy on exchange rates and their fiscal stance is relaxed has a lot more to do with the decisions and policies that are being developed than any other single thing. There is some justice in the Government's fear. The Chancellor reiterated today, as he did in the autumn statement and previous statements, that he was to continue the fight against inflation. That, without doubt, is the Government's greatest single success, although it is fair to say that if one compares the reduction of inflation in Britain with elsewhere the progress is useful, but it is nothing like as impressive when compared with the fact that inflation has been reducing virtually throughout the western world.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made a useful and telling speech about the manufacturing sector, but the simple fact is that the Government look likely to continue with their high interest rate policy. They are doing that because it will keep the exchange rate higher than it would have been otherwise. The Chancellor does not deny that. He wants to fight inflation. One clear ingredient in the short-term analysis of inflation is the exchange rate, and he said that from the Dispatch Box today. We must give him 10 out of 10 for honesty. One of the appeals of a higher exchange rate is that it will make imports cheaper. That has an effect on the cost of living index, which suggests that the problem has been solved.

As hon. Member after hon. Member, especially those representing industrial areas, have pointed out, sadly, is not the end of the story. High interest rates, high exchange rates and cheap imports occur, but the other half of the story is that the British manufacturer trying to sell abroad suddenly finds that it is much more difficult to do so as his price has been put up because of the exchange rate. Trying to maintain the home markets, which is just as important, is equally difficult. Both those trends mean the loss of jobs, and that we are a net importer of manufactured goods.

Paragraph 33 of the report of the Select Committee on treasury and Civil Service states:

"export volumes have not been very responsive to price and cost changes."

I think that the Chancellor is arguing that exchange rates are not that important for exports. Over the past four or five years they have not responded as immediately as people used to believe they did. That may be so, but they do respond. Anybody who deals in goods imported into Britain will say that if a line comes on to the market that is well priced people will buy it. Exchange rates have as big an effect on that in the short term as anything else. It results in high interest rates, high exchange rates and jobs that are difficult to hold both at home and abroad.

I do not believe that the Chancellor wanted that effect. I do not believe that he set off thinking about getting rid of jobs in manufacturing. He has allowed it to happen and he stated today that it will continue because he wants to fight inflation. When he uses the word "inflation" I suspect that he means the wage demand problem that I believe has dominated this country for the past 20 or 25 years. The great unspoken problem in British politics is how to develop a sensible income strategy. We have lost much of our base through that.

In 1979 we were told that a new formula had been found and that monetarism would solve all the problems. At least the Chancellor now agrees with nearly all of the Opposition, who never did believe that monetarism would solve the problem. We are now back to exchange rates, interest rates and appeals for moderation, which seem largely to fall on deaf ears.

We believe that there must be a better solution, which is to control wage demands rather than slowly squeeze to death the remnants of our industrial sector. We could make a genuine attempt to develop an understanding on pay. We believe that we need a pay policy whether it be voluntary, fiscal or legislative. That is something that we could

[Mr. David Penhaligon]

discuss in depth on another occasion. It would be better to have a sensible approach to pay rather than squeeze our industrial base to death.

The Minister may have better figures, but as far as I can see from the figures made available, if one compares the pay rise of an average British worker over the past 25 years with the pay rise of an average German worker, amazingly, the British worker has beaten the German worker by 16 years to nine. Out of 25 years, the British worker has had the best rise on 16 occasions and the German worker on just nine. I do not believe that one person in the House would argue that that statistic reflects changes in living standards: we all know that the German industrial worker has done much better.

The prize of the development of a pay policy is that we can let interest rates go down, we can let the exchange rate reach a more realistic value and we can give our manufacturer a chance, at home and abroad, without roaring wage settlements. Somehow or other somebody must achieve that in Britain in the next 10 years if we are to have a substantial manufacturing sector. As hon. Member after hon. Member has said, it is difficult to envisage a living for Britain in the future which does not rely on our capacity to manufacture goods at a price that people are prepared to pay.

We seem to be moving towards a Budget with tax cuts. That will be on the back of asset sales, even if the Chancellor likes to pretend that it is not. I see that the Chancellor is in the Chamber. If, for some reason or other — we all know the difficulty of getting legislation through the House—something cropped up which meant that in the current financial year the £4·75 billion-worth of public asset sales did not occur, where would the Chancellor make the saving of that money? Would he borrow some more, cut back on capital investment in our economy or put off the tax cuts? I do not expect him to answer the question. There is not much point in asking because he does not often answer our questions. However, I suspect that less than 10 per cent. of the Members of the House would not know which of those three would be put on the back burner. It is tax cuts.

If we have some money through public asset sales to make tax cuts in the early part of next year, as was said by the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-Westst (Mr. Harvey) the alliance believes that part of it should go into public investment, into restructuring our hospials, roads, schools, or sewers or whatever may be relevant in the particular part of the country. We argue that because we have now become so import-sensitive that any reduction in income tax will undoubtedly bring more imports, and that will have a much smaller job effect that if we put the money into public investment. I do not argue that case for all Budgets, or the Government would spend every single farthing that the national economy produced. However, I believe that in the next Budget there would be more sense, more humanity and more comprehension of the difficulties faced by many people if the money were pushed in that direction than used to make tax cuts which we know will benefit those in work who are probably already well-paid and are the better-off in our economy. They are not the ones who most need the state's assistance.

8.57 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Being lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this stage of the debate, gives me the opportunity to make a truncated speech, which might be of benefit to the House and which concentrates on three positive proposals that I should like to bring to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

With the background of an economy that is now progressing satisfactorily on most of the indicators—save, notably, that of massive unemployment—I should like Government policy to be directed principally to measures that would improve our competitiveness and this country's ability to do well in world markets, because I believe that that would have a useful part to play. I should like to draw three specific measures to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

First, there is a strong argument for more encouragement and support for industrial research and development. The House may know that between 1972 and 1983, Britain's total research and development rose slightly from £7·01 billion to £7.33 billion at 1983 prices, but at the same time the money for applied civilian research rose by only 2 per cent. in real terms and that for fundamental science and research declined by 20 per cent. That is not a satisfactory picture.

Equally, from 1967 to 1982, Britain's industry-financed research and development rose by a mere 0·9 per cent. a year, whereas over the same period the Japanese figure was 9·8 per cent. a year, for France and West Germany it was 5·9 per cent. a year and for the United States it was 4·1 per cent. a year. Therefore, basic research needs to be further encouraged by increasing public funds for higher education and the research councils. Industrial and applied research needs to be encouraged through the Department of Trade and Industry, with the continuation and expansion of the recently increased support under that heading, and by concerted efforts to educate British management in the vital necessity of that aspect of its activities. In that connection, we might consider the possibility of greater tax incentives for civilian and applied research, building on measures that already exist.

Secondly, there is a strong argument—as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) and others have said—for greater national investment in training and retraining. As is well known to the House, the performance of British companies has been lamentable in that respect. That was made clear recently in the Coopers and Lybrand study for the Manpower Services Commission. On average, British companies spend about 0·15 per cent. of their sales turnover on adult training compared with 2 per cent. to 3 per cent. in many of our foreign competitor countries. Indeed, too many British managers tend to regard such expenditure as an overhead rather than as an investment.

Those shortcomings can be remedied. It is not too late. The Government could take several measures to help. First, capital expenditure for training could qualify for tax relief in the year of expenditure. Secondly, there is a case for channelling further resources via the MSC into adult training and retraining programmes on similar lines to those operating now for the youth training scheme. Thirdly, there is a case for a statutory national individual training credit system, which has been recommended by

several people. The United States has such a system. It also figured in a pamphlet written by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) and myself a while ago.

My third recommendation is in line with the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) and other of my hon. Friends. There is now an overwhelming case for this country to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. Paragraph 1·55 of the autumn statement makes it clear that monetary aggregates and the exchange rate are equally important indicators for decisions on short-term interest rates. Now that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Mansion house speech has served to obscure the clarity of monetary policy, we have what amounts to an exchange rate policy, principally to counter inflation. In those circumstances, it would be much more reliable to pursue that policy as a member of the exchange rate mechanism. The argument put forward by Mr. Samuel Brittan and others, that it could lead to lower interest rates over a period of time, holds quite a lot of validity.

Briefly stated, the arguments that are most persuasive are as follows. The most important part of our trade is now with the other EMS countries; it should help to keep our costs and inflation rate nearer to that of our principal competitors, notably West Germany; and with the muddying of monetary policy and the attenuation of the PSBR policy, it would assist in further progress on counter-inflation, which we all wish to see. It would help us to resist the politics of unrealistic expectations, which is always a severe temptation for any democratically elected Government at this stage of a Parliament; it could lead to lower interest rates in the way that I have described. Perhaps most important, and little mentioned, it could be a contribution to international monetary reform which, looking just over the horizon, is a necessary further stage in the policies that my right hon. Friend has been following in the Group of Five and elsewhere.

I hope that my right hon. Friend has been able to take note of those three points.

9.3 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have three related questions for Treasury Ministers.

The first is in relation to public works and their real cost. The Institute of Civil Engineers argues persuasively that for every £100 million spent on sewers, over £50 million will be recouped by tax that would not be paid otherwise, unemployment benefit that would not be paid, and adjustments to several benefits, even housing benefit. Do Treasury Ministers accept that view of social accounting? If not, why not?

Secondly, I should like to ask about an unpopular and delicate subject, about which it is too easy to be trite: the black economy. It does not behove any hon. Member to adopt a moral stance about the black economy. Those who are involved in the so-called black economy are often living in poor circumstances. Nevertheless, the time has come, to judge from the constituency work of all hon. Members, to recognise that between 45 and 50 per cent. of all the repairs carried out by the building industry are carried out by a network—a subculture, if one likes—with people often asking in pubs whether anyone knows someone who can do the work. In no way other than cash is the transaction paid for. It is time that an assessment was made of the extent of the black economy. It is not a question of being moral but of being realistic and whether we should raise the tax threshold. To get a true picture of the economy this subject can no longer be ducked.

Thirdly, I turn to the collection of revenue. I know that Tony Christopher of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation and others have rightly persuaded Treasury Ministers to increase the staff of the Inland Revenue. However, are the Government satisfied that there are sufficient staff with the highest level of expertise to deal not only with fraud but with very complex tax collection? I am told that in the Government machine there are only 16 senior civil servants who are capable of taking on complex tax and fraud cases. As for prosecutions for fraud, out of 384 cases there have been only 37 prosecutions. Do the Treasury Ministers accept these rough figures and do they think that they are serious? If they think that they are serious, should not something be done about the matter?

9.6 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I should like to add my voice to those right hon. and hon. Members who have asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give a further and better explanation of his medium-term financial strategy policy. When he was the master foreman who thought up the medium-term financial strategy, he will recollect that there were two main motives for it. The first motive was that there should be greater certainty. The second motive was a belief that politicians collectively could no longer be trusted to keep their hands off the money supply, thereby corrupting the currency.

When my right hon. Friend built that structure, the general feeling in the country was that inflation should be reduced. The need, however, for a medium-term financial strategy is now much greater. The general political wisdom is that, most of all, the Tory party wants to win the next general election and that it wants to do so by getting as many people as possible back to work as quickly as possible. That is precisely the circumstance in which the nation needs a medium-term financial strategy.

However, as I understand it—I note that many other right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken in the debate share this view—that strategy has been all but abandoned. In its place has been put a regime of high interest rates and high exchange rates. It is obvious from what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that high interest rates are regarded as necessary so that the liquidity preferences—to use a very technical term—of the people who hold money may continue to be fairly high, but that is bad for manufacturing industry.

It seems to me that my right hon. Friend is also aiming at a high exchange rate. Again that is bad for manufacturing industry. It is also exactly the same as the theoretical position that was adopted by the Tory party in 1973, when it imposed a prices and incomes policy. It had as its objective, not the cure of the cause of inflation, but the cure of the symptoms. There are different symptoms now, but they are symptoms nevertheless. Again I believe that this policy will be unsuccessful.

There is a second analogy to be drawn with 1973. Instead of the high and rising property prices, which fed through to the retail prices index in 1973, there is a high stock market. I hope my right hon. Friend will explain why he virtually abandoned the medium-term financial strategy on 17 October. I hope he will also explain why he prefers a high interest rate and a high exchange rate policy. Most

[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]

of all, I hope he will explain not only why it is technically desirable, but how it is technically possible, because both interest rates and exchange rates are tossed hither and thither by market forces. There may be some members of the Labour party who believe that the state can control interest rates and exchange rates, but there are not many in the Conservative party who believe that that can be done.

We supported the medium-term financial strategy because there was a collective view that politicians would corrupt the currency. I hope my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will explain that any unworthy suspicions that might be directed towards a Conservative Administration can easily be answered by him.

9.10 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I should like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Opposition to welcome the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) to his new job as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I think that this is the first time he has taken part in a debate since he was appointed. We genuinely welcome his appointment and hope that he will enjoy his time in office. The right hon. Gentleman brings considerable advantages to his new job. In particular, he brings the experience of two important Departments—the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Trade and Industry, which stands him in good stead.

I am also sorry for the right hon. Member, and I am sorry for two reasons.

First, I am sorry for the right hon. Gentleman because he has been appointed to his new role at a time when, after six years of Conservative Government, the people will increasingly be asking to see the results of the sacrifices that they have been asked to make in terms of unemployment. *[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has joined us. He has been absent for most of the debate. It is unfortunate if he intends to start barracking immediately. He has not sat here throughout the debate. Many of his colleagues have been present, and I intend to deal with as many of their contributions as I can.

I am sorry for the right hon. Member also because he will have to listen to the speeches of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in future. Previously he has not had to listen to that mixture of arrogance and self-delusion that characterises the Chancellor's speeches on such occasions, including this afternoon.

Only this Chancellor and this Prime Minister could bring themselves to table a motion that

"welcomes the prospect of continuing low inflation and steady growth as the basis for maintaining the trend of rising employment"

and go on to congratulate themselves on

"the continuing reduction in the share of national income pre-empted"—

their word—

"by public expenditure."

Therefore, I begin by drawing the attention of the Chief Secretary and the House to what is really contained in the autumn statement and what is really happening in the economy.

The autumn statement begins by claiming that inflation is set to decline further. The right hon. Member for Norfolk, South might be forgiven for thinking that he has been appointed to his new job at the end of a year in which inflation has declined, but the truth is that inflation has risen in the past year from 4.75 per cent. to 5.5 per cent.

What were we promised a year ago? The Chancellor smiles, but in his more serious moments he does not regard it as a matter for risibility that inflation has increased. That is certainly not what he promised a year ago. We were confidently told then by the Chancellor that inflation would fall from 4·75 per cent. We were promised a decrease and we got an increase—the exact opposite.

Let us look at the next promise—at growth. The Chancellor describes growth as the basis for maintaining the level of increasing employment. What has happened to growth during the past year? A year ago, we were told that GDP would grow by 3·5 per cent. At first sight, it looks as though it did. The Chancellor is nodding with satisfaction. He tells us that next year output will grow by 3 per cent. in line with the average since 1981. That looks steady enough — 3 per cent. a year, no swings, no roundabouts, no ups and no downs.

However, anyone who ploughs through another 40 paragraphs of the autumn statement will find a different picture because the Chancellor admits that the true forecast for 1986 is not 3 per cent. but 2·5 per cent. and that the average for the period since 1981 hides a growth rate decreasing from 3·5 per cent. in 1984 to 3 per cent. in 1985 to 2·5 per cent. in 1986. Independent observers of the economy forecast — we are indebted to the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service for bringing the forecasts together in its report—that growth will be even lower, that it will not be 2·5 per cent. but nearer 2 per cent. next year, falling even further to about 1·5 per cent. in 1987. Thanks to the Select Committee, we can see exactly the same picture in other parts of the economy.

The Chancellor says that fixed investment has increased by 4 per cent. this year and will drop to 3·5 per cent. next year, but independent forecasters say that it will be nearer 1 per cent. Then the Chancellor says that exports have risen by 7 per cent. this year and will increase by only 2 per cent. next year, and that imports have risen by only 3·5 per cent. this year but will rise by 4 per cent. next year. On the basis of those figures it is not surprising that, when the Chancellor promises that the surplus on the balance of payments on the current account will increase from £3 billion this year to £4 billion next year, those same independent forecasters expect the opposite—a fall to £2·5 billion.

The truth is that this country stands on the brink of another recession and, buried in the economic statement, the Chancellor admits it. What else can the Chancellor mean when he refers to "the current cycle", or "a cyclical slowdown"?

But there is one thing which the Chancellor and the outside experts agree on — unemployment will stay above 3 million people: more than 3 million people next year and more than 3 million the year after that.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Harvey) said in a thoughtful speech that unemployment was due largely to the impact of technology on the economy. I agree that technology and its spread is responsible for some unemployment. It is wrong, however, to attribute increased unemployment and its continuing level simply to the introduction of new technology. The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) is similarly wrong when he attributes the rise in

unemployment in the past few years to a once-for-all shake-out of people in non-jobs. It is true that there is a shake-out of people in any recession, but to attribute the rise in unemployment in the past six years to a once-for-all shake out ignores my experience and that of my hon. Friends in the cities. It ignores the facts which were put to the House earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). We suggest that the right hon. Member for Worthing should tell the people who have lost their jobs at Metro Cammell in Birmingham that they are losing their jobs because of a once-for-all shake-out of non-jobs. He should go to Castle Bromwich and tell the toolmakers of British Leyland who are just about to lose their jobs that it is a once-for-all shake out of non-jobs. He should go to the BSR workers in Stourbridge and tell them that it is a once-for-all shake out of non-jobs. Thousands have lost their jobs in the past six years, and they are still losing their jobs.

It is not surprising that Conservatives prefer to talk about rising employment and ignore the fact that by far the largest increase in employment is represented by part-time jobs for women. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) says, the Opposition do not decry the provision of more part-time jobs for women. We are entitled to point out however, that the Government count those with part-time jobs in the figures for rising employment, but when they lose their part-time jobs, they are not counted as unemployed. Nor are they counted as unemployed before they acquire those part-time jobs. We are also entitled to point out, that some of the women who are taking part-time jobs do so because there are no full-time jobs.

We are also entitled to point out that the increase in part-time employment for women is concealing a clear decline in employment for men in the unemployment statistics. There has been a decline in employment for men in each of the past two years. Figures in the autumn statement show that. Then we are entitled to point out that the Chancellor's boast about rising employment is based on bogus claims about the number of the self-employed, and that there are still 1 million fewer people in employment now than in 1979 when "Labour was not working." Finally, we are entitled to point out that it is clear from the Chancellor's statement that the trend of rising employment will not be maintained next year. The truth is that the increase in employment is already falling back. It is part of a developing underlying recession in the British economy.

The Chancellor plans to reduce the share of national income used for public expenditure next year from 44·5 per cent. to 43 per cent. Even taking his figures at face value, the fact remains that it was 43 per cent. in 1978-79 — the last year of that much maligned Labour Government. Where then is the achievement of this Government and this Chancellor by his criteria?

The difference is not simply the amount—it lies also in what the public expenditure is spent on, but the Labour party does not accept that the percentage of national income taken by public expenditure is significant in itself. It is entirely possible for the percentage of national income in public expenditure to increase while taxpayers and consumers are better off. Some Conservative Members dispute that.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Yes, we do.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman obviously does not understand economics. The answer is that it all depends on the rate of growth in the economy. It is also possible for the percentage of public expenditure to decline and still spend more in public expenditure. That is the real issue — the total of public expenditure. Next year, the percentage of public expenditure will decline because the Government hope to spend less in real terms than this year. They want a reduction of £1 billion in real terms from £127·8 billion to £126·8 billion.

The hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) got it wrong. Public expenditure is not broadly stable. It is clear from the figures in the autumn statement that the Government which he supports are planning to reduce public expenditure, not keep it broadly stable.

However the real reduction that is planned for next year is much more than £1 billion in real terms, as is admitted in the autumn statement. When we take out reserves and asset sales, we find that public expenditure next year is planned to be £133·1 billion.

Asset sales are not public expenditure and nor are reserves unless they are used for expenditure. Reserves are available for use either for expenditure or for temporary tax cuts such as have been promised. When hon. Members deplore the lack of a fiscal adjustment in the autumn statement, I must tell them that it is there and is called "reserves".

Public expenditure will be £133·1 billion in real terms as compared with £136·7 billion this year. That represents a reduction in real terms of more than £3·5 billion. If one goes through the Government's figures Department by Department, it is clear that that is what they have screwed Departments down to in their Star Chamber round of discussions.

The Government will spend less on education.

Mr. Dorrell: Can the hon. Gentleman give one year in the past 15 when, under Labour or Conservatives, the reserve was not used to finance expenditure?

Mr. Davis: That is a very good question. If the hon. Gentleman reads Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee reports, he will see that they criticise precisely that. They criticise the present Chancellor's introduction of high reserve figures to provide himself with the flexibility for tax cuts in the following year.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes, to provide flexibility.

Mr. Davis: Of course. They used it to fight the miners. Who are they planning to use it to fight next year?

They are planning to spend less on education. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West said that the Government will increase education spending or whether he wants them to increase education spending. Either way, I have bad news for him — they will not increase spending on education. Indeed, such spending will decrease in real terms.

The hon. Gentleman also got it wrong in regard to the job release scheme. It was not this Government but the previous Labour Government which introduced that scheme. One of the the Government's first acts was to cut the scheme when the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) was Secretary of State for Employment.

The Government also intend to spend less on trade and industry, less on housing and less on services provided by local councils.

[Mr. Davis]

The two most worrying aspects of the Government's policy are, first, what the autumn statement calls the sale of assets and the Chancellor of the Exchequer calls privatisation, and, secondly, what will happen when the oil runs out.

We do not disagree with the Chancellor about the accounting treatment of the proceeds of the sale of assets. The Select Committee is right. However, that is not the major point, nor is the doctrinal disagreement between the Chancellor and the new Conservative party, and the Opposition.

I say doctrinal, because this afternoon the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear that he wants to see a completely privatised economy, whereas the Opposition believe in a mixed economy which includes both public and private sectors. It is the Government who are the extremists in the House.

The real issue relates to what will happen when everything that can be sold, has been sold. This year the Government will balance their accounts by selling £2·5 billion-worth of assets, and next year by selling £4·75 billion-worth of assets, but eventually all assets will be sold. What will happen then? How will the Government plug the gap?

All hon. Members know what is happening to North sea oil. Throughout their term of office, the Government have been warned about their dependence on revenues from North sea oil to pay for unemployment, and at least the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) had the honesty to admit that that is how the money is being spent. The Government are living on unearned income which will eventually come to an end. The autumn statement was most frightening because we can now see an end to North sea oil revenues. Next year will be the first year in the history of the Government when those revenues will be less than those of the previous year. That is the big issue, not, as the Chancellor would have it, the argument between the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about whether the Government have, should have or can have a depletion policy, or about the short-term fluctuations in the price of oil. North sea oil is running out. How will the Government fill that gap in future?

We were fairly asked what a Labour Government would do if they were in office. We would do exactly what our amendment to the motion states. We would recognise the importance of manufacturing industry and we would encourage it. In particular we would help industry to train the people that it needs for a high-technology high-turnover economy, and we would help industry to finance research and development. Both those calls were echoed by some Conservative Members who have more foresight than the Chancellor. We would increase the demand for manufactured goods by an increase in public expenditure. We recognise that public expenditure is the motor, not the brake, for the economy. We would provide jobs directly by increasing public expenditure and the house building programme. Instead of selling nationalised industries, we would expect them to grow in output and employment. We would expect genuine expansion, not the expansion beloved of the City of London through acquisition and takeover, which produces nothing in real terms and merely generates paper profits. Above all, our eyes would be fixed, not on the next election, but on the next decade.

We know, as the Government know but will not admit, that there is a long term problem about paying for the present level of public expenditure without the bonus of North sea oil revenues and the stop-gap policy of selling national assets. That is why in the long term even the Government must accept within their terms of reference that they must improve public expenditure, increase taxes, or increase borrowing. That is why any tax cuts announced in the Budget will be temporary, as they know.

Against that background, the Government also know that Britain is standing on the brink of a cyclical downturn. The so-called recovery is already running out of steam. There are more than 3 million out of work and Britain is heading for another economic recession. The Government's only response is to flog off the nation's assets to pay for temporary tax cuts in a desperate attempt to keep things going for long enough to get through the next election. They are smashing up the furniture to keep the fire burning a little longer. After the election, the Prime Minister will retire to Dulwich and the rest of us will be left to pick up the pieces.

9.30 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) for his kind remarks about me at the beginning of his speech. As he rightly said, it is some time since I have been involved in economic and Treasury debates. However, I took part in them for many years before 1979. I heard my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer speak on many occasions over many years and his were always admirable speeches.

Although it is some time since I have engaged in economic debates, I look forward to a constructive and friendly dialogue with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) about the shape, method and basic content of the public expenditure documents with which a Chief Secretary is involved. Since I spoke on Treasury matters from the Opposition Benches, there has been much progress in improving those documents. I know that my right hon. Friend had a positive relationship with my predecessor, to whom I pay a warm tribute.

I have already discovered the club of Chief Secretaries and ex-Chief Secretaries who have some shared understandings not of the scars perhaps, but of the size and scale of their detailed work load. I have always admired the skills, the forensic abilities and the cheerful patience of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees). My admiration is enhanced as I discover what he achieved during his period of office.

I am sorry that I must disagree at the outset with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, and the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who mentioned fiscal adjustment. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor dealt with that this afternoon, but, coming fresh to the issue, I am bound to say that I believe that the Chancellor's decision this autumn was absolutely right. I add only that the public expenditure figures in the document, especially for the first year, are real plans and decisions on which Departments are now basing their actions.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) so rightly pointed out, at this stage we do not take decisions on fiscal matters or make fiscal or PSBR judgments. Therefore, that figure is not meaningful and it could be misleading, as my right hon. Friend the

Chancellor explained this afternoon. The fiscal adjustment put forward in the autumn statement during recent years has shown me that that figure is frequently inaccurate, often strikingly so. That shows that it was right to have dropped it from this year's autumn statement.

The main thrust of the Opposition's charge was the decline of manufacture. There was much beating of breasts by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill and notably by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

Mr. Corbett: Do not belittle it.

Mr. MacGregor: I will not belittle it and, if I have time, I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's contribution. There was much beating of breasts, but remarkably little analysis of why things happened.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor pointed out this afternoon, the decline in manufacturing was similar during the latter period of the Labour Government and was only sharpening during our first two years of office, when we were dealing with inherited problems at a time of world recession. I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's point, because he was short of positive alternatives.

I noted how quiet the Opposition were about the impact of galloping inflation at well above the rates of our industrial competitors during the period of the Labour Government, the impact of restrictive practices and of Government interference and burdens preventing management from managing, and the impact of overmanning, which was such a feature of the industrial debates in the House and in industry during that time. There was little concentration on it this afternoon because the Government have gone a considerable way to solving those problems.

In that context, it is instructive to consider the latest survey on unemployment conducted in November 1985 by the CBI. Employers were asked:

"Here are some factors which may have had a contribution to the level of unemployment in the country today. Which one of these if any do you think had the greatest contribution to unemployment?"

The answer given by 21 per cent. of those who replied was excessive pay increases relative to productivity. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford rightly drew attention to the dangers of increasing unit labour costs. Secondly, 18 per cent. of those who answered said that the reason was overmanning compared with our competitors. That was a striking feature of the 1970s and caused much of the hidden unemployment. Opposition Members do not like listening to this, because it tells them what employers are saying now.

The answer third from the top, given by 16 per cent. of those who answered, was poor productivity and efficiency — *[Interruption.]* This is a very important analysis and I am not surprised that Opposition Members do not wish to listen to it. The fourth answer, given by 11 per cent. of those who replied, was failures on the part of the management. Next, 6 per cent. — a low figure — believed that restrictive working practices were to blame. To a large extent, that problem has been solved in recent years. Five per cent. of those who replied — again, a surprisingly low figure in view of the impact of high technology — believed that labour-saving investment was to blame. However, I suspect that that is because much of that investment took place in the early 1980s and that less takes place now.

Then we come to the remaining items. Four per cent. of those who replied believed that growth in the number of people wishing to work was a factor. That is surprising because we are still at a stage where the potential labour force is increasing all the time because of demographic factors, and the numbers, especially of married women, who wish to join the labour force are increasing. Finally, 8 per cent. of those asked said that Government policies were the reason for unemployment. That is a striking illustration of what emerged strongly from the CBI conference at Harrogate. The thrust of that conference was what industry could do for itself and what the Government could do to remove the burdens on industry and to continue to create the right climate.

Mr. Terry Davis: If the right hon. Gentleman is asking the House to accept the conclusions of that survey conducted by the CBI, will he also ask the House to accept the official statement by the CBI that there is nothing in the autumn economic statement for it except an increase of £250 million in costs?

Mr. MacGregor: Let me be clear about this. First, I am asking Labour Members to accept what the CBI said in November 1985. Secondly, in the general discussion with employers throughout the country, there is an awareness that our determination to keep down public expenditure as a proportion of GDP and, above all, our striking success on inflation are in industry's interests. Perhaps the CBI did not identify that in its statement because it knows that inflation is moving downwards. However, a serious consideration of the autumn statement demonstrates clearly that it is in industry's interests. That also comes through in the survey.

Many hon. Members were worried about interest rates. I understand why industrialists and firms generally wish to have lower interest rates, but it is important to consider the context in which they talk about interest rates. I quote from the latest *CBI News*, in which the president of the CBI, Sir James Cleminson, says in relation to what the CBI said about interest rates at the Harrogate conference:

"In real terms, they must be brought down at a rate consistent with not increasing the rate of inflation."

There is a growing understanding, which again came through in the debates in Harrogate, that it would not be in the interests of industry if, through the pursuit of our interest rate, monetary or exchange rate policies, inflation went up sharply again. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right last night to say that, if we were to take risks with interest rates, gratitude from industry would soon go sour if the results were a return to higher inflation, which would affect the future of every business.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I must continue because there is a great deal about which to speak.

My right hon. Friend's point is reflected in the statement from the CBI.

Above all, at the Harrogate conference there was recognition of the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford made in his powerful and effective speech about the dangers that will arise if our unit labour costs get out of line with those of our competitors. I thought that my right hon. Friend thoroughly dealt with the points made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on oil policy and especially

[Mr. MacGregor]

on depletion. I recommend that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook looks at my right hon. Friend's speech in *Hansard*.

The main theme of my right hon. Friend's speech was the danger of unit labour costs rising as a result of what he described as a spasm of management feebleness of a familiar kind. The CBI is echoing that. That would create more risks of losing jobs than anything, but is not understood by Labour Members. We must continue to put pressure on that aspect.

My right hon. Friend was also right to underline the need for flexibility in wage and salary arrangements and the methods of rewarding work done. He emphasised profit-sharing schemes, bonus schemes and, above all, share ownership and made points that were clearly not getting an echo from the Opposition Benches. The Labour party does not understand the importance of those points. How right it was to say that the philosophy of wider capital and share ownership was an idea whose time had come.

I point out to the SDP, which also believes in this policy and has been trying to make great play of it, that, while its members talk, we have been acting over many years to bring it about. My right hon. Friend and I have been members of the Wider Share Ownership Council for many years. Building on share incentive schemes or share option schemes is, above all, a key element of the policy of privatisation. It is one of the most important parts, along with the greater efficiency which this brings about in the industries pursuing that policy.

My right hon. Friend was also right to emphasise wage and employment flexibility, particularly concerning part-time work, which economic and social change is bringing about. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook would do well to recognise that part-time employment has a very important part to play for constructive and economic reasons. He should not be so derisive of it when he talks about such jobs being created.

On the wider economic front, it was striking how little the fundamental elements in the economic forecast were challenged. The hon. Member for Stockton, South produced a number of other forecasts about growth rather than the Treasury forecast, but on the whole the Treasury forecast has been pretty accurate, which is no doubt why he put forward his doubts so meekly and tentatively. There was little reference from Opposition Members to the importance of the downward pressures on inflation in continuing to keep people in jobs, in creating new jobs and in improving our competitiveness. That was hardly referred to during the debate by the Opposition, either because they do not understand it or because they are afraid to admit that we are succeeding. The combination of steady growth and lower inflation plus all the changes on the supply side are the key to jobs—about which I am concerned as much as the hon. Member for Erdington — and dealing with the unemployment figures in the long run.

I come to interest rates and monetary policy. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor dealt with this subject at considerable length in his Mansion House speech. I do not wish to repeat the whole of that speech now, but it is an important statement of the Government's position. The key point is that the Government are committed to maintaining sound financial conditions and to securing an appropriate growth of money GDP while steadily pressing down on inflation.

The precise mix of fiscal and monetary policies to achieve that is a matter of judgment at any one time. All the evidence is that conditions are consistent with our objectives, notwithstanding the recent behaviour of M3. The fiscal policy remains tight and the forecast shows that the 1985-86 PSBR at 2·25 per cent. of GDP is the lowest for 14 years. That figure is less than 3 per cent. even if the proceeds of privatisation are excluded.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Inflation has been falling and it is expected to fall below 4 per cent. by the end of next year. No one has challenged that and it is a clear sign that the Government's monetary policies are succeeding.

Mr. Budgen: It is theoretically possible to have a very low rate of inflation but nevertheless putting money into the economy to create a higher rate of inflation in future.

Mr. MacGregor: No one has challenged the plain fact that the economic forecasts for next year—all outside forecasts agree—suggest that the pressures on inflation are all downward.

Comparatively little has been said today about public expenditure, but as that is my particular responsibility I should like to discuss it in terms of the autumn statement. Most importantly, the key objective on public expenditure is being fulfilled in the three-year plans. Whether or not we include proceeds from privatisation, public spending between 1985-86 and 1988-89 will fall in relation to GDP. By 1988-89 it will be the lowest proportion since 1972-73, and that is with or without the proceeds of privatisation. That approach has the broad support of industry.

Within that overall objective, the Government have a clear idea of priorities. We have not stressed the importance of priorities sufficiently in recent discussions but these priorities are carried through in the autumn statement.

The hon. Member for Erdington talked about hospitals and roads. He ought to know that the Government have concentrated expenditure in the Health Service as a key priority since 1979. Expenditure on the Health Service is up by 20 per cent. in real terms. The Government have made the two items the hon. Gentleman singled out—hospitals and roads — special priorities for capital expenditure. Both priorities have had expenditure increases of 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The Government have also employed 50,000 extra nurses.

Mr. Corbett: There is not enough nursing staff, although the Government have cut nurses' working hours.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is opposed to the cuts in hours. The fact is that he does not have an answer to the fact that the Government have concentrated their expenditure on priorities. That rightly reflects a recognition of real economic and social needs.

In the autumn statement the Government have deliberately taken a decision to concentrate resources more on local authority housing renovation because we believe that that is where needs lie. It was rich for Opposition Members to argue that that will take years to carry out, as the Government are having to clear up a backlog of 40 years of inefficient control. The Government are doing that, and we shall carry it out over 13 years.

It is right that the level of local authority starts has come down in recent years because much more housing provision is taking place in the private sector, which is where the bulk of the population wants it to be.

Mr. Terry Davis: Give us the totals.

Mr. MacGregor: I would like to make a further important point about priorities. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that there has been a switch from one particular priority, that of defence spending. Defence spending has been increased substantially under this Government, and much has been achieved by that. A great part of the programme for improving equipment has been completed. It is right now to establish priorities in other areas and to look no longer for real growth in the defence budget. An area where we can still achieve substantially greater output with a defence budget that is not increasing in real terms is by concentrating on better defence procurement policies and greater value for money. That applies, too, to the Health Service. It is notable that that is never discussed by Labour Members. By concentrating on greater efficiency and obtaining greater value for money, we can release many more resources for real needs within the same overall figure.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): That policy has led to the closure of maternity, accident and emergency units in my constituency.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Lady will not face the fact that there has been a considerable increase in real terms on spending on the Health Service.

It has been explained repeatedly that the privatisation policy is being pursued because it is right in itself. It is better for the industries concerned and better for the customer. It produces wider share ownership and results in industries having to come to the capital markets to prove their priority before they can obtain finance from the markets. The policy is being pursued for these reasons.

It is true that proceeds come from the sale of assets, but surely it is clear that we are putting plainly in front of the public all the details of the proceeds from privatisation so that everyone can judge the way in which the policy is being pursued. The figures appear in the autumn statement because it is conventional for them to do so. The convention was followed by the previous Labour Government, and I understand that it is an international convention. The figures are in the autumn statement for all to see and no one is pretending that they are being hidden. It is possible for anyone to make a judgment, especially when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer produces his Budget, on the balance between privatisation and the borrowing requirement, for example.

I do not know what the Opposition would do about privatisation. They must come clean because the public want to know their wider policy and because their view of privatisation will form an important part of their future economic policy if, most unfortunately and many decades ahead, they return to power.

It is not clear what is behind the attack of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook on privatisation. Does he think that he must find a way of denigrating privatisation because it is such a popular policy, or is he saying that he would not pursue the policy, that he wants higher public expenditure and that his public sector borrowing requirement would be greater than the one which we are pursuing? He is muddled in his attitude to privatisation, and that is plain for all to see.

I have listened carefully to the debate and many of my hon. Friends have made constructive suggestions. I was not able to hear every speech in the debate, but notes have been given to me setting out what has been suggested. When I entered the Chamber a short while ago I heard part of the interesting speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). It was clear from my hon. Friends' speeches that there was strong support for the overall programme. There is strong support for the economic policy as a whole, as reflected in the economic forecast, and for the public expenditure programmes themselves. It is difficult to know what to make of the Opposition.

Mr. Penhaligon: Perhaps I can help the Minister. I shall be pleased to do so as he used to do much good work for the fishing industry when he was the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said, in effect, "If the price of oil declines, so be it. If the price increases, so be it. We shall not interfere with the cartel." That is understandable. Do the Government think that the economy will be stronger or weaker if the price of oil falls below $20 a barrel?

Mr. MacGregor: I thought that the Chancellor made it clear that there were advantages as well as difficulties implicit in that situation. This is an issue that we shall have to consider at the appropriate time. The hon. Gentleman referred to my previous work in connection with fish. He must know that he was putting forward a red herring.

It is difficult to know what to make of the Opposition. It was interesting to note that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook refused to answer the two questions that my right hon. Friend put to him this afternoon. I put them to him again. What broad level of public sector borrowing requirement does he think is appropriate in the current economic situation? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] He has absolutely refused to set any level. Secondly, when will he say what the Labour party would do about the renationalisation of companies that have been privatised? *[Interruption.]* No wonder the right hon. Gentleman is turning with some embarrassment to speak to his hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). Above all, will the right hon. Gentleman say what level of public expenditure he would think appropriate?

No wonder the right hon. Gentleman will not answer any of those questions. He knows that his present policy would mean higher taxation, higher borrowing, renationalisation and, above all, higher inflation. If the right hon. Gentleman is too coy to give the country a straight answer, let me remind him of Labour's plans at the last general election. *[Interruption.]* No wonder Opposition Members do not want to listen.

The sum total of electoral bribes offered by Labour at that time amounted to a staggering £40 billion of additional public expenditure. Since then there have been only indications, but they are all hugely upwards. Higher spending has been promised on rural and urban areas. I believe that Labour would renationalise companies transferred by us to free enterprise. They would set up new public corporations in parts of the economy where there were none before, student grants would be substantially

[Mr. MacGregor]

increased, sixth formers would be given pocket money on the rates and aid would be doubled. Labour would abolish private medicine and private education, putting the entire burden on the taxpayer. They would spend more on the roads, railways and ports.

My right hon. Friend referred to a recent article in *Tribune* on an interview with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who, I notice, has not been in his place. In that article he talked of an enormous expansion, by at least 50 per cent., in the Department of Trade and Industry budget. He talked about releasing financial constraints on local government for economic development. We know the type of local authorities to which it would go and—*[Interruption.]*—and the wasteful expenditure that that would mean.

In his recent policy document, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) listed a whole series of areas of further public expenditure. Indeed, it looks as though the Labour party is adopting the gut reaction, "Whatever you do, we will double it." No wonder the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not answer the questions put to him this afternoon. He must be terrified of what his right hon. and hon. Friends are cooking up.

I shall give only one quotation tonight:

"The Labour party is always wanting to bake plum pies before we have picked the plums."

They were not my words but those of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have time to give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. MacGregor: Those words of the right hon. Gentleman are quoted in Lord Barnett's book. The right hon. Gentleman was asked this afternoon what he would do about monetary policy and he answered by using one word — *[Interruption.]* — "prudent." That is an astonishing word to use given that list of spending. The right hon. Gentleman had one message this afternoon—he was frightened of the next election. There will not be an election for some time, but our policies will ensure that we shall win it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 183, Noes 254.

Division No. 26] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Norman
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Timothy Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Resolved,

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th November; welcomes the prospect of continuing low inflation and steady growth as the basis for maintaining the trend of rising employment; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the continuing reduction in the share of national income pre-empted by public expenditure.

Social Security

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 12th November, be approved.

It may be helpful to the House if I outline the purpose and main features of the order and the regulations associated with it. I should say at the outset that I do not intend to engage in speculation about what may or may not be in the Government's forthcoming White Paper on social security. It will be published shortly and the House will have ample opportunity on that occasion to debate what is in the White Paper.

This brief debate illustrates an important theme in social security—that benefits have to be paid for. We have to ensure that the money coming into the national insurance fund is sufficient to pay for expected benefits, and that there is an adequate balance to provide for unexpected contingencies. For that reason, we have this annual exercise in prudent accounting, which requires the Government to bring before parliament their proposals for national insurance contribution rates and related matters for the forthcoming tax year. The report of the Government Actuary on the effect of the proposed changes was laid before the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 12 November, as required by the Act.

I shall begin by considering the effect of our proposals on employers and employees. In that respect, I hope that the House will acknowledge the Government's achievement in bringing before it proposals which will mean that for the third successive year there is to be no change in the rate of class 1 national insurance contributions. That is achieved against a background of an increase in main benefit rates which will add £2 billion to social security spending in a full year, bringing it to £41 billion. This steadying of contribution rates is beneficial to both employees and employers and reflects the Government's determination to keep the tax and contributions burden as low as possible.

Although the rate of class 1 contributions remains constant, there is, as usual, a change to the lower earnings limit for employees' and employers' contributions, as well as a change to the upper earnings limit for employees' contributions. The House will recall that the upper earnings limit for employers' contributions was abolished with effect from 6 October this year to help offset the loss of revenue resulting from the new reduced contribution rates for the lower paid and their employers.

In carrying out these changes, we are simply fulfilling the requirements laid down in the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, which requires the lower earnings limit to be equal to, or no more than 49p below the basic rate of retirement pension and the upper earnings limit to be between 6·5 and 7·5 times that rate. A pension rate of £38·30 next year—representing a real increase in the value of retirement pension during the period in which the Government have been in office—points inevitably to a lower earnings limit of £38 a week.

The statutory requirements affecting the upper earnings limit for employees permit a little more discretion. It would have been possible to extend it to £287·25, but the figure we have chosen of £285 represents a 7·5 per cent. increase on the current limit, which is broadly the same as the general increase in the level of earnings. This maintains its relationship with the basic pension rate and is within the range of 6·5 to 7·5 times that limit—again as laid down in the Social Security Pensions Act 1975.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State acknowledged in last year's debate, there were grounds for criticising the way the earnings limits worked. Since that time we have taken the opportunity, in the Social Security Act 1985, to introduce a graduated system of contribution rates which substantially modifies the effect of the lower earnings limit. The new graduated rates, based on three bands of earnings for employees and four for employers, soften the previous sudden onset of full rate contribution once the lower earnings limit has been reached. The purpose of the new system is to foster the creation of jobs by reducing the cost of employing some 8·5 million workers and for the lowest paid in particular reducing employers' contributions by more than half, from 10·45 to 5 per cent.

We propose to build upon that by increasing, under the terms of the order, the range of weekly earnings on which reduced rates of contributions will be payable. The lowest band of earnings on which contributions at 5 per cent. will be payable will run from £38—the new lower earnings limit—to £59·99 per week. The 7 per cent. band will run from £60 to £94·99 per week and the 9 per cent. band will start at £95 with an upper limit of £139·99. That is an increase of £10 over the previous limit.

The changes mean that an employer employing someone at £139 a week will have his employment costs reduced by over £2 a week. The weekly take-home pay of someone earning £94 a week will be increased by £1·88, and his employer's costs will be reduced by a similar amount. Only employees earning between £265 and £285 per week have any significant change to their contributions and here the maximum additional contribution will be £1·80 a week.

I should now like to tell hon. Members of our proposals for self-employed people. As the House is aware, self-employed people pay their contributions in two parts—the flat-rate class 2 contribution and the profits-related class 4 contribution. As we do not propose to increase the class 1 rate for employees, it follows that no increase is needed in the class 4 rate that is derived from it. The profits limit for class 4 contributions rises automatically each year broadly in line with the earnings limit for class 1 contributions. The figures proposed this year are £4,450 and £14,820, the latter figure being exactly 52 times the upper earnings limit. Contributions on profit are paid at the rate of 6·3 per cent. and have been since April 1983.

With regard to the self-employed class 2 rate as a deliberate and positive incentive to small businesses, we propose continuing the large abatement given to self-employed people earlier in the year. Consequently, we propose only a modest increase of 25p a week in the contribution, making it £3·75 a week from next April.

The effect of these changes is that for the majority of self-employed people there will be an overall reduction in their contributions of £38·40 a year in 1986-87 compared with 1985-86. Only those earning above the upper profits limit of £14,820 will pay more, and then only a maximum of £27·12 a year. The small earnings exception from class 2 liability also rises automatically—in this case by £150 to £2,075. Finally, the proposed voluntary class 3

contribution rate is, as usual, being set at 10p below the class 2 rate, giving a figure of £3·65 a week from next April.

The House will have noticed that we are not this year proposing any change in the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund. It will remain at 9 per cent.

I deal finally with the effect on the national insurance fund of the changes that we have proposed. The Government Actuary in his report estimates that the order that we are debating will cause expenditure from the national insurance fund to exceed income by £80 million next year. That will have only a very marginal effect on the working balance in the fund, which will stand at the end of next year at an estimated £4,755 million. That balance represents 20 per cent. of the estimated benefit expenditure during the year, still well above the prudent minimum balance of 16·7 per cent. recommended by the Government Actuary.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has considered these estimates and is satisfied that the changes that we have proposed are entirely compatible with maintaining a proper working balance on the fund, consistent with advice from the Government Actuary, while at the same time reducing, wherever possible, the burden on employers, employees and the self-employed alike.

In 1986-87 we shall be paying out just under £24 billion from the national insurance fund—nearly £18 billion of it in retirement pensions. The purpose of the annual re-rating of contributions is to ensure that there are sufficient funds to pay for those benefits.

We believe that the changes contained in the order provide that guarantee and, moreover, at the expense only of the minimum extra burden on contributors. What they aim to do—and what we believe they achieve—is to strike a balance between the protection of the national insurance fund, with the huge benefit calls upon it, and the protection of those who contribute to that fund. On that basis, I commend the order to the House.

10.25 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security has pointed out, tonight's debate gives effect to the changes in the system of national insurance contributions that was introduced earlier this year in the Social Security Act 1985. We all recognised the regressive nature of the national insurance contributions system and the way in which it has been exacerbated by the policy that has been steadily pursued by the Government. That policy has increased the reliance upon contributions to fund social security benefits. At the same time, however, it has decreased the supplement paid by the Treasury from general taxation. It is thus collected with more regard for ability to pay. This year the Government have not, for once, chosen to reduce the Treasury supplement. We are pleased about that. However, we believe that it is set at too low a level, and we are not therefore as gratified as the Under-Secretary of State might expect.

It is extraordinary that a Government who have so steadily pursued a policy of increasing reliance upon contributions—contributions towards what was intended to be and is still called a "national insurance" system—should equally steadily have reduced the benefits for which those contributions were levied. The steady continuance of earnings-related contributions has gone hand in hand with the steady disappearance of earnings-related unemployment benefit, sickness benefit and maternity allowances. Most recently there has been the disappearance of the earnings-related invalidity pension. I hope I am not tempting providence by saying that, but that has been offset against the invalidity allowance, with a consequent reduction in the income of the disabled. My postbag is swollen with letters from the disabled who complain that they are not receiving the full effective increase that was allowed by the uprating last autumn. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State's postbag is swollen with similar letters.

We recognise that the system needed to be improved. The Government argue that the changes that they introduced earlier and that they are modernising by this order will provide additional help for the lower paid. However, the Under-Secretary of State will be aware that, although the proposals replaced one very sharp poverty trap, it was replaced, unfortunately, by several other poverty traps, although their immediate effect was somewhat diminished.

I do not know whether the Under-Secretary is aware that it has been calculated recently that the new set of poverty traps will catch three times as many people on low pay as were caught under the previous system. Those who are caught in the new poverty trap, or traps, will be subject to marginal tax rates that are as high as 70 per cent. precisely because, as earnings move across each band, people are subject to each rate on their whole earnings.

The biggest trap, as happened under the old system, occurs when somebody crosses the first threshold of earnings. Unfortunately, this will affect in particular part-time employees, the great majority of whom are women. If will affect young people too. In other words, it will affect precisely those groups of people who are already losing out in other ways. They are losing out already on unemployment protection rights and on benefit entitlement. They will now lose out not only because of the poverty trap but because employers will be encouraged to keep wage levels low, or to cut hours below the level at which employees become liable to national insurance contributions.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said about the three poverty traps, but surely the position was far worse previously when there was just one rate —9 per cent. At a rate of 5 per cent. the poverty trap will be alleviated. The present arrangements improve the position. If the hon. Lady is so concerned about it, what is her solution to the problem?

Mrs. Beckett: I recognise that the present poverty trap is not so serious now, and I pointed out that fact. However, although the poverty trap is less severe, I think that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that if it catches three times as many people, those who will now be caught in the poverty trap but who were not caught by it before will not be so grateful as the hon. Gentleman appears to expect them to be. It is our duty to point out to the Government that more people will be affected by these changes, even though they will not be affected quite so seriously as were those who were previously caught by the poverty trap. We are concerned about the effect on part-time workers, especially women. The changes in employment figures, to

[Mrs. Beckett]

which the Government so often refer, are largely accounted for by women. Unfortunately, those who can obtain employment will be caught by these changes.

Sometimes it seems that, so long as people do not appear in the unemployment figures, the Government are less worried about whether they have what the Prime Minister likes to call a "real job" and even less worried about whether they can live on and support a family on their earnings. The Minister of State said on Report that the proposed changes would increase the net income of the low-paid. There is a danger that, instead of increasing their net income over a comparatively short period, the proposals will merely change the composition of that income as gross wages are pushed down at the expense of three times as many people caught in the poverty trap.

This would be a matter for concern at any time, but it is especially so when the prices of so many of the basics of healthy and civilised living are pushed up by other Government policies. There has been an increase of about 12 per cent. in water rates, and increases in prescription charges and gas and electricity prices to meet the Government's financial targets. The Government still assert that people should be prepared to bear more of the burden of the costs that were previously borne through their contributions to the welfare state.

During the debate on the Social Security Bill much play was made of the help that the proposals would give to the young unemployed. We drew attention to the fact that, although it may be argued—we would question this to some extent—that the proposals helped those people, the help was paltry compared with the penalty imposed on families which include the young unemployed and are forced to receive housing benefit because of their financial circumstances. At the time we made that complaint, the deduction from housing benefit for a young person in employment was at, as seemed to us and to the Government's Social Security Advisory Committee, the excessive level of £9 a week. Since then, the Government have increased that deduction by more than the rate of inflation to well over £10 a week.

In contrast to the increased penalty that the Government have imposed on the young unemployed, the self-employed continue to benefit from the Government's generosity. During the passage of the Bill, we pointed out that even self-employed people who might be reasonably well off and be earning substantial sums would have to pay only £3·50 under the proposals, to retain their entitlement to the basic pension. That was extremely good value for money—such good value for money that there seemed to be little question but that the state was subsidising that improvement. The Under-Secretary of State said that the sum had increased to only £3·75. As the non-dependant deduction from housing benefit was already thought to be excessive at £8·80, I believe that, if the Government were going to be generous to any group of people, they should have been generous to that group rather than to the people whom they chose.

Every year that we have had this debate since I have held this position we have touched on the nominal balance that is maintained in the national insurance fund. The Government Actuary recommended that a prudent level of balance would be 16·6 per cent. The proposal is for 21 per cent. for the current year and 20 per cent. for next year—substantially more than the Government Actuary said was needed for "prudence". These are sums which, even if they are only kept in notional balance, are not dispersed in benefit although they are received in contributions.

I also remember asking the Government and receiving no answer, whether they intended to keep substantially larger balances in the fund. It was proposed that the level of balances should be 27 per cent. rather than the 21 per cent. that finally emerged. I asked whether that was due to excessive prudence or the fact that the Government realised that unemployment would rise by much more than the Government Actuary was allowed to suggest.

As the outturn was 21 per cent. rather than 27 per cent. it seems that, although the Government were not prepared to admit it, they were concerned with the level of unemployment. We can only conclude as, for next year, they still propose to keep 4 per cent. more than is considered prudent, that, irrespective of whether they will admit it, they are confident that their economic policies will prove as big a failure next year as they did last year, the year before that and the year before that.

Although I do not doubt that these proposals will go through, they do so against a background of, at best stalemate and probably a deterioration in the Government's position.

10.35 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I welcome the proposals. It is a great pity that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), my neighbour in Derbyshire, has wasted this opportunity by making what has become a party political speech. She ought to be aware from her experience in social security that one never eradicates the poverty trap but just moves it around. There can be a shallow poverty trap that does not affect people very much, but it affects a lot of people, or a deep poverty trap that affects a small number of people considerably. As soon as we offer benefits in addition to what people can earn, there is a poverty trap. I do not believe that the Labour Government made a better job of getting rid of it than we have done. It is not logically possible to get rid of it.

The hon. Lady and her colleagues should recognise that, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, it is a considerable achievement to introduce these changes which help the low-paid and improve matters only six months after the scheme was introduced. My hon. Friend mentioned all of the changes. For most of us there will not be any change. The main class of contribution rates will stay at 9 per cent. for employees and 10·45 per cent. for the company. That deserves some kind of recognition. No change often receives no acknowledgement, but it deserves recognition.

We now have more pensioners in the United Kingdom. We pushed up the total cost of the social security budget last month by more than £2 billion—more than the rate of inflation. I am not sure where the hon. Member for Derby, South thinks the money is going, but it is going to some of my constituents and they are very pleased to have it. It all has to be paid for, but we did not need to increase national insurance contributions for the vast majority. Indeed, we have cut the rate for those who can most benefit—people in low-paid jobs. The day will come when the Opposition recognise some of these things and say, "Well done" but that time has not arrived tonight.

One or two of the things that the hon. Member for Derby, South said are worth pursuing in a non-party

political way. It is not all sweetness and light. In the debate on the Budget in the previous Session, I said, as had many others who spoke before me, that national insurance contributions are a tax. I welcomed the Government's recognition at long last of that fact. It does not matter that it is called a contribution and that it confers a right. Most people know their gross income and their net income; and the rest are just "stoppages". They do not care very much what title those stoppages have. The same is true for the employer as it is a cost of employing people. It does not matter whether it confers rights and benefits to people in whose names contributions are paid.

We make nonsense of any policy to help the low-paid to stay in work if we push up employers' costs through national insurance while trying to cut income tax. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is nodding——

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Am I?

Mrs. Currie: He will be aware that, under the Labour Government of 1976-79——

Mr. Field: Like one of those dogs in the back of a car.

Mrs. Currie: —the national insurance charge on employers rose from 8·75 per cent. to 13·5 per cent. It was to Labour's shame that they did that and to ours that we left it that high for far too long. A result of that is that it became more expensive for employers to employ people. If we charge employers about 13 per cent., a figure which included the national insurance surcharge, we should not be in the least surprised when they switch to using equipment and machinery instead of people. That seems axiomatic. At last we are getting to grips with the problem, and I urge my hon. Friends to see this as the first step and to take the matter further.

I asked the Library to give me figures for the loss from an individual's income of national insurance and income tax. It gave me figures for average male earnings for a single person not contracted out. In April 1976 a single man on average earnings would have paid 28·1 per cent. of his earnings in income tax, 5·75 per cent. in employee's national insurance, and his employer would have forked out 8·75 per cent., which totals 42·6 per cent. I chose April 1976, because that was when the Labour Government went beserk in pushing up income tax rates. That is the highest proportion of income tax paid in recent years.

The latest figures for October 1985 made me swallow hard, because while we had managed to cut the take from tax from 28·1 per cent. to 23·7 per cent., which is a substantial improvement, unfortunately the take in employee's national insurance had increased from 5·75 per cent. to 9 per cent., and the take from employer's national insurance, which is significant for helping people stay in work by encouraging their employers to keep them, had increased from 8·75 per cent. to 10·45 per cent. That figure has improved as it was more than 13 per cent., but the total is 43·15 per cent. of earnings, in other words, it is more than it was in 1976.

For low-paid workers, someone on, say, half average earnings, the position is almost exactly the same. In April 1976 a man would have paid 21·2 per cent. in tax, and 5·75 per cent. in national insurance, and his employer would have paid 8·75 per cent., which totals 35·7 per cent. In October 1985 he paid 17·5 per cent. in tax, which is a substantial reduction and we must congratulate our right hon. and learned Friend on that, his insurance increased to 9 per cent. and his employer's insurance would have been about 9 per cent., which totals 35·5 per cent. In other words, we have managed to knock 0·2 per cent. off the total take in all those years.

Two significant points are to be drawn from that. First, it took the Library two days and seven different sources to dig out what in my ignorant and humble view is the most basic information for studying the take from a man's pay. It should not have to be sought in seven sources. Secondly, it is obvious that we have yet to congratulate ourselves entirely on ensuring that we have reduced the take from a man's pay and from his company in employing him.

The Government Actuary's report states that today's order will cost £70 million, and the autumn statement made it clear that—because more people are working, there is more overtime, less short-time working and average earnings are rising faster than inflation—the total income to the national insurance fund will rise by more than the £70 million that it will lose—by £1·5 billion. Therefore, I urge all my hon. Friends that when debating whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer should cut taxes in the spring by changing the rates or the threshold, we should perhaps consider the national insurance figures instead. We should not be satisfied until the figure that we take from a man on average earnings drops to below 40 per cent., as it was 15 years ago. That implies a national insurance contribution of about 6 per cent. The figure for a man on half earnings should fall below one third. That seems perfectly reasonable. That implies a national insurance contribution of about 3·5 per cent.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor described those changes in the autumn statement as,

"welcome assistance to the low-paid and their employers, and a stimulus to the employment of the young and unskilled."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 433.]

That must be right, and this small change is a welcome step. It is too soon to tell whether the changes that were introduced on 6 October are having any effect, but it was pleasing to see from the latest unemployment figures that more than 20,000 young school leavers came off the register last month. That is a net reduction over the same period last year, so perhaps the policy is having some effect. Such small changes, together with our policies on wages councils for the young, youth training and the Manpower Services Commission's efforts, lead me to hope that we can look forward to better employment prospects for all our people.

10.45 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): It was unfair of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) to say that my hon. Friend the member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) had made a party political speech. Any reasonable person listening to my hon. Friend would have thought that she was her usual thoughtful, probing self, carefully considering the Government's proposals.

When the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South got into her stride, we realised why it was important for her to throw dust in our eyes, because if there was a party political speech, it came from her. However, it was a surprise speech, in that it seemed to be an indictment of the Government's tax policy. A Government who successfully fought two general elections on reducing the rate of tax must find the hon. Lady's remarks disturbing.

[Mr. Frank Field]

One hopes that the valuable information that she gleaned from the Library will not be completely lost by the Labour party as it prepares for the general election.

It would be difficult for anyone — certainly an Opposition Member — to disagree with the change in structure that has been introduced, although I shall return later in my speech to the remarks of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South on the impossibility of getting rid of the poverty trap. Although it is right to applaud the Government for the change in structure, it is equally right to focus some attention on the other changes that they have made in the burden of national insurance contributions during the past six years.

There have been two significant changes, both of which were commented on fairly by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South. The first is that there has been a major switch in lessening—if one can call it that—the burden of the Exchequer on those in employment. That is not to accuse the Government of sleight of hand, because they said that they would do so, but it is interesting to compare our present position, with a small contribution from the Exchequer, with what was envisaged in the 1948 White Paper on the national insurance scheme. Following Beveridge's proposals, it was assumed that because it was a poll tax and, therefore, highly regressive, it should play only a small part in financing the cost of national insurance benefits.

By 1965, it was forecast that the Exchequer contribution would be about 70 per cent., and that employees and employers would make a small proportional contribution to financing the scheme, but the reverse has happened. The Exchequer contribution has almost faded away, and been given considerable stimulus to fade away under the Government, and the burden on employers and employees has increased substantially. Although one criticises the tax system for not being as progressive as it should be, it is more progressive than the national insurance scheme. That has been the first shift in the burden of taxation.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South was right to highlight the two consequences of that—on takehome pay for people considering the benefits of working or not working, and on the costs that employers must meet if they are to continue to employ their existing work forces, let alone take on new people.

Partly to meet the problems of putting that extra burden on the shoulders of those in work, the Government have made a second shift in the distributional impact of the tax by increasing the burden on those in work, who are earning wages and salaries, and reducing the contribution paid by employers. That is the second redistribution of the cost of financing the welfare state.

All this has taken place, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South said, at a time when people are being asked to pay more, while getting less from the national insurance scheme. We do not quibble about the reforms that were introduced last year, which were welcomed. Nevertheless, there have been changes that have had a detrimental effect both on employment and on people's job opportunities.

Mr. Tim Smith: I do not quite understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. He keeps on saying that a larger burden is now placed on those in work, but is he suggesting that a larger burden should be placed on those who are out of work, or on pensioners? Surely most taxation is paid by people who are in work, and in one form or another they will end up paying for it. I cannot see how, if Beveridge had anticipated 70 per cent. as the amount of Treasury supplement, it would be a contributary scheme at all.

Mr. Field: Unfortunately, Beveridge is not here, so we cannot have a conversation with him and ask whether he thought that the scheme would be contributary, and, as I am not skilled in conducting seances, we shall have to leave the question of what he would have thought.

My last point links in with another point that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South made. One might criticise the Government over the poverty trap, but no Government can eradicate it. All that they can do is to move it around, as this Government have done. They have made it slightly better, in that the effect is less horrendous, but more people are caught in it. However, the changes in taxation that have occurred since 1979 show that for high income earners—less than 3 per cent. of the population—the cuts in taxation have been truly staggering. Had such cuts not been granted, we would have had the resources to eradicate the poverty trap as we know it today by changing the national insurance scheme, by raising thresholds, and by substantially increasing child benefit.

Mr. Tim Smith: Untrue.

Mr. Field: The hon. Member may not like that, but that is the choice. I shall give way if he wishes to dispute whether it is true about the tax cuts for what were called surtax payers. Do we now face the next election saying that even that pledge was not fulfilled by the Government?

Mr. Smith: That is not the point. We are not suggesting that the Government did not fulfil their pledge. However, the amount of revenue to be gained by raising the top rates of tax to their former level would not be sufficient to fund what the hon. Gentleman is describing.

Mr. Field: I am grateful for that intervention, because the parliamentary answers that we have had on this subject show that that small group of less than 3 per cent. have gained £8 billion since 1979. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that that would not make any difference to the proposals that we are discussing, he is living more in the world of Beveridge than the world in which I am living.

I do not disagree with the change in structure that the Government have made to the scheme. It is an improvement, but they have chosen to make other tax changes for those who are well off, rather than making major changes in reforming the financing of the welfare state and of the tax system for the majority of taxpayers. As a result, we still have the problem of the poverty trap. At the same time, we have been shifting the cost of the welfare state and, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said, all of us are paying more for less.

10.55 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I welcome the fact that the order reinforces the radical proposals which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced in his Budget statement when he reduced contribution rates for the lower paid to 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. respectively. We cannot estimate the effects of the changes as they were introduced as recently as 6 October, but I am

confident that they will have a substantial and beneficial effect on employment. The changes were welcomed by the majority. The regulations reinforce the changes.

I am concerned that thresholds are linked to pensions, which at present are linked to price increases. The result is that we are not increasing thresholds in line with earnings increases and they are falling as a proportion of earnings each year. It is nonsensical that someone earning only £38 a week should have to make any contribution to the national insurance fund, even if it is only 5 per cent. I know that if those contributions were not forthcoming there would be consequences for benefits, but it is crazy that someone earning so little should have to make any national insurance contributions.

I do not understand why there should be any Treasury contribution to the fund. If it is a genuine contributory pension scheme, those who participate should make contributions in exchange for which they are entitled to a pension after a certain period. There is no justification for the supplement. It has been reduced to 9 per cent., and in due course it should be eliminated.

10.57 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I cannot agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) about the Treasury supplement. It is a matter of concern that the percentage has been reduced. In 1975-76 — admittedly, before the Government took office—it stood at 18 per cent. and it is now only 9 per cent. That is a steep rate of decline.

I am optimistic about the order. I think that the appearance of the new Minister, the Under-Secretary of State, on the Government Front Bench has made a significant impact on the Government's policies and I look forward to the consequences of that in future. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, we should recognise that there has been some damage limitation. I recognise also that the national insurance rate has been held steady for three years, which is to be welcomed. The relatively small increases in the rates for the self-employed are to be welcomed.

In the context of the past six years, the small reductions that are proposed are only right and proper. I hope that they are a hint of things to come and that there will be further damage limitations and other improvements. If my understanding is right, the Government have a duty under section 120 of the Social Security Act 1975 to review the general level of earnings in Great Britain before they start to consider the content of the order.

I shall quote from an article that appeared in *The Guardian* of 30 October. It was concluded

"that the bottom 10 per cent. of all income earners had a rise in gross weekly earnings of 6·6 per cent. over the year to April compared with a rise in retail prices of 6·9 per cent. By contrast the top 10 per cent. took rises of nearly 7¼ per cent. while the average rise was just under 7·2 per cent."

The article continued:

"The gross earnings of the bottom 10 per cent. of men have risen by 69·8 per cent. since 1979, well short of the 74·6 per cent. rise in retail prices. Meanwhile, the top 10 per cent. have had rises worth 101·2 per cent. and the average (median) is 84 per cent."

That shows that there have been significant changes in the earnings of the better off and of the worse off. The gap between the better off and the worse off is increasing, and that is not adequately reflected in these provisions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) welcomed the lower rates of national insurance contributions at the time of the Budget as a move towards an integrated tax and credit system. The problem is that, as the system is working, instead of having one large discontinuity in contributions, the spread is bringing more people into the earnings trap. Reference has been made to the large number of people, between 70 and 80 per cent., on the marginal rates. We must watch carefully how the system works. I agree that these are early days, the scheme having come into operation in October.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): Is it not a fact that the increase in numbers to which the hon. Gentleman referred reflects the large increase in the number of people who are paying lower rates of national insurance contribution and, thus, are beneficiaries of the alterations that have been made by the Government? That should be welcomed, particularly in the context of what has been said about the lower paid not having wage increases as large as some of the higher paid.

Mr. Kirkwood: I welcome that so far as it goes, but two consequences flow from that development. Although the take-home pay of some people on very low rates of pay is increased, it makes it difficult for them to secure a real improvement in pay because of the earnings trap, especially as it gives employers the opportunity to hold down pay. They can tell employees, "There is no point in my paying you an extra two or three quid because it will all go in lost benefits, school meals and so on."

The Low Pay Unit, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and researchers at the London School of Economics have done some interesting work on this subject, and I will give an example of what can happen under the three phased reduced lower rates. A grade C part-time cleaner working 16 hours a week for £2·13 an hour earns £34·08 a week and is exempt from paying national insurance. If she receives an increase of 9p an hour, to £2·22 an hour, taking her pay to £35·52, she becomes subject to national insurance payments of £1·78 a week, meaning that her real take-home pay after the increase is £33·74, which is less than she earned before the increase. This instrument will increase the number of people who will find themselves in that situation, and we must keep a close eye on that.

I agree that the increases in the class 2 and 4 contributions could have been a great deal worse. The actuarial assumptions of increases in earnings of about 7 or 8 per cent. which have been written into the order fall a long way short of what will happen in respect of self-employed people, especially in the retail and hotel sectors. The experience of the past 12 months shows that they will have no increase in earnings. They will be lucky if they can hold their own in cash terms in the next 12 months, never mind have an increase in earnings.

Many self-employed people will find that the new stage rates will impose an increased burden on them. They will have to calculate the three new low rates. When there was only one rate employers had only to do one set of sums. They now have to do three. That must be taken into account. The self-employed have had a bad deal.

The rate revaluation in Scotland has had a severe impact on the earnings of small businesses in the past year and will continue to do so in the coming year. As has been mentioned, rates are a hidden impost on the self-employed that they must face in addition to the increases in gas, electricity, telephone and, in England, water prices. They

[Mr. Kirkwood]

have combined to prejudice the self-employed. They make the actuarial assumption of a 7 or 8 per cent. increase in their earnings optimistic, to say the least.

In general, the self-employed feel that the impost of class 2 and 4 contributions is unfair. They consider them to be a tax on employment that bears heavily on small businesses. They believe that they should have parity with employers who pay class 1 contributions and should be spared class 4 contributions and pay class 2 contributions. They cannot recoup their class 4 contributions because if they increase their prices to increase their incomes they increase the profits on which the class 4 contributions are based.

The self-employed have been dealt a rather unfortunate series of blows. The increased impost appears small on the face of it but, if we consider the way in which the Government have been acting in this matter over the past six years, the increases are stiff. We shall be looking for further reductions in self-employed and class 1 contributions in the future if we are to redress the balance that has become so sadly out of kilter over the past six years.

11.7 pm

Mr. Major: I began my introductory remarks by saying that I did not propose to anticipate the social security White Paper. That was prudent. I begin my closing remarks by saying that I do not propose to step between the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I am prepared from time to time to be reckless, but I am not prepared to be wholly foolhardy. I hope that the two hon. Ladies will appreciate that.

The hon. Member for Derby, South said a great many things. From time to time she even touched upon the order that we are debating. In one of those moments she mentioned that the national insurance fund balance of 20 per cent. of annual benefit still seemed high in relation to the 16·6 per cent. balance suggested as a minimum by the Government Actuary. I do not want to quibble with the hon. Lady, who was a distinguished luminary of the Labour Government, but in that Government's closing years the percentage balance was 39, 40·8 and 38·3 respectively. If I follow through the logic of what she subsequently said, I can only assume that they left that level of balance because they were anticipating the subsequent legacy of unemployment.

The hon. Lady also said—and what she said was echoed to a degree by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)—that three times as many people may be caught in the poverty trap post changes in graduated contributions as were caught previously. As my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Derbyshire, South said, it is not specifically the numbers of people who may be affected that matters, but how badly they are affected. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) touched on that point quite clearly and honestly.

There are great difficulties with the poverty trap, and we all acknowledge that. No Government have yet found a way to eliminate those difficulties. We hope that we will ameliorate them with the proposals that we will set out in the White Paper that I am not disposed to discuss this evening. Nevertheless, it is clear that the changes that were made in October have softened the effects of those difficulties—and done so quite dramatically. That is wholly to the good.

The hon. Lady spoke about why it might be a good idea to spend the balance in the fund—perhaps on higher pensions or some other attractive area of spending. The answer is quite clear. It is a matter of simple prudence. The balance in the fund is necessary for working purposes. It is needed as a reserve against unexpected increases in benefit expenditure or falls in contribution income. We would be very unwise to operate on a very narrow margin.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South spoke of the attractions of a reduction in the national insurance rate to 6 per cent. I must tell her that a 1 per cent. reduction would result in a £1,300 million drop in resources in the first year, and a reduction of the size that she suggested would cost the fund about £4 billion, which would be a very substantial reduction indeed.

There was considerable discussion by my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield and for Derbyshire, South and the hon. Members for Birkenhead and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the anticipated effects on employment of the changes in graduated contributions. It is fair to say that as the changes became operative only from 6 October, it is too early to make any realistic assessment of what may be achieved. The predictions that we have seen—from the private sector, not the Government sector—suggest the creation of between 150,000 and 400,000 extra jobs by 1987.

The purpose of those changes—should they be successful—was clear. It was to create a climate in which employers would take on extra staff. We hope that they will seize that opportunity, not only for the economy at large but for those at present out of work who would come into work if they were able successfully to do so.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that employers might find it difficult to work with three different rates of contribution. I hate to disagree with him, but he is wholly wrong. All employers are issued with national insurance tables and they merely need to read across them to see the liabilities. I cannot believe that the changes in graduated rates will cause any significant difficulties.

There was a modicum of discussion about the size of the Treasury supplement, which remains steady this year at 9 per cent. I cannot offer the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire any commitments for the future, but was pleased to hear that he was content that the level of contribution would remain steady this year.

However begrudgingly, the Opposition should give the Government some credit for one or two of the matters in the regulations and in the October changes that preceded them——

Mr. Frank Field: We are spreading it around with a trowel.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that, I would hate to be here when he was not doing that—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I will be here—it is a pleasure to which I look forward during the next few weeks.

We could have had a little more credit for the fact that the class 1 contribution rates did not rise for the third successive year. That is a substantial achievement, bearing in mind the background against which it was achieved. I hate to contradict the hon. Gentleman, but it compares

favourably with the previous Labour Administration, who increased employers' contributions by five percentage points. We did not hear much about that from the Opposition. We might also have heard a little more about the fact that we are proposing to extend the advantages of the new lower contribution rates a good deal higher up the earnings scale. I think that that is generally welcomed. I hope that it will also be welcomed outside the House. We still intend to ensure that those paying contributions at the lower rates will have their benefit rights protected.

I think that that is a good record and one which we can commend to the House with some pride and pleasure. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 12th November, be approved.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents)

PROTECTION OF WORKERS:

PROSCRIPTION OF HARMFUL AGENTS

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9193/84 and 7832/85, draft Directive and amended draft Directive on the protection of workers by the proscription of specified agents and/or work activities; recognises that the intent of the draft Directive accords with established United Kingdom practice on the protection of workers; and endorses the Government's intention to agree to the Directive in principle.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES

That the draft Restrictive Trade Practices (Services) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 22nd November, be approved.

ROADS AND BRIDGES (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Security for Private Road Works (Scotland) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 26th November, be approved.

AGRICULTURE

That the draft Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 2nd December, be approved.

BETTING, GAMING AND LOTTERIES

That the draft Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (Schedule 4) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Report (10th December) of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

St. Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

11.16 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of the intended closure of St. Nicholas hospital. I am also grateful for the visible support of the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). I hope that he will have the opportunity of catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the course of the debate. If he does, he may speak not only for himself but for his hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend). I appreciate and value the support that the hon. Members have given in the campaign on behalf of St. Nicholas hospital. Their support has demonstrated that this is an all-party campaign, and underlines the fact that the hospital serves not only my constituency but neighbouring areas.

This is the third occasion on which I have raised the question of the future of St. Nicholas hospital on the Adjournment. That illustrates the long-standing campaign waged against it by Health Service officials and the sheer determination of local people to keep it open.

It is worth putting the current problems into perspective. The first formal attack on St. Nicholas came as long ago as 1971 from the former south east regional hospital board. Its plan died with the board's demise in 1974, but the vendetta against St. Nicholas continued. The new Greenwich and Bexley area health authority issued a formal consultation document in November 1976 proposing the removal of all acute services from St. Nicholas. Despite massive public opposition, the closure of all beds at the hospital was confirmed by the authority in July 1977. The problem then landed on the desk of the Secretary of State the present Lord Ennals. To his credit, he received several deputations, consulted widely and visited Plumstead to see for himself, not just the hospital but the area it serves. As a result he declared in December 1977:

"I do not believe it can be right to close the hospital and I am unwilling to do so."

He justified that decision by producing what is arguably the most quoted statement about the hospital in its long and distinguished history. He said:

"St. Nicholas is a valued hospital, well situated to service a community whose population is growing. It is in Plumstead where social conditions are poor and there are many old people living in bad housing. It is also central for Thamesmead, a locality of industrial development."

In May 1978 after further detailed discussions and some deliberation, the Secretary of State announced his final decision. He endorsed the plan put forward by the South East Thames regional health authority. It was intended to turn St. Nicholas from a district general hospital into a community hospital. The blueprint for the transformation was clear and detailed. In its new role, the hospital was to provide, in the words of the then Secretary of State,

"out-patient and minor casuality facilities; theatre and supporting services for minor surgery with about 20 beds; 20 to 25 general practitioner medical beds; and the present 41 geriatric beds with perhaps the addition of some further geriatric beds. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of a psycho-geriatric day centre."

I admit that I was disappointed and somewhat cynical about that outcome. To me, trusting St. Nicholas to the

[Mr. John Cartwright]

tender mercies of those Health Service mandarins who had always wanted to close it was about as sensible as trusting Little Red Riding Hood to the wolf.

Lord Ennals did his best to reassure me. In a personal letter dated 10 July 1978, he wrote:

"I really do not think it right to contend that the change of use of St. Nicholas hospital means its eventual closure. I told the health authorities that I am not willing to agree to closure and I know that they will make every effort to develop practicable arrangements which will enable the hospital to continue. I cannot believe that the inevitable transitional problems cannot be solved and I am sure that St. Nicholas can become a viable community hospital which will complement the District General Hospitals in the Area and give valuable service to the people of Plumstead and Thamesmead."

Unfortunately, my pessimistic forecast turned out to be more accurate than Lord Ennals' optimistic predictions. It was only four years after his decision that the health authority once again recommended total closure of the hospital. In the meantime, it had never allowed the hospital even to try to carry out the tasks that the Secretary of State had mapped out for it. It starved it of resources, refused to let it provide the range of services included in the 1978 decision, and, far from developing the hospital, pursued a policy of systematically removing one after another of the vital elements of the 1978 package.

First came the closure of a minor surgery department. Then the number of general practitioner beds was cut. A continued rundown of out-patient facilities culminated in the transfer of two ear, nose and throat clinics to the Brook hospital. Then came the abrupt closure of the "walking wounded" accident department. In none of those cases was there any public consultation. The closures were regarded as temporary, and not therefore subject to the formal procedures. In act, they were widely seen for what they were—a deliberate campaign by the Greenwich health authority to run down St. Nicholas by back-door cuts and thus to achieve the total closure that it had been denied in 1978.

In 1982 people in the authority finally took their courage in both hands and once again started the formal procedure to shut down the hospital. Then they became embroiled in a complex argument with the Bexley health authority over the division of the financial spoils expected to result from closure. That arose because between 60 and 66 Bexley patients are being cared for in geriatric beds in Greenwich hospitals. Bexley wants to provide for them in its own area, but it cannot do so until it gets its hands on a substantial slice of cash from Greenwich. The Bexley plan was to provide extra geriatric beds at Queen Mary's hospital in Sidcup and to create 26 new beds at Erith and district hospital, originally by 1988-89. However, we now hear that the Erith scheme is being put back, apparently as far into the future as 1993-94. Bexley is therefore left with a maximum of 34 geriatric beds at Queen Mary's in Sidcup in which to accommodate some 60 to 66 patients now in Greenwich.

Most people would regard that as too much of a tight squeeze, but Bexley health authority officials apparently believe that it is possible because what they charmingly call their throughput is considerably higher than that of Greenwich. That seems a somewhat insensitive approach to the care of the elderly and a rather doubtful proposition. It also totally ignores the fact that many of those elderly folk come from Erith, Belvedere and Welling in the northern part of the borough, an area which is far better served by the nearby St. Nicholas hospital than by one in faraway Sidcup. In fact, I understand that some elderly people discharged from Queen Mary's hospital in Sidcup find their way into private nursing homes, and as a result are even further away from their homes and relatives than in Sidcup.

The Bexley patients are vital to the future of St. Nicholas hospital. If beds cannot be found for the old folk who are now cared for in the Brook and Memorial hospitals in Greenwich, the space that is needed will not be released to accommodate the Greenwich patients who now occupy St. Nicholas hospital beds.

The negotiations between the two district health authorities have been a long and drawn out affair. As long ago as 17 December 1984 the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), in his role as a Department of Health and Social Security Minister, wrote to me and said:

"I am concerned that there should not be any further delay in making the decision on the future of St. Nicholas. It is important that Greenwich and Bexley health authorities agree between themselves at an early date on the amount of revenue to be transferred for geriatric services currently provided to Bexley residents from St. Nicholas. I will ensure that South East Thames Regional Health Authority is ready to arbitrate between the two authorities if agreement is not reached soon."

I understand that the negotiations are still not complete. The Minister gave that assurance over a year ago. Nobody can accuse the authorities concerned of intemperate haste.

May I offer what I hope will be a sensible and helpful suggestion to the Minister. Given that the Erith provision will not be available until 1993-94, is it not possible to provide funds to enable the Bexley health authority to take over beds in St. Nicholas? There is plenty of accommodation in St. Nicholas. Could not some of the beds there be allocated to Bexley to provide for those old folk who will otherwise have to be accommodated at Queen Mary's hospital?

I very much welcome the action that the Minister has taken so far. He has not rubber stamped the closure decision; he has asked serious questions about the future of patient care if St. Nicholas is closed. It is not just geriatric patients who will be affected. In its comments upon the closure proposal, the Greenwich and Bexley family practitioner committee questioned the sense of spending considerable capital sums upon providing extra outpatient and paramedical facilities in other hospitals if St. Nicholas was closed, particularly if this would involve patients in long and difficult journeys. The family practitioner committee supported at the very least the retention of full outpatient and diagnostic services at St. Nicholas.

It is also worth recalling that 54 local general practitioners who had used the general practitioner beds at St. Nicholas oppose both the closure and the resulting transfer of those beds to Greenwich district hospital. Their comment was revealing. They said that there was a crying need for beds for the elderly, whose primary need was care rather than high technology medicine or surgery. St. Nicholas could play that complementary, supportive role, with great benefit to the two district general hospitals. Many of the routine, minor accident cases could be dealt with at St. Nicholas instead of lengthening the queues at the Brook or the Greenwich district hospitals. The pressure on beds at the two big general hospitals could be eased if none acute cases and care were available at St. Nicholas.

My constituents are incensed by the fact that St. Nicholas is not being allowed to fill this role. They want to know what on earth the point is of lengthy and detailed public consultation if a health authority can then ignore its results as blatantly as the Greenwich health authority has done in this case. St. Nicholas is ideally sited to serve not just my constituents in Plumstead, Abbey Wood and Thamesmead but many more people in the neighbouring areas of Belvedere, Welling and Erith. It is ridiculous that these potential patients and their families should be forced to undertake costly and difficult journeys to Sidcup, just because of the bureaucracy of health service boundaries.

We are not asking for the hospital to be retained in its present form. We understand that the nature of the site makes it extremely expensive to run, but it should be possible to use some of the buildings and some of the land to provide the basic essentials that are needed by a viable and effective community hospital. That would release a substantial area of land to help with the funding of the necessary capital expenditure.

None of the factors that led Lord Ennals to rule against the closure in 1978 has been removed. The population is still growing, particularly in Thamesmead. There are still large numbers of elderly people. There are still substantial areas of old housing. And growing unemployment has done absolutely nothing to improve the social deprivation in the area. If anything, the case for St. Nicholas is stronger today than it was in 1978.

I applaud the Minister for the action that he has taken so far. I urge him to follow the example of his distinguished predecessor and come and see for himself. He will find that the case for St. Nicholas rests not on loyalty to a much loved local institution, powerful though that is, but on the sheer hard fact of the need for health care in the area that St. Nicholas has served for so long and that it should be able to serve in the future.

11.29 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Is the hon. Gentleman's intervention agreeable to the Minister?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Evennett: I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate and to associate myself with the comments of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) about St. Nicholas hospital.

As I see it, there are two main points. The first is the background to health care provision in my constituency, in that of the hon. Member for Woolwich and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), who, regrettably, is unable to be present. Before the district authorities emerged, our area was served by the Bexley and Greenwich health authority. As a result, people living in the western part of my constituency used St. Nicholas hospital because it was their nearest hospital. On the Bexley side of the divide, underfunding of the district has caused St. Nicholas hospital to provide desperately needed services, which it has done extremely well for many years and for which I express the gratitude of the people of Erith and Crayford.

To close any hospital is always sad. To close one which is so valued and so vital is a mistake. The hon. Member for Woolwich referred to population growth in his constituency. The same is true in my constituency, in Thamesmead, with its new community trust, and in Belvedere. This means that people will be looking for more hospital services in my constituency. Yet the response of the district and regional health authorities to that trend is to close St. Nicholas and to postpone development of the only other local hospital, the Erith and district hospital. Such policies not only cause much concern, but call into question the whole strategy of the regional health authority. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take serious note of that.

My second point is more general but entirely relevant to the debate. I believe that the National Health Service has a place for two types of hospital—the large district general hospital, such as Queen Mary's, with facilities for major surgery, acute care, and so on and the smaller local hospital, such as St. Nicholas and the Erith and district hospital. The smaller hospital should provide a range of services—walking wounded, outpatient services, limited surgical facilities, GP beds, geriatric care, and so on. The Erith and district hospital has provided such services, as St. Nicholas also did in the past.

With the technological advances in medicine, it is clear that expensive equipment can be provided only in the larger hospitals, but the value of smaller hospitals must not be underestimated. They provide and, I believe, will continue to provide, a vital community service and they should not be allowed to wither and die. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Woolwich that the withering and dying of St. Nicholas hospital is regrettable and should be halted. Erith hospital is under a similar threat.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to look very carefully at the provision of much-needed medical facilities within our district because if we do not do that the people will suffer—the elderly and the sick whom we have to look after and about whom we are concerned today. The proposal to close St. Nicholas hospital is detrimental to my constituents, as is the failure to develop Erith hospital. I urge my hon. Friend to think long and hard, as I am sure he will, about the provision of facilities in our area — in Woolwich, Thamesmead, Erith and Crayford—to come and see those facilities and then to make his decision.

11.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to have the opportunity to respond to a debate that is of great importance to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and to their constituents. I recognise their actions over many years to defend the hospital.

We are carefully considering the recommendations at ministerial level. The hon. Member for Woolwich has understandably said that that is not new, but he has accepted that this matter needs measured, careful consideration. We recognise the passions that have been raised and the realities to which the hon. Member for Woolwich and my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford referred.

We must all deal with the policy of the resource allocation working party—RAWP, that strange acronym which we have all grown to know and love, if not necessarily to understand. The thrust of the policy is to

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

move to greater equality in the provision of services throughout Britain. The policy has had bipartisan support for 10 years. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) played a part in its initial stages. Under the RAWP formula, Greenwich health authority is 22 per cent. over the accepted level and, in common with a number of other inner London districts, is overprovided with acute beds. It needs to reduce the numbers of such beds, build up its priority services and release resources for redistribution to historically underprovided districts, such as Medway in the South-East Thames region.

We must approach this problem against the background of making sensible use of resources, while recognising the sentiments that are involved. We shall carefully consider the arguments made tonight and on other occasions by hon. Members and others. We are asking "serious questions", as the hon. Member for Woolwich was generous enough to recognise, about the timing of alternative facilities at Bexley and about transport. We need answers.

Those who put the case for the defence of St. Nicholas must face serious issues. The hospital was built in 1872. A new district general hospital—Greenwich—was built nearby in the 1970s and the Brook hospital is only three or four miles away, providing a comprehensive range of services. The district health authority believes that maximum efficiency can best be achieved by concentrating all acute hospital in patient services in those two major hospitals — Brook hospital and Greenwich district hospital.

In looking at the problems involved in running St. Nicholas hospital, we must take account of the resource implications. Of the total running costs of between £2 million and £2·6 million, only 46 per cent. is spent on direct patient care.

Mr. Cartwright: That is a fair point. I am sure the hon. Gentleman understands that that figure is so high because there is so much unused space and so many unused buildings on the site. I suggest that we rationalise the site and use it more effectively. I suggest that Bexley should be allocated some beds at St. Nicholas to tide it over during this problem until the Erith development comes on stream. That would be another effective use of the resources.

Mr. Whitney: That is another possibility. I am not attacking or defending a stance, but putting the issues on the record. The hospital was built in 1872 and, whatever use it is put to, it will always be expensive to run and maintain. It is estimated that, on present proposals, there will be savings of about £1·5 million a year after the first year. The health authority is anxious to maximise its resources to meet the needs of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the elderly.

I understand that the 12 general practitioner beds have consistently been underused, the average daily occupancy being just over half in 1983. I assure the hon. Member for Woolwich that there is no vendetta by Health Service officials. It is recognised that the district and regional health authorities must make the most sensible disposition of resources. They must be allowed to examine such a proposal. The fact that it has come back again and again does not necessarily make it bad. It might be the most justified one. I recognise the strong local loyalties that have been reflected here today.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health and I are considering the matter carefully. We shall examine still further with health authority chairmen the timing of the provision of alternative facilities and transport facilities. I hope that it will not be long before we can conclude that consideration. I assure hon. Members that the consideration will be careful and that what they have said tonight will form part of our examination.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 December 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Tax Cases (Appeals)

9.34 am

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition in due form addressed

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The humble Petition of Anthony John Miller, of 85, Alexandria Road, Sidmouth, in the County of Devon, national Chairman of the Taxation Committee of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses Limited, sheweth:

That whereas in a letter dated 30th April 1984 to John Moore Esq. M.P., Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Anthony John Miller stated inter alia that

> "The provision contained in the 1983 Finance Bill, relating to election for appeals to be heard by the Special Commissioners has been put forward again in substantially the same form in the 1984 Finance Bill under Schedule 22. The effect of these changes in the law is to remove from the taxpayer their absolute right to elect to bring an appeal before and to be heard by the Special Commissioners. We object most strongly to any change of this absolute right.
>
> Nicholas Ridley states in his letter that the intention is to remove this right only in respect of 'delay cases'. With respect, we can see nothing in the proposed legislation which will ensure that it will be applied only to 'delay cases'. The decision is left entirely to the discretion of the General Commissioners, who have to be satisfied that certain conditions are fulfilled.'

and whereas in a letter dated 17 May 1984 to Anthony John Miller, John Moore Esq., MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, stated inter alia that:

> "The concern of the National Federation is Clause 122 and Schedule 23, paragraph 3. You say that the effect of this provision is to remove from the taxpayer his absolute right to elect to bring and appeal before and to be heard by the Special Commissioners . . .
>
> I fully understand your concern and would straight-away reiterate that it is the intention of the Government (and the Inland Revenue if the proposals became law) that the provision should apply only to 'delay cases' . . . The provision does not disturb the right of the taxpayer to be heard by the Special Commissioners. It is not concerned with cases where there is a dispute about the correctness of a return, where the right will continue to run. It does not interfere with the rights of a taxpayer who particularly does not wish to appear before the General Commissioners. It merely provides that if an appellant has not troubled to supply the Inspector with his accounts or a return in support of his appeal—in practice within about 15 months of the end of the year of assessment, as Nicholas Ridley explained to Gerald Malone—he really cannot in this day and age expect to take up the time of a specialist tribunal.
>
> The problem has been one of definition and we finally decided to use an existing definition in Section 45(4) Taxes Management Act 1970, that is a case where the appellant has arguments to present or evidence to adduce on the merits of the appeal. This wording was originally devised to define a delay case in deciding on a quorum for the present Special Commissioners' hearings. It was agreed with the professional organisations"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is a great expert on procedural matters. I draw his attention to Standing Order No. 119, which lays down that a petition should be summarised and that only the prayer should be read out.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: My understanding is, Mr. Speaker, that the petition "may" be summarised, not "must" be summarised. The House is entitled to hear the petition, more than half of which I have completed. Is that not so?

Mr. Speaker: The Standing Order states that a Member

"shall confine himself to a statement of the parties from whom it comes, the number of signatures attached to it, and the material allegations contained in it, and to reading the prayer of such petition."

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am presenting the material allegations to the House. They are complex and cannot be further compressed without their thrust being lost. The petition is of great importance to thousands of taxpayers who believe that they have been wrongly assessed. I certainly shall not add any comment to it.

The letter continues:

> "It was agreed with the professional organisations when it was drafted, has stood the test of time and has been generally understood and accepted. The Inland Revenue have assured me that there would be no question but that submission of full accounts and/or a complete return would be covered by this definition.'

And whereas in a reply to a question by Neil Hamilton MP in a debate on the Finance Bill in Standing Committee A on 21 June 1984, Mr. Ian Stewart MP Economic Secretary to the Treasury said inter alia.

> "The hon. Gentleman asked about the effect of clause 122 and the schedule on the ability of taxpayers to elect whether the case goes before the general or the special commissioners . . . I can confirm that paragraph 3 of Schedule 22 covers only delay cases. The general rights of appeal to either the general or the special commissioners therefore still remain. If papers and accounts relating to a case are submitted in time, which for normal purposes is a 15-month period, the taxpayer's rights are fully protected and it would not normally qualify the 'delay case.'"

and whereas in a letter dated 2 July 1984 to Robin Maxwell-Hyslop Esq. MP the Rt. Hon. Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone stated inter alia that

> "The provision is intended to restrict the right of the taxpayer"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once the hon. Member starts including in his summary what he has himself said we are creating an unhappy precedent.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am not quoting anything that I have said; I am quoting what the Lord Chancellor said in an official letter to a Member of Parliament. It is because the Government have not done what the Lord Chancellor undertook in an official letter that this petition has been presented to the House.

Mr. Speaker: My point is—I think that the hon. Member would be with me on this—that we must not create precedents here. The rule is that a summary should be made.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I am three quarters of the way through, you will be relieved to hear, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop]

The petition refers to the Lord Chancellor's letter, which stated:

> "The provision is intended to restrict the right of the taxpayer to elect to have his case heard by the Special Commissioners instead of the General Commissioners only in cases where the taxpayer has appealed against the tax assessment but has not produced any evidence to support his appeal ('delay' cases)"—

I am on the last page, Mr. Speaker—

> "The general right of election between the General Commissioners and the Special Commissioners remains. I understand that when the Inland Revenue consulted on this matter, the policy was generally welcomed and I have no objection to it.
>
> As to the way in which the provision has been drafted, the legislative language used to identify delay causes in the Finance Bill is that used in Section 45(4) of the Taxes Management Act 1970. I am informed by the Revenue that when Section 45 was drafted it was agreed with the professional organisations and it has stood the test of time."

The petition continues:

and whereas Clause 122 and Schedule 22, paragraph 3 of the 1984 Finance Bill was enacted as amendments to Section 31 of the Taxes Management Act 1970.

and whereas the practical effect of the amended legislation is that H.M. Inspectors of Taxes are applying Section 31 (5B) of the Finance Act 1970 to cases which are not "delay cases" and referring them to the General Commissioners and the General Commissioners are directing in such cases that the election to appear before the Special Commissioners be disregarded, and the taxpayer is thereby being denied the general right of election between the General Commissioners and the Special Commissioners.

Therefore your Petitioner humbly prays this honourable House to take the premises into consideration and to do therein as to this honourable House shall seem meet.

To lie upon the Table.

Industry Year 1986

9.47 am

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the initiative of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in declaring 1986 Industry Year; agrees that it is essential that society values the contribution that industry makes to the nation's well-being, and that the most talented people are again attracted to work in industry to secure its future; welcomes the support being given to the initiative by the Government, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, the British Institute of Management, churches, women's groups and others; and urges all companies and schools to become involved.

All round us we can see evidence of the creation of wealth—schools, hospitals, roads and everything that we hold dear to us—but I wonder how many people comprehend how these provisions are made and how the finance is arrived at.

We are a resourceful and intelligent country. In many respects, we are the invention house of the world. Long is the list of British inventions that have been developed by many other countries into commercial success. We have produced more Nobel prize winners than any other country. We excel expecially when we have our backs to the wall. Our performance 45 years ago in the second world war is evidence of that. The struggle that we had just two or three years ago in the Falklands war is ample evidence of the resourcefulness of our industrial background in providing the weapons and tools to enable our forces to do the job.

Yet, despite this resourcefulness and inventiveness, our industrial capacity as a nation seems to be inexorably in decline. Some people can easily identify many of the reasons. It is not difficult to go through the list. Poor design is held up as an example. Many of the products of British origin that we have bought in the past two years leave much to be desired. Poor quality normally goes hand-in-hand with design, because quality starts on the drawing board. If the design is not good, it is difficult to get good quality.

There is an element of poor salesmanship, a sort of take-it-or-leave-it attitude which has cost us dear in many markets throughout the world and in the United Kingdom. The factories that produced good products apparently felt that Britain and the world would beat a path to their door to buy their products. They now realise—if they are still in business—that that is not the case. Poor productivity, brought on by poor management and restricted practices by the work force, played their part in ensuring that our decline has continued for many years.

There is a light at the end of those tunnels. I shall quote Sir Adrian Cadbury, the chairman of the west midlands industry year campaign committee:

> "For too long, Britain has found it more comfortable to sink in a gentlemanly fashion down the international league table than to take the actions needed to reverse the decline."

As I said, in some respects, we have been able to redress that decline. We have made great strides in improving the quality and design of our goods and our salesmanship and marketing ability. The evidence of that exists all around us. The most notable example is Jaguar Cars. It epitomised everything that was wrong with British industry until the late 1970s. When grasped by the neck by a good manager, and when the product was revitalised and the work force

had received the support that it needed to produce a product of quality, that product excelled in all the markets in which it was offered.

In the early days, companies such as Jaguar Cars and many others were good. The malaise occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. The white heat of the technological revolution passed those companies by. They felt that their products could rest on the laurels that had been gained over many years. They found their capitive markets disappearing to their competitors.

Much has been gained over the past few years, but there is still something wrong with our industry. Despite the improvements in design, productivity, worker-management relations and the number of new products coming onto the market something is still causing the country problems in re-establishing its industrial might.

Other countries do not seem to have such a problem. Countries such as Japan, Germany and America, and many of our European competitors are forging ahead. They seem to have an industrial background which enables new ideas to come forward and their factories to produce goods that are wanted. That is something that we lack.

The purpose of the Industry Year 1986 campaign is to identify that factor and to take steps to eradicate it as far as possible. Other hon. Members may wish to widen the debate into industry's problems generally. I respect that wish because we are talking about industry in 1986—next year. The campaign does not necessarily cover all Government, local government or regional policies. Many of my colleagues might wish to mention subjects which are not directly relevant to the campaign.

The Industry Year 1986 campaign is non-political. It was felt that to politicise it would lead inevitably to dissent, which would mask the message that the campaign is trying to get across.

What is the Industry Year 1986 campaign seeking to do? The opportunity for the expansion of our industrial capacity is now or never. We have a marvellous opportunity to develop our industrial capacity against a strong economic background and improvements in productivity, industrial design and standards. We need to grasp that opportunity now if we are to provide for health, welfare, education and all the resources that we shall want in the future.

The aim of the campaign is to improve the public perception of industry's importance. A lack of that has proved to be one of the most debilitating factors in our industrial progress. I shall quote from a survey conducted to discover people's conception of industry about—how they see its importance compared with other walks of life. A survey covered 3,333 students between the ages of 13 and 18. It stressed:

"Perhaps the most important single finding was that there was no significant understanding of the importance of business as the basis of wealth creation, low appreciation that it was a worthwhile career to follow either in its own right or for its wealth creation process or understanding of the benefit it brings the nation—the poor and the sick."

When considering the importance of the many professions and occupations, 84 per cent. of the 3,333 considered that doctors and nurses were the most beneficial to the nation and were the most important people. I do not argue that they are not the most important. They are vital, but what disappoints me immensely is that only 24 per cent. of those questioned thought that managers in industry were important; only 21 per cent. thought that the factory worker was important; and only 7 per cent. thought that the shop worker was important. The shop worker is covered by the campaign because of the retail sector's importance to the economy's wealth-creating process.

Many young people and others do not consider that industry and the wealth-creating process are as relevant as they once were. The CBI finds that to be the case. At a recent meeting in the House, the west midlands CBI was asked to state the greatest problem that confronted it in ensuring that British industry improved its productivity. I asked, "Why is it that after 10 or 15 years of trying to improve productivity, you still suggest that your productivity is not as good as that of your competitors? Why is there a delay?" The answer was, "Because, by and large, we cannot get the right men and women into industry. We cannot get the men and women with the brains, the expertise and the desire to improve the wealth-creating process. If we could, we could make the improvements in productivity that we need. They are not interested in coming into industry." That is a problem which we must tackle urgently.

We must try to redress the balance and attract young people into industry. Industry Year 1986 has been initiated by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce. It has three basic aims; first to increase awareness of the fact that industrial success is fundamental to whatever we do; secondly, to increase the links between education and industry it has set targets to be accomplished during the next 12 months or so—and thirdly, to encourage industry to play a fuller role in the community within which it operates.

The campaign has been in preparation since 13 April 1984. It is not an instant, firing-from-the-hip response. It is a carefully co-ordinated and thought-out campaign to bring home to the country the importance of Industry Year 1986. It has a complete regional network. It is probably the most ambitious campaign ever conducted to further any form of industrial initiative. It has a small central organisation. Much of the preparation of the literature and other material has already been done.

There are now regional activity groups and regional working groups which have been set up throughout the country. Many of them are interested in following a pre-set campaign to attract as much attention as possible. To create awareness of the fundamental contribution of industry, it is necessary to attract the help and support of the media, through the newspapers, television and radio, and to prepare video films for presentation to schools, clubs, colleges and so on. There needs to be stronger links between education and industry. That involves organisation in the schools and colleges. There needs to be action within industry itself, because much has to be done to improve relations within industry between workers and employers, so the trade unions also have to play their part.

Norman Willis, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, has written to every general secretary of every affiliated trade union, encouraging participation in Industry Year. He has written an article for inclusion in all trade union journals. Therefore, the campaign does not cover management or industry only; it covers the trade unions. Obviously, we all have a vested interest in ensuring that industry plays a major part in the life of the nation.

I have already mentioned the CBI's awareness that too few people wish to come into industry. The problem starts from the first day that children go to school. Very little

[Mr. Roger King]

contact is made with young children concerning the role of industry. Their education is strictly formalised. Although there are notable exceptions, in general the wealth creating process is not drawn to the attention of children in primary schools, or even in junior schools. We should try to create interest in that process as early as we can. I am not necessarily suggesting that children should go to factories and have jelly and ice cream at the end of the assembly line, to gain some idea of factory life, but during their junior school days children should be given the chance to visit factories and talk to people involved in the manufacturing process. The younger they are when they become involved with the enthusiasm of industry, the more likely they will be to appreciate its importance. From small acorns big oak trees grow. Although I do not suggest that every youngster visiting a factory will be caught up in the enthusiasm of industrial life, the country will be the loser if such visits do not take place.

Junior schools should play a part in creating projects linked with local places of work, including factories. They should be involved in making things, looking at them, seeing how they work and how they can be improved. Factory managers and trade unionists should help the schools with those projects.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman with great attention, but is he not founding his points on a false assumption? If his suggestion were to be adopted, is it not equally possible that the visitors would be put off? What contribution have the big public schools made to manufacturing industry as distinct from finance, the City and the law?

Mr. King: I hope that youngsters would not be put off. I am not suggesting that factories should be obliged to receive parties of school children. I hope that they would receive them with enthusiasm and instil that enthusiasm into them. It takes two to tango, and I hope that industry will show enthusiasm for its contribution to the nation, although sometimes it does not appear to show it.

I cannot answer for every public school in the land. For my sins, I went to a public school and my contribution to industry has been minuscule, but I have played a modest part. I hope that many of my colleagues and others who have been to public school are capable of making their contribution. I have no idea whether the public schools have made a contribution. In contrast with the position 50 or 60 years ago, today many quite average people go to public schools for various reasons. The hon. Member will know that many Service personnel are obliged to send their children to public schools, and they could never be described as being the monied people of the land.

We should take every possible step to acquaint junior school children of science and technology. I know that that is difficult because of their learning abilities, but in the school that my children aged 8 attend they are able and willing, together with the other children—partly as a result of television and exposure to the media—to learn a great deal more than children were able to learn a generation or so ago. I hope that basic science and engineering will, in liaison with factories and the manufacturing processes, become part of the junior school curriculum in the not-too-distant future and play a substantial part in awakening the interest of young people in our industrial life.

At the level of secondary education, we must adopt a much more serious approach. I am not suggesting that the relationship of junior schools with factories should not be serious, but in secondary schools we have to make a serious approach to the task of attracting people into industry.

I have addressed many schools. On one occasion, in addressing youngsters aged 15 or so, I asked how many of them would like to start a business. In a class of just under 30, the majority put up their hands. When I asked what they thought was needed to start a business, about 95 per cent. said that money was needed. The other 5 per cent. mentioned the need to have backing. Only one youngster gave the correct answer—that for starting a business the essential requirement is an idea. Without an idea a business cannot be started.

I was worried that those youngsters, having gone through the education system, felt that the main impediment to starting a business was the lack of money. We must try to remove that mental block and show that the most important ingredient is an original idea for a new product or service. Once that idea exists, many of the other problems can be resolved.

We need to establish, within the secondary school curriculum, a proper knowledge of the role of industry. In the past few years great emphasis has been placed on home economics courses—cooking, sewing and all the things involved in maintaining a home. That is very good, but is it not time that there were business economics classes at schools, so that every child leaving school would know about business? Why should not there be an O-level in business? It is extraordinary that we put home economics before business economics, when the wealth creating process transcends everything else in importance.

Why should not we teach youngsters to understand the system involved in our stock markets, the raising of capital, and VAT returns? Why should not there be an O-level in VAT returns or in basic profit and loss accounts? We should be teaching children those subjects, with rather less emphasis placed on sewing and cooking, although they are important. I did not learn them at school and had to get married to get that sort of provision. That may sound to some like male chauvinism, but to me it sounds like common sense.

We should look closely at the curriculum of secondary schools and create a new discipline in the business element, with a business O-level course. That is of vital importance. It is also important to ensure that women are enthusiastic about industry. Because of the attitudes that have been adopted over the years, there are far too few women in industry and running industry. That is tragic. It does not happen in many other countries, particularly those of our competitors. Although there are notable examples of women getting to the top of the tree, they are few and far between. Women are often subjected to male chauvinism and to positive discouragement. That is wrong because they have much to contribute, probably more than many of the males of the species.

The director of external affairs at Austin Rover is Jean Denton. She is a lady of considerable ability and she runs the department extremely well. I am grateful that the company will play a major part in Industry Year. She is going to make a special attempt, as befits her position, to attract more women into industry. There will be a series of video demonstrations and talks at dealers' showrooms throughout the country, with special emphasis on the role

that women can play in industry. That is to be applauded, and I look foward to it continuing in many other companies.

Women's institutes, of which there are vast numbers, and all sorts of female-orientated organisations also have an important part to play to discuss the role of industry, to meet people and to learn and understand the process that industry undergoes in order to create the nation's wealth. I hope that women will play a substantial part in the campaign, as should the Church.

Much criticism has been made in recent weeks about the role of the Church within our community. As I receive all the reports here and at home in my constituency and hear the problems of constituents, I often wonder about the problems of our society, such as poor housing, and the many other difficulties that confront us. We all know about that, and the Church commented on it recently in "Faith in the City". No emphasis is given to the wealth-creating process. It is almost as though wealth grows on trees and one has only to shake the trunk and the wealth will drop off. I know that the Church understands the wealth-creating process, but it should pay more attention to it. I hope that Industry Year will encourage the churches to place a greater emphasis on the wealth-creating process and acquaint their congregations with it.

One thing that we do understand is that one cannot have what one cannot pay for, and it cannot be paid for unless the money is earned. It is as simple as that. If we want to cure the problem of the inner city areas, to overcome the urban deprivation and other problems in our society, we must create the wealth to do so and the atmosphere that can bring it about.

Trade unions obviously have a strong part to play and I look forward to them being seen to play an important role in harmony with and alongside management, not in competition with it during the campaign. Many of the problems that are perceived in people's minds are due to the antagonistic attitude that has been engendered by decades during which it was management versus worker, strike and turmoil. Much of that has now been eliminated and is history. Both parties now get on exceedingly well as the problems of industry begin to be understood.

Industry itself has a demanding task. It will have to work in schools, colleges and universities to preach the gospel. Without industry taking a prominent part in preaching that gospel, much of what Industry Year seeks to provide will not come to pass. We need to have open days in factories, visiting lecturers to schools as I have already mentioned, and the creation of video films about what a business does. All those things will help to put the role of industry across to the public.

The museums also have a role to play by highlighting much of our industrial past. We have a great and glorious past. Our capacity as the first industrial nation is something to be proud of, although exploitation took place, as we all know from the history books and probably from personal experience of our families and ancestors. Nevertheless, that which we created in the 19th century and the early part of this century we can and must re-create using many of the same ideas, but harnessing many of the new ones that we have learnt to develop over the past few years.

The question that many parents may face is whether to put their daughter on the stage. However, not many people would send their daughter—or these days, their son—into industry. It has a reputation for being dull, boring, repetitive, noisy, unhappy and strike-prone, with a love-hate relationship. It is also risky because of redundancy and unemployment. One can be in one minute and redundant the next. That risk does not always face those in a profession. There have been such risks in careers in industry, but the reason why Industry Year is so apposite now is that many of the problems of redundancies and so on are past. I admit that they still occur. There is a tragedy at Castle Bromwich in Birmingham where 750 Austin Rober tool room workers are being made redundant. Such problems will continue to occur because we shall always go through periods of industrial change. There is no stopping that.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) mentioned in his intervention the problems of coming to grips with industry and its capacity, and how it is financed. Much of it is cloaked in mystery. I believe that that is wrong and that we should take whatever steps are necessary to make the financing of industry completely open and understood by all, because once it is understood it is not feared. One of the prime obstacles for young people going into industry is fear that they will not complete their career without being made redundant, the company going bust or being taken over.

I speak with some experience in industry, because in 1974 I had the privilege of starting my own business from scratch. I went into business with two colleagues and we went through all the trials and tribulations that one experiences when starting a business. We were always under-financed, struggling to make a product that had a ready acceptance in the market place and trying to balance our cash flow correctly so that we could pay suppliers as money was received from customers. It is risky to start a business, and I suppose it always will be. It would be wrong for us to make it too easy because if it is, people will go into business for the wrong reasons. The product that we made lent itself not just to the home market but to the export market. As we grew from a company of two —myself and my wife—to a work force of some 42, we were producing goods for export to Japan, America and many of the continental countries.

As I look back on the six years when I was involved in that business, I can say: never mind the trials and tribulations, never mind the bank manager ringing me up and saying, "I have a cheque for £2,000 here. Your account is already £1,000 overdrawn. What shall I do with it?" I would say "I can tell you" and usually, to help me out, the bank manager did as I suggested. One Christmas in 1976 we were so short of money that my wife and I went to the local bank and drew out the wage packet on our Access cards to pay the work force, and we had precisely £2·50 for spending over the 10-day Christmas period. Never mind about that. The memories that I have are of producing a product which we made in our factory and which was sent to Japan, America and many European countries.

It was satisfying to fill up a large container with our products. We turned the raw material of steel tube, foam, cloth and so on into a car seat. We sent it to a market that other people found hard to penetrate. The satisfaction was enormous. However, so were the dangers. We ended up by dramatically changing the company, after the vagaries of the pound-dollar relationship. The pound suddenly shot up to $2·40 and pushed us out of the American and Japanese markets. We had to make redundant nearly half our work force. It was a tragic experience, when one had

[Mr. King]

been used to employing and hiring people, to have to make 20 people redundant, but that is the risk in industry. That is one of the reasons why so many people choose a much softer option by going into a profession or working for local government rather than risk the problems that might beset them in industry.

I emphasise that for the young business man starting up, the opportunities and the satisfaction of producing goods for sale at home and abroad are immense. One cannot get such satisfaction from anything else in which one indulges. It is satisfying to produce something and put one's name to it.

However, the Government have their part to play in ensuring the continuing success of the development of industry throughout 1986. Although the Industry Year 1986 campaign is for that year only, it will not accomplish everything in 365 days. It will take a good deal longer than that. It is hoped that the campaign will run on and on until at some stage in the future we have revitalised our industry, encouraged young people to go into industry and made them appreciate the role that it plays in our society. Equally, it is no good, when we have such a campaign doing everything that it can to stimulate local industry, and when the Government are playing their part, if local government does not join in as well.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I refer to the role of Government in promoting industry. Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that the Government, whom, presumably, he purports to support, are successfully ruining industry in the north-east of England by the abolition of special development area status and by the asinine introduction of disastrous regional policies?

Mr. King: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. I do not think that any form of regional assistance that Governments have introduced has been any good whatsoever to British industry. All that it has done is move jobs from one part of the country to another. Other forms of assistance could have been given. The disaster overcame the west midlands area because for 25 years industry was told that it could get out of the area and scatter to the breeze, which brought the problem home to roost. I agree that successive Government policies on regional aid have been a disaster, although I am not giving the hon. Gentleman the reply that he would like.

Local government has a role to play. I look with horror and fright at this prospect in Industry Year. The City of Birmingham council is talking, albeit with a smile on its face, because nobody seriously thinks that it will come to pass, of a 60 per cent. rates increase, which will crucify industry throughout the area. Local government must play its part in reducing the burden upon industry.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The hon. Gentleman says with enthusiasm that we should watch out for the rise in rates inflicted by Labour-controlled councils. No doubt many such councils are inflicting rates that are well above what is necessary. Nevertheless, does he not concede that many of the rate rises this year will come about as a direct result of central Government policy, not local government policy? For instance, in Somerset we may have a rate rise of 25 per cent., which will do great damage to local industry, but about 22 per cent. is a direct result of the Government's policy of no increases in the budget. Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that?

Mr. King: I cannot recognise the problems of Somerset because I do not know them. The hon. Gentleman commented on his part of the world, and I am restricting my comments to Birmingham, which I know. I shall be as charitable as possible because the Industry Year 1986 campaign is supposed to be a non-political event. Some aspects of Government policy have had and will have an influence on increasing the rates, but one must also look at the role that local authorities, many Labour-controlled, have taken upon themselves in the community. In Birmingham, tens of thousands—indeed millions—of pounds of ratepayers' money have been spent inadvisedly on grandiose Labour party schemes, for example neighbourhood councils, costing us about £5 million or £6 million of expenditure on leisure service arrangements and so on.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What about recreation facilities?

Mr. King: I am not against recreation, but I feel that, if people had jobs in commerce and industry, they would have their own money to provide their own recreation. It would not necessarily have to be provided by the local community. We also need a stable economy. We have more or less got that at the moment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why, every year, does the hon. Gentleman vote for money to go to Ulster to provide the very recreation facilities that the Birmingham authority is trying to set up? He votes in the Lobby annually for moneys to go to Ulster so that a Government Department can provide those facilities. He should look at his own voting record.

Mr. King: I am not——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is true.

Mr. King: It may well be correct. I would not deny it. I give the same answer to the hon. Gentleman as I gave to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). I am addressing my remarks to Birmingham and the west midlands area, not to Northern Ireland, which is an area with a peculiar set of circumstances. It demands certain facilities and policies that would not necessarily be carried out elsewhere.

The Government must also create the right regional climate. Although I do not welcome regional assistance, I am happy to note that in the west midlands, with intermediate status, many new jobs have been provided, and many new businesses established. That is commendable, given that we have to have regional assistance.

The Government need to create the right environment and roads. Roads are the main arteries along which our goods and freight travel. It is essential that we have roads to the docks. Many of the projects that have been earmarked for development to open up the west midlands area still await final approval and construction.

In the west midlands, young people look out on a sea of industrial dereliction. Old factories and businesses have gone. That happens in industry. Nothing is for ever. One recognises the problems of industrial areas that have undergone such a decline. There is no way young people wish to take part in industry when they can see nothing around them but old factories lying obsolete, and weed-covered sites where businesses used to be. They shudder and are dismayed at that, and do not want to get involved with anything such as that. We must tackle the problem

during Industry Year 1986 and subsequent years. We must improve the environment for industry. We cannot all go to green-field high-tech sites. Indeed, we do not want companies to go there.

We want them to stay in our conurbations where vast acres lie ready to be developed. The CBI in the west midlands has voiced its anxiety. It wrote to me as follows:

"I know you are aware that this is a very important subject for the region. Despite the fact that the total allocation was £13·98 million in 1984-85, and is expected to be £12·59 million in 1985-86, it is still the case that in the years 1974-85 the net effect has been that reclamation progress has not kept pace with the increase in dereliction. Thus, the amount of derelict land in the region has increased by 24 per cent. between 1974-82 to nearly 5,800 hectares. Of this total, 1,900 hectares lie in the West Midlands County (including 1,500 hectares within the Black Country Boroughs of Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell and Wolverhampton). In addition, Staffordshire has 1,500 hectares, Shropshire — 1,200 hectares, Warwickshire — 1,000 hectares and Hereford/Worcester — 200 hectares. This is, therefore, a major and growing problem".

The Government and industry must combine to eradicate it as quickly as possible. Eyesores and dereliction will not attract young people to industry. It is essential that we grasp this nettle for several years. It is only a problem of will. Many companies would be prepared to do much of the work themselves if they could get Government assistance.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is keen on public purchasing. It amounts to £14 billion a year and I know that he is also anxious that as much as possible of it occurs in the United Kingdom. I hope that more can be done to satisfy the Government's requirements from within the United Kingdom provided that it is up to the job. If the products are no good, we have to go somewhere else, even if that means Japan or America. We must establish a more aggressive international posture to get business. We must tackle the problem of Spanish car imports, for example. That is an old chestnut but it epitomises many of our trading relationships. The Export Credits Guarantee Department could also help to get business. We know in our heart of hearts that many of our competitors are buying with under-cover assistance. That was highlighted recently by the Bosporus bridge contract, which went to Japan. Whatever country is in the business of getting business, we must be there horse trading as much as the rest of them.

The creation of new businesses has attracted much attention. Britain has been successful in the past five years —about 141,000 VAT registered businesses have been created in that time. They are using many of the facilities offered by the Government, such as the business expansion scheme, the loan guarantee scheme, the enterprise allowance scheme, the business improvement scheme and the venture capital scheme. The national insurance surcharge has been abolished and the VAT threshold has been increased to £19,500. It is well below the £50,000 that I should like, but we can always press for that improvement.

I still receive letters from constituents saying that they are interested in starting a business, that they have an idea, but that they do not know where to get financial backing. We must redouble our efforts to acquaint people of what is available to help them create new businesses. A central co-ordinating body is required in that regard. Perhaps we could rename job centres business centres. A high street shop next to building societies might be a suitable vehicle.

New business is essential to the development of our economy. I wonder, however, whether too many people start up in business, unaware of the pitfalls or hoping that they will not fall into them. It is not too difficult to raise the initial finance if one has an idea. A second mortgage can be taken out or money can be borrowed by scratching around the immediate family. A sleeping partner can be brought in as a shareholder. The difficulty occurs 18 months or two years later when the business has developed but there are cash flow problems. The business requires plant and equipment more quickly than it can sustain them, so business is lost.

I wonder whether it is wise of banks to allow a loan on the strength of a second mortgage because, if a business does not succeed, people can find themselves homeless. I wonder whether a certificate of business competence should be a prime requirement of anybody setting up on his own. It could be acquired at school or college. Businesses will continue to fall into traps without it. After 12 months in business, the VAT men, the PAYE men and a host of others descend like paratroopers demanding payment and saying that the books are a mess. The result is that a good product hits the dust simply through lack of basic form filling expertise and financial experience.

Business has a role to play in improving its own image. Far too often people think of it as remote from the community and its work force. Management takes decisions well away from the site of production. I wonder whether it is time for companies to have some form of factory parliament which would enable the work force to question the management once a month. That might help to break down old barriers. Perhaps companies will consider how they relate to their work forces during industry year. That is especially important for factories which are dotted all over the country. I hope that the era of companies controlled from facilities overseas which make decisions that affect whole communities is a thing of the past. I am reminded of the tragedy of BSR in Halesowen. The company operates principally out of Hong Kong and 4,000 jobs have gone, presumably because the management does not want to modernise here and prefers to make its products in Hong Kong or Taiwan. We should discourage such remoteness.

This year is also energy efficiency year. Such industrial campaigns are good but should highlight improvements that can occur for several years. The two promotions— energy efficiency year and industry year — should compliment each other. Efficient energy management is an essential part of good industrial and commercial management. The nation's energy bill reaches some £35 billion a year. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has said, about £7 billion is wasted each year. That is an immense amount of money and we should all ensure that the nation realises the opportunities for economy. No less than £2 billion is wasted on energy by industry and commerce each year. I remember industry being able to reach normal five-day week production levels on a three-day week. I do not want to return to a three-day week, but much can be done to contain energy expenditure. We often hear industry complaining about the cost of energy, but even the most half-hearted energy conservation programme can achieve enormous savings.

During the past two years, the Secretary of State has been promoting energy efficiency with great effectiveness, and energy efficiency year will be a great step forward in

[Mr. King]

that campaign. It was launched in Birmingham in November and should gain the support of businesses large and small.

There is a Queen's award for export achievements. To make our industry more efficient, we need, not a Queen's award, but perhaps a Duke of Edinburgh's award or a Prince of Wales's award for energy efficiency. That would go a long way to encouraging industry. There is nothing like putting up a flag in front of one's factory or on the masthead of one's notepaper. I hope for great changes in that direction.

Industry is about buying British. Each of us can play a part in that. If we do not buy British products, but continue to support products from foreign manufacturers, we will not create the jobs and opportunities that we need. Industry Year will depend upon our supporting British industry. I am not talking about creating new jobs. I hope that they will come as a result of improved efficiency, marketing and sales expertise. We must create public awareness of the role of industry. There are many facets to industry, from retailing to tourism to manufacturing, but I can say one thing with great conviction: without industry we shall surely perish. Industry is leisure, health, entertainment, pensions, sport, art, fashion, food, education and travel. Industry makes it all possible. Without industry, nothing is.

10.41 am

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on his good fortune in winning first place in the ballot. I have been trying—perhaps you have, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker—for all the years that I have been a Member of the House, except when I was a Minister, to win a place in the raffle and have not succeeded. I also congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the motion. I and many hon. Members wish Industry Year well.

The hon. Gentleman's speech was interesting. I hope that he will not think me churlish if I say that he lost me after the first 25 minutes, as I fear that he lost everyone else in the Chamber. However, those things happen from time to time. I accept the spirit of his motion, as do my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Opposition, the CBI and the TUC. The hon. Gentleman also said that the churches look forward to Industry Year 1986. Were I a young aspiring Conservative Member of Parliament, I would not have included the word "churches" in my motion. That is not a nice word in the Conservative party nowadays, and it might cause him a little embarrassment. Above all, I hope that the Government will accept the spirit of the motion and will do something positive to encourage industrial prosperity.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for adopting a parochial note and speaking about industry in Scotland. He spoke, properly, about the West midlands and his constituency in particular. In Scotland, industry means jobs; at present, we do not have them. Industry means apprenticeships, but we have few of those. Almost 400,000 people in Scotland are out of work. Since the figure has more than doubled during the six years of this Government, we are especially aggrieved about our industrial position. Sad to relate, the same pathetic story is true all over the United Kingdom. Industry Year 1986 will be a success only if unemployment is substantially reduced.

During the next year we should give much more thought to the place of our older and more traditional industries. In Scotland, industries such as coal, shipbuilding and steel have been almost destroyed during the past five or six years. The coal industry has lost about 10,000 jobs; shipbuilding has lost 5,000 to 6,000 jobs; and the steel industry has lost about 9,000 jobs. I have no doubt that the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is well briefed to say later that although all those jobs have been lost in traditional industries, the Government has created many jobs in new industries in Scotland, the north and elsewhere. Although I welcome the creation of jobs in the high-tech industries, I must tell the Minister that Scotland still has 200,000 fewer jobs than it did five or six years ago and that is a scandal.

Our great anxiety in Scotland is the future of the steel industry, and especially the future of Gartcosh. Just after I became a Member of the House, at almost the same time as my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) when there was a steel debate the Opposition Benches were packed and there was squabbling over who should speak in the debate. However, in recent times, because of the almost complete destruction of the industry, there is hardly a soul here to speak in steel debates. None of us has the same constituency interest in steel as he did 22 years ago.

Gartcosh has become a symbol to the people of Scotland. We shall judge the Government's enthusiasm for industry in Scotland by their approach to this problem, and we shall be satisfied that the Government believe in a strong steel industry only when they give a positive guarantee about the future of Gartcosh and of Ravenscraig. Not only Labour Members, but people outside the House are extremely cross. This week, we had the dreadful spectacle of the Scottish Conservative Members who serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs wrecking any prospect of an early decision on this vital matter. They told us that they wanted yet another review because they believed that the evidence was inconclusive, Most of us believe that the evidence is conclusive, and the local people want an end to the wrangling.

The problem arose, as the Minister may be aware—if he is not, his Whips will tell him—because during the past four or five weeks there has been a power struggle for the position of chairman of the Scottish group of Members of Parliament. Why anyone would go to such trouble to become the chairman of only 13 Members is beyond my comprehension. However they have been so concerned about their own affairs that they have let this massive issue go to the wall. Therefore the steel workers at Gartcosh will face Hogmanay, the eve of Industry Year, without any guarantee about their future. It is completely uncertain: all because of the malarkey that has gone on in the Scottish Conservative group during the last few weeks. It has caused a great deal of bitterness in the steel constituencies of Scotland, particularly in Lanarkshire. We want an end to all of that and to all the tripe that we have heard from the Government Benches during the last few weeks.

Our older, traditional industries need real help and much more support. The workers in those industries—the miners, the steel workers and the shipbuilders—are beginning to laugh at the Industry Year concept. That is sad indeed. I very much hope that the Government, instead

of saying that everything is a matter for the chairmen of the nationalised industries, will tell them that they do not run the country: that Parliament and Government run the country. I do not want to interfere in the day-to-day affairs of the British Steel Corporation or the National Coal Board, but Gartcosh is not a day-to-day affair. Major decisions have to be taken, in which the Government must be involved. Government Ministers cannot shuffle off their responsibilities and put them on to the shoulders of non-elected chairmen of the nationalised industries.

I want to make two points about the speech of the hon. Member for Northfield. He referred to the "Buy British" campaign, with which I have considerable sympathy, but I do not agree with those hon. Members who favour wholesale import controls. We are a great trading nation. We ought to do business with other countries. We want to encourage them to invest in this country, particularly in the high-tech industries. We shall not encourage them to do so if there are wholesale, indiscriminate import controls. However, I favour import controls when there is unfair trading or when other countries, notably Japan, export but seldom, if ever, import the goods of other countries.

As for unfair trading—I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will discuss this matter with those of his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry who are responsible for trade — one or two nations adopt very unfair trading practices. Some of them are our partners in the European Community. This country has always aided strictly by the trading rules, but that does not apply to other countries in Europe. There is legislation on the statute book to cover unfair trading, but I hope that the Under-Secretary will take back to his colleagues the message that new legislation about unfair trading ought to be put on to the statute book. Such legislation ought to be able to respond very much more quickly to unfair trading practices.

I do not have the exact Japanese export figures and I do not know what Japan imports, but one does not need to be very clever to understand that Japan exports much more than it imports. The Japanese Government have been at pains to say recently that they favour the import of goods, but we have yet to see the realisation of the Prime Minister of Japan's ambitions. No matter what he says, Japanese business men do not want goods to be imported. Japanese citizens, who show great loyalty to their own companies, do not want imports, either. The hon. Member for Northfield knows a great deal about the car industry in the Midlands. He knows that Japanese cars are imported in their thousands. Each Japanese car is imported, by definition, with five tyres. That does not help the British tyre industry. Each car is also imported with its lighting equipment. That is not good for the British electrical appliances industry.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that between 1960 and 1982 the average productivity of manufacturing industry grew by over 500 per cent. in Japan, whereas in the United Kingdom it was under 80 per cent.?

Mr. MacKenzie: That reinforces my argument. The Japanese do exceedingly well out of Britain but we get absolutely nothing in return. The sooner something is done to make them understand that we are in earnest about this matter the better.

The hon. Member for Northfield referred to education and training and to the recruitment of young people into industry. The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry said in public recently that in Industry Year the face of industry must be made more acceptable. He said that an effort must be made to recruit young people from schools and colleges into industry. Sir Terence Beckett went further and suggested that it would be helpful if a member of the royal family went on to the shop floor and got his hands dirty. I am not very concerned about that, but I am concerned that colleges and schools should try much harder to encourage young people to enter industry, as indeed they do in Europe. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) knows that the Scottish tradition is that if one has a son one wants him to enter the law, medicine or the kirk. In my own family young people have mainly entered the law instead of going into industry, so my family has failed industry. But the law, medicine and the kirk are not the only places for bright young people.

The Government could encourage young people to enter commerce and industry by providing the technical colleges and polytechnics that train young people for industry with a much higher status and better resources. Furthermore, the Government should alter their recruitment policy for the Civil Service. I have never understood why it is necessary to have a first class honours degree in classics or history to become the Permanent Secretary of a major Department of State. I look forward to the day when engineers and scientists head our Departments of State. My hopes for Industry Year are that we shall encourage our older, traditional industries, and that we shall also do a great deal more to build up the high-tech industries.

We should sort out our trading position by looking at the whole business of imports and exports in 1986. We should give much more respect to our engineers and scientists, but, above all, we should provide jobs for our people in Scotland and in other parts of the United Kingdom and give those people back the dignity that they have lost by being unemployed.

10.59 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am pleased to speak after the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie). However, the thrust of the debate should concern not so much the help that the Government should be giving but the understanding that everybody should be building——

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 5 (Friday sittings).*

Severn Bridge Tolls (Judgment)

11 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement. The challenge to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision to increase tolls on the Severn bridge succeeded in the High Court yesterday morning.

The judge held that there were procedural improprieties at the inquiry in that the inspector did not evaluate and recommend on matters germane to the decision. This was not, the judge found, cured in the decision letter. The order was therefore held null and void. No transcript of the judgment has yet been seen. When we have studied this, an appeal will be considered.

Action was taken immediately so that tolls could be charged at the old level as soon as practicable, probably some time later today. Vehicles are being allowed to cross without payment while the necessary mechanical changes to the toll booths are being prepared.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank the Minister for that statement. I am truly sorry that it is she who is having to carry the can before the House today. Is it not unbelievable that for the third time the Secretary of State for Transport has been overruled in the courts, and this a leading member of the so-called law and order Government?

Does the hon. Lady remember that earlier this year the Court of Appeal overruled the Secretary of State and told him that he could not stop the GLC lorry ban? Does she remember that the High Court ruled that he had wrongly demanded £250 million from the GLC and said that his action was

"unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper"

I underline that last point—procedurally improper.

Now we have a third case. The High Court has again ruled that there was procedural impropriety—failure to consider wider objections. As a result of his procedural impropriety the right hon. Gentleman has illegally increased the tolls on the Severn bridge. The poor man is becoming a persistent offender. Is it not just as well that these are not criminal cases? Imagine what would happen when the judge came to sentencing and the record was read out. The judge would say, "Life without remission".

Does the hon. Lady recognise that the Secretary of State has a defence of sorts? He could plead fool not felon and we would readily recognise the validity of that claim. But it must be a matter of grave concern that the Minister who has just refused a proper inquiry into the Channel tunnel has already twice been found guilty of procedural impropriety and, according to the court, has failed to consider all factors. I advise those would-be sponsors of the fixed link proposals to take care. Imagine the hilarity when they break through on the French side only to be met by the right hon. Gentleman saying, "Excuse me, but I have news for you".

But what about those motorists who have paid an extra 30p a day—35,000 of them? The motorists have been robbed of over £10,000 a day. Who will compensate them, and how, or does the robber keep the swag? What apology does the Minister make to the people of Wales? It has been decreed that he ignored the fact that the new tolls could frustrate efforts to bring new jobs to Wales.

Is it not typical of the effrontery of the Secretary of State that he is not even here to make the statement today, despite the request from the Opposition Front Bench that he make the statement yesterday and despite a request from the Opposition Front Bench for an emergency debate on the subject? He should have been here today if only to say goodbye.

Mrs. Chalker: I have a good memory of all the facts but the House will understand if I ignore some of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks which were completely irrelevant and he knows it as well as I do.

I will now try to help the right hon. Gentleman. First, the court did not find for the appellants that the Secretary of State had misdirected himself in law when making his decision. The judge said that certain objections to the order should have been subject to evaluation by the inspector and the inspector should have recommended upon them. The inspector heard and recorded the objections, but he did not recommend upon them because he had held that they were beyond the scope of the inquiry. That was the decision of the inspector alone.

Some of the right hon. Gentleman's words fall strangely when one considers the facts behind the case. In 1966 tolls started with a 12½p equivalent toll fare across the bridge. Thirteen years later, in 1979, tolls were raised to 20p. In June this year tolls were raised further. In all that time the tolls have not kept up with inflation.

I have a report from the court but I do not have a transcript. I understand that no transcript will be available for about 10 days. Any further discussion on the matter cannot really take place until we have studied that transcript.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that, whatever may be the arguments for imposing toll charges — there are strong and varied arguments — in the particular circumstances of the Severn bridge, where the arrangements for the collection of the tolls are such as to produce a monstrous bottleneck on what is already a somewhat overcrowded crossing the events of this judicial decision now provide the Government with a pretext, for which they ought to have been looking for some time, to do away with tolls altogether since they undoubtedly considerably inhibit the economic development of Wales?

Mrs. Chalker: I well understand my hon. Friend's case, but Britain would not have had many structures on the dates when they were finalised unless it had been possible to take some measure of the cost of providing those structures from those who use them in preference to the long detours that they formerly had to make.

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): As a Member for Avon county I am gratified by this turn of events. The Minister says that no detail is available yet. In the event that costs are not allowed, will the Government reimburse the local authorities that have taken the action? Secondly, since the Government are hell-bent on privatisation, instead of tampering about with something like the gas industry, why not privatise the Department's legal work because it seems to be the fastest growing sector of the Government?

Mrs. Chalker: As the daughter, and sister, of lawyers, I do not think that I should comment on the right hon. Gentleman's last remark. I might be held to be prejudicing

the situation in some way. I realise that Avon was one of five county councils, together with Gwent, Mid-Glamorgan, West Glamorgan and Dyfed, which were the challengers of the Secretary of State's decision. I am not in a position to tell him about any reimbursement but I can assure him that I shall write to him when the judgment has been studied.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it comes ill from Labour Members to criticise the Government in relation to the matter that has been referred to the High Court when they, when in Government, were responsible for some of the classic cases — for example, the Tameside case, the Laker Airways case and the Congreve television licence case. These things do happen from time to time and it comes ill from Labour Members to take such cheap points.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is much more expert in legal matters than I am. I well remember cases going against Governments of all hues over the years. That is one of the parts of our legal system which are safeguards in many ways. I have tried to confine myself to the issue before me and I hope that my hon. Friend will, therefore, understand if I do not comment further on his very fair comments about the Opposition's initial response.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Donald Stewart. This is a statement about the Severn bridge.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I take your point, Mr. Speaker, but I wish to support the general point sensibly made by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) about bridge tolls generally. Is the Minister aware of the situation on the Scottish bridges where the ——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is what I feared.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): As the toll on the Severn bridge 19 years ago was 12½p, and the Secretary of State is seeking to raise it to 50p, is not that a very low increase, bearing in mind the substantial benefits that the bridge affords the local community and those who use it?

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend would not have gone ahead with the order, which he did before there was any question of a legal challenge from the five county councils, unless he had thought the increase to be reasonable. Nevertheless, until the equipment is changed we are returning to a free passage and then to 1979 levels until a decision is made, following receipt of the transcript, on what should be done.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Why is the Secretary of State for Transport not here to make the statement? Has he not carefully avoided one of the judge's comments? The judge said:

"The points would and should have assisted the Secretary of State in the exercise of his discretion and power."

Has not the Secretary of State overstepped his discretion and his power, and is not this the third time in a year in which he has done that?

Is not this the 15th time that the Government have been hauled before the courts in the past two years? They have spent more time being arraigned by the courts than the Lord Chancellor has spent in the courts upholding the law. Does the Minister not realise that in many people's view those facts demonstrate a strange and worrying hypocrisy from the Government who dare to lecture us about values and upholding the law? When will the Government begin to adopt some decent standards in the governing of this country?

Mrs. Chalker: The Government will never cease trying to adopt the highest standards. There are, nevertheless, in the judgment on any matters of this nature myriad factors to be taken into consideration. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to make cheap political points about a situation that is far more complex than probably even he can understand. I was informed at ten minutes to 10 this morning of this matter. That was the notice that I had. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not in the office at that time — he is elsewhere, on a visit — it would have been impossible for him to return. That is why I was asked to make the statement in his stead. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the statement would not have been in any other form, even if my right hon. Friend had made it.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Now that the courts have decided that the 150 per cent. increase put on by the Government in June is null and void, will the real objectors to the toll increases be heard by the Department of Transport? Those objectors are the people involved in commerce and those commuting out of unemployment-ridden south Wales to get jobs in south-west England. Will they be heard and will the Government stop these ridiculous increases and help the people who need to use the bridge?

Mrs. Chalker: I said in answer to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) that the inspector who conducted the inquiry heard and recorded the objections. He did not recommend upon them because he held that they were beyond the scope of the inquiry that he was nominated to conduct by the Lord Chancellor. I realise well and truly how difficult it has been for many people in south Wales and many other areas of the country who need to travel long distances and to be absent from their families to find work. However, this country has long needed that flexibility of movement. The fact that they are on the other side of a waterway is one fact——

Mr. Barron: An increase of 150 per cent.

Mrs. Chalker: The increase has to be judged over 19 years and not, as the hon. Gentleman likes to do, over a single year or so.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): As the Secretary of State has yet again ignored all the evidence given to him from the area about the direct barrier to the creation of employment that an increase in the tolls would present, how many times must he be brought before the courts before he has the decenty to resign? How long do we have to wait before he understands that he must take account of the interests of the people of this country and not behave in this arrogant manner?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure the hon. Lady that my right hon. Friend is very fully aware of, and sympathetic to, the interests of the people of this country, but it never does to allow one's heart to rule one's head and it is high time that the hon. Lady learnt that valuable lesson. I make no further comment about that.

My right hon. Friend, in reaching his decision, followed the recommendations of the inspector, which were clear: the tolls should be raised.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Did my hon. Friend have any indication from the Opposition that a private notice question was to be asked on this subject——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a private notice question; it is a statement.

Mr. Rathbone: That is the point of my question. It is only because of the willingness of the Minister that we are having the statement. The criticisms of the Opposition are ill-founded, because they had no keenness to find out the truth in the first place.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House informs me that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said in the House yesterday that he intended to ask for a statement. I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman, but I have not yet had time to read yesterday's *Hansard*. I would have been better prepared if I had realised the import of what he had said.

It is always difficult when something happens on a Thursday and the House sits at 9.30 on a Friday and a statement has to be made at 11 o'clock. It is difficult to have as much information as I should genuinely like to give the House. However, as the transcript is not yet available, I have no means of informing the House further in the way that hon. Members would obviously like.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): May I ask the Minister calmly to give us a few more necessary facts? Although no transcript is available, a detailed note must have been taken by counsel representing the Secretary of State in court and by the instructing solicitor. Presumably the hon. Lady has that note and can refer to it. If she does not have it, she should have it.

What is the position about costs? In more than 15 cases since the Government were elected in 1983 the courts have ruled that there have been serious errors of law and that orders made by Ministers pursuant to legislation were rendered null and void because of illegalities. Orders for costs must have been made against the Secretary of State on those occasions, which means that the taxpayer is having to fund the litigation resulting from the incompetence and negligence of Ministers.

Thirdly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly, please.

Mr. Ryman: What do the Government intend to do as a result of this disgraceful act of negligence? Is it intended that the inspector should conduct another inquiry? That would normally be the procedure. The inspector having been found by the courts to be in error in law, do the Government intend to set up another inquiry, with a more competent inspector, to go through the evidence again?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman as much as possible. A full note was taken by counsel in court yesterday, but it is not yet available in type and has not yet arrived in my office. As soon as we receive it, we shall read it with care. I make the statement the day after the court case in response to a request. I shall make the information available as soon as possible, but I cannot do the impossible, hard as I might try.

Costs will be awarded to the applicants. That was stated yesterday. The funding of other cases falls outside the terms of this statement, but obviously we shall be looking into the matter with care. Nobody likes the situation and no one is prepared, where it is avoidable, to let it happen again. I say that to the House with all sincerity. Judgments which might not be totally clear will have to be taken on board and we might, indeed, have to look at what should be said in the law.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): In view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said about jobs in south Wales and the west country — which will be affected by the monstrous increases in tolls since June — will the Secretary of State take on board this important issue, notwithstanding the inspector's report?

The Secretary of State has absented himself this morning. What engagements can be more important than making such an announcement to the House? Does the hon. Lady enjoy being a surrogate for someone who is involved in illegalities? Will she call upon her right hon. Friend to do the decent thing and to come to the House with a resignation statement?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman's last comments carried him in an unwise direction. I am no one's surrogate..I am the Minister of State at the Department of Transport. The Secretary of State had an important engagement. He would not have known about a possible statement until he was many miles from London. It was physically impossible for him to be here at.11 o'clock this morning.

Of course we understand the importance of the issue and we understand the problems for people who travel daily over any estuarial crossing. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that moving from a 12½p toll in 1966, to a 20p toll in 1979, and to a 50p toll in 1985 is way below the inflation level over the last 19 years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: This is private Member's motions day. Mr. Rathbone.

Macaulay Institute

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance. I bought a copy of *The Scotsman* this morning and received a telephone call from the *Press and Journal* in Aberdeen and was thereby advised of the publication described by the Scottish Office as

"a White Paper with green edges"

It proposes the closure of the Macaulay institute in Aberdeen, which employs 238 people, and its transfer to Dundee and Edinburgh.

Immediately I read about it, I phoned the Minister's office to seek a copy of the Green Paper. I was advised that it was not available in the House of Commons but that it was possibly available in Edinburgh. The person to whom I spoke said that he would do his best to find a copy somewhere in London.

Is it not disgraceful that devastating decisions affecting hon. Members' constituents should be announced to the press in Edinburgh when no copies of the relevant document are available to hon. Members to enable them to make effective representations? Will you, Mr. Speaker ask the Government to treat the House with respect and allow Members of Parliament to do their job with proper information?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows my views. I think that if documents of this kind are available to the press they should be available to hon. Members. However, that is not a matter for me. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's comments will have been heard by Ministers on the Front Bench.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you find out on how many other occasions Green Papers have been issued without any copies being available to hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Industry Year 1986

Question again proposed.

Mr. Rathbone: I pick up the thread of this excellent debate on Industry Year 1986, initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). I congratulate him on taking the initiative. The importance of the debate is not marred by the attendance. I welcome the Minister to the Front Bench. He has done much for industry, particularly for design in industry, as we were able to mark dramatically in our debate on 21 October.

Industry Year 1986 was initiated by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, an entirely independent body which, from its 18th century beginnings, has provided a link between the applied arts and industry; between academia and the practical. The society was the organiser of the great Victorian exhibition of 1851. Industry Year 1986 is a logical progression. I declare a proud interest as a long-time fellow of the society and as a current member of its council.

As a preamble to other thoughts, I congratulate the society on its initiative. But the society is only as good as the people who belong to it. I congratulate first the President of the society and the patron of Industry Year 1986, His Royal Highness Prince Philip. The director of the society has been in charge of the engine room. I refer to Sir Geoffrey Chandler—an enthusiastic engineer. He would not have been able to achieve all that he has achieved without those who are working with him—he would be the first to admit it — including those generously seconded from industry and finance during the planning period this year.

I want also to mention Sir Peter Masefield, chairman of the special Industry Year Committee and the chairmen of the activity working groups who have done so much work. I mention particularly Mr. Ken Fraser of Unilever, chairman of the publicity working group; the Reverend Canon Dr. George Tolley of the Manpower Services Commission, chairman of the education working group; Mr. Martin Moss of the National Trust, chairman of the design working group, Mr. Michael Robbins of the Museum of London, chairman of the museums working group; Baroness Platt of Writtle of the Equal Opportunities Commission, chairman of the women's working group who was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield in the preamble to his speech about the importance of women in industry. I also wish to mention the Bishop, the Right Reverend Dr. Edward Wickham, chairman of the churches working group. I must also mention the chairman and members of the 13 regional working groups and the innumerable county committees.

As with all organisations, nothing would happen without the permanent staff. I lift my hat to the secretary of the society, Mr. Christopher Lucas, and his hard working staff.

Industry Year has its genesis in the many years of seminal consultations held under Kenneth Adams' guiding hand at St. George's House, Windsor, the conference centre associated with the Dean and Chapter of St. George's Chapel Windsor. So the seeds that will blossom in Industry Year 1986 will have been sown in ecclesiastical ground, although hopefully rather less contentious ground than that tilled so thoroughly by hon. Members earlier this week. It was certainly at the St. George's house

[Mr. Rathbone]

conferences that tackling the problems of an industrial country with an anti-industrial culture were discussed and developed, which then led to the thrust of Industry Year 1986.

The aims of Industry Year 1986 are crucial to everyone in this country. First and foremost, it is to create an awareness and acceptance of the fact that our whole quality of life and standard of living are directly related to our industrial success. Thereafter, its aim is to build, through industry, an increase in the links that exist, both before and after going into industry, between people in industry and education.

We must not only expand those links this year but continue to seek opportunities to do so in future. In doing that, industry must learn to express itself better — to itself, to everyone in it and to those on the periphery who depend upon it. British industry has adapted to change and to high technology to a much greater degree than we often admit, but it certainly has not explained how it has done so; it certainly has not shown itself to be proud of its achievements in that area; it certainly has not sung its own praises.

As part of Industry Year 1986, I hope that industry will put to rights those characteristics of reticence and hiding of its candle under a bushel. If it does not, that will breed ignorance, and ignorance breeds misunderstanding and mistrust. Industry must shoulder the task of explaining itself in order to gain the rightful respect of others. Only in that way will it attract the people that it needs to meet the exciting opportunities that will be offered both now and in the future.

One of the greater misunderstandings and concerns is about profit—or, as it is sometimes miscalled, surplus. That is a misnomer because it suggests that profit comes by chance rather than by plan, and that when it does come there is no real need for it because it is surplus to requirements. That is certainly not the case.

The term "profits" and what they contribute must be better understood. It is only when making a profit that we can ensure the future commercial viability of the industry or company concerned. But that is not the end of the equation. It is only by taxation of that profit that we can fund our Health Service, our welfare programmes, our education institutions and our community services such as fire police and ambulance. When we think of profit, we must eschew the questioning of the need for profit, however much the debate may continue, as to how the taxes on that profit may be distributed. The need for profit must first be established and accepted by everyone.

The task of producing that profit—of contributing energy and thought to the manufacture of goods and the contribution of services to create that profit—is just as important as the task of using those profits, or the taxes on them, for the good of people in our country and elsewhere. We need to place a special emphasis on the vocation to earn those profits, the vocation to manufacture, and the vocation to invent, to construct and to sell. Without success in those areas, there will be no wherewithal to help those who, for whatever reason, cannot help themselves, and for whom we gather so many of our taxes.

As we encourage, once again, that vocation, so I believe that Governments must seek out economic and fiscal policies that can be consistently pursued over long periods — not simply through the period of one Government. Sir Geoffrey Chandler, the director of Industry Year 1986, commented on the discontinuities of Government policy during the past quarter of a century. He said:

> "These discontinuities included the experiment with national planning in the mid 1960s; the move towards disengagement in 1970; its reversal in 1972; attempts to introduce a more central role for Government in industrial performance in the mid 1970s; its abandonment and replacement by the industrial strategy; and a renewed focus on disengagement from 1979."

That is something that all Conservative Members will have welcomed.

That is a worrying description of our country, and compares tragically with the consistent and determined policies of our major competitors in the United States, Japan and Germany—and even in France, Italy and the Low Countries, despite their national difficulties.

There are those who believe that better continuity will be achieved only when we have a more directly proportionate system of elections. I certainly count myself among them. I believe that there has never been a better moment to establish such continuity by greater proportionality than now, following as it does a healthy period of good, radical Conservative government as a starting block to establish continuity for the future.

But continuity would be encouraged also by a greater meeting of minds and mixing of thoughts—

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend accept that the position in Israel, Italy or the Weimar republic during the 1930s, shows that proportional representation cannot really be regarded as a reasonable prescription for industrial success or prosperity?

Mr. Rathbone: My hon. Friend will not be surprised by my negative response to his question. I know that he pursued that matter with the Prime Minister during Question Time yesterday. I believe that then, as now, he showed a misunderstanding of an immensely complicated question. However, I shall not be tempted down that line now but perhaps leave it to another day.

Continuity would also be encouraged by a greater meeting of minds and mixing of thought between industry and Government and education and industry. That is almost certainly the most important on-going activity of Industry Year 1986, and should be its most active and creative legacy. Much has been done between Government and industry and Parliament and industry through the well-established scheme of attachment, from which many hon. Members have benefited. But I wonder whether more could be done to arrange an even more widespread exchange between the Civil Service and industry. Too often such exchanges appear to concentrate on attachments between Whitehall and the City and vice versa. The changes that I am advocating should stretch far wider.

In the other place, recently, it was reported that there is a total of 300 secondments in and out of the Civil Service at present. But of those, only 80 are in the Department of Trade and Industry. Surely there should be more, both proportionately and in absolute numbers. In France and the United States there certainly appears to be greater liaison and exchange between Government and business in the development of individual's career patterns and while those careers develop. I believe that 1986 will be an especially appropriate year for a Government initiative to expand activity on that front.

Training within industry is crucial if we are to attract better people, develop them, encourage them and make them more capable of making major contributions to whatever they set their hands to. The Government have made some strides in that direction. I compliment the youth training scheme, especially in its newly extended version. However, unlike Germany, we have still to realise how training can make a more positive contribution to individual and industrial success. That was measured and found to be the case by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research not very long ago.

Mr. Ryman: The hon. Gentleman said somewhat complacently that the Government are helping to provide training. Does he consider the closure of skillcentres throughout the country to be consistent with a Government policy of encouraging training?

Mr. Rathbone: The hon. Gentleman falls into the trap of thinking that, because something exists and appears to be good, it should continue for ever. One of the exciting characteristics of the Government's attitude and actions regarding the YTS and other Government-sponsored schemes is that they have been developed as they have proceeded so that they keep pace with the growing and changing demands of industry and of the young people who are to be attracted into them. Let us not fall into the trap of feeling that everything that exists should be set in concrete for all time. That is a trap into which we have fallen too often in the past.

Great steps must be made in improving our training. That was borne out by an excellent leader that appeared in the *Financial Times* only the other day. It referred to the latest study on attitudes towards training, which was undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand. The leader told a depressing story. It stated that the report

"tells a story which is only surprising because it is worse than had been thought. It is not the case that employers and managers recognise their relative disadvantage in training compared with competitive countries and are trying to put it right; instead, they are unaware it exists, are indifferent to training at senior levels and see the training budget as one of the first on which the axe should fall in hard times."

That is at least partly the position because training in other countries is not left to the inclination of individual firms. Instead, it is established as a requirement under law.

In West Germany, chambers of commerce with statutory powers administer a training scheme in which only those companies with meisters, or foremen, who are trained to teach their skills as well as practise them, are permitted to take on young workers. In both the United States and Japan, the standard of students entering companies or courses for vocational training is generally much higher, and the skill training is much better.

In France, a levy of 0·5 per cent. on turnover is made to finance training, and the technical schools produce generally good quality candidates. The only scheme like that that we have had in recent years has been represented by the training boards, which were allowed to be phased away a few years ago. I have no voice in support of the so-called industrial training boards. They were used only too often as a budgetary head under which costs could be picked up from some other source for things that were to go on anyway, such as sales conferences and the like. The amount of training done within them was minuscule and I am glad that they have gone. As we are in the process of getting rid of the boards, let us have a Government initiative in their place.

People want to be trained. If one mark is needed of that, it is the success of training courses within the open university, where it is the inclination of the individual that is being tapped. The enthusiasm of the individual is being met and the Government have something there on which to build. For the moment, the carrot is not enough for employers and I fear that there must be some stick. Too often employers blame skill shortages on others. They blame the education system or the Government when the problem stems largely from their own indifference to training and, more importantly, from their failure to make best use of existing staff. The leader that appeared in the *Financial Times* should be taken to heart by the Government and by every hon. Member.

Industry Year 1986 is more than a propaganda activity for one year. If it is to be successful, it must be the job of a decade. This year must be a lever for changing attitudes, and the lever must be applied for years to come. We all have a part to play in building the momentum for change. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield said, local government and national Government, members of Parliament, other elected representatives, companies and those who work in them, trade unionists, church leaders, community leaders, educationists and, last but by no means least, parents must all be involved.

In my home county of Sussex, the Sussex Federation of Industries has already set up 19 geographic working groups, including special activities at Sussex university, which is celebrating its first jubilee. It happens to be the first jubilee of any of the newer red-brick universities. It is marking its first jubilee by a massive extension of its science park and of its co-operative activities with local, national and international industry.

The university has set up special activities in Brighton technical college. It is establishing a special Gatwick working group, which is organising exhibitions, school visits and the like at London's second major port. There are already 28 special twinning arrangements between schools and companies. There are special activities for business women, and it is crucial that women in business are specially involved and featured during Industry Year 1986. Local members of the Institute of Personnel managers are carrying the message of Industry Year to encourage all those in the companies for which its members work and, we hope, the families of the employees. They are highlighting the true message of the importance of Industry Year.

The task before us is to build understanding and appreciation of industry, and it is one in which everyone has an interest. No one can opt out because our quality of life and standard of living depend on our joint national success in bringing about more positive attitudes. Industry Year 1986 will have provided a bridge. Thoughts and ideas must continue to cross that bridge for years to come. That cannot be too strongly accented now, even before Industry Year 1986 has started. It should be exciting. It certainly is crucial.

11.48 am

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I enjoyed listening to the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). I welcome the inclusion in his speech of comments on proportional representation—that desperately needed reform—and its impact on industry. He was right to say that the rather crabbed intervention by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) sprang from ignorance of a complex issue.

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

That was regrettable. The hon. Member for Lewes might have said also that it sprang from a depressing selectivity in the instances that the hon. Member for Stafford brought to light. The hon. Member for Stafford carefully omitted mentioning the case of West Germany, Norway or Denmark — indeed, every other Western European nation, save Italy, now running a fairer election system and having a better record of industrial growth and prosperity than Britain. This year, even Italy, which was denigrated by the hon. Member for Stafford, has a higher standard of living than that enjoyed by Britain.

The social institutions, political system and above all, industrial scene in Britain are more significantly divided within themselves than in any other western European industrial nation. Britain is tribalised and at war with itself. Extremism runs rampant through the country, in councils, society and industry. Proportional representation, which would not by itself create perfection out of chaos, would nevertheless help to bring about some moderation and stability, which would be welcome.

Mr. Cash: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to desist from his exaggerated claims for proportional representation and to bear in mind that political judgments and economic solutions lead to improvements in industrial success. I welcome this debate for that reason. It provides an opportunity for these questions to be considered sensibly.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) showed the most extraordinary nerve in giving an address in Staffordshire where my constituency lies, on the anniversary of the Tamworth manifesto in which he invoked the statement by Lord Randolph Churchill—yet another Conservative—"Trust the people", in aid of his argument in favour of proportional representation.

Mr. Ashdown: I have no doubt——

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to intrude on the debate. At the conclusion of the statement by the Minister of State, Department of Transport, on the Severn bridge, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) raised a point of order about an article in *The Scotsman* entitled

"Two farm institutes to close".

The article referred to

"a White Paper with green edges"

which was published yesterday by the Scottish Office. The hon. Member for Gordon told Mr. Speaker that the "White Paper with green edges" was not readily available in the Vote Office. I subscribe to that view. The hon. Gentleman went on to say that no copy was available in the Palace of Westminster for hon. Members to look at.

I have just obtained a copy from the Library. I understand from the librarians that a copy of the "Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development" was placed in the Library yesterday. If the hon. Member for Gordon had made suitable inquiries to obtain the document he would not have been in a position to criticise the Government for something that I had rightly presented to hon. Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie).

Mr. Ashdown: I return to the intervention of the hon. Member for Stafford. I think that you would call me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I went too far down his line of argument. I have read the speech that my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made in the hon. Gentleman's area. No doubt it hurt, and so it should have. After all, the Conservatives to whom my right hon. Friend referred in those days were pursuing precisely the approach that I suggest British industry needs —a one-nation policy, which pulls the nation into a unified structure rather than divides it. My right hon. Friend is right.

I return to the subject in hand. The Industry Year publicity pamphlet aims to increase the understanding of the role of industry and its service to the community. No doubt, we all welcome this, because, as the promotional literature points out, in many ways Britain has an anti-industrial culture. Many of the creative minds who could have a vital part to play in our future industrial prosperity choose not to do so in an industrial context, in the belief that industry is somehow dirty.

The search for pure knowledge is often over-valued compared with the search for ways of applying that knowledge. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) said, we are good at inventing but not at applying the inventions to manufacturing. Even the idea that the professions—medicine, law and the like—have a respectability denied to industry relates to a wrong but deep-seated view of the position of industry. The conventions of the House seem somehow to reinforce and include those factors. Queen's counsel are learned, and military gentlemen are gallant. Engineers are plain honourable and business men are honourable but sometimes not even that. That attitude must change. If Industry Year facilitates that change it is to be welcomed. No one can doubt that something must be done for British industry. It is clearly now close to crisis point. A glance at the trade figures makes that clear.

In another place Lord Aldington said:

"the balance of trade in manufactured goods has changed from a surplus of between £1½ billion and £6 billion in each of the years 1963 to 1982, to a deficit in 1983 reaching nearly £4 billion in 1984. There is no sign of a significant improvement in 1985—despite the splendid export achievements. If one analyses the classes of industry" — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 3 December 1985; Vol. 468, c. 1192.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member quoting from the House of Lords *Hansard* for the last Session.

Mr. Ashdown: I believe that I am quoting from this Session, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member is out of order. He cannot do that.

Mr. Ashdown: I apologise to the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I have stepped out of order. The drift of what I was saying is clear enough. It is reinforced, as we are aware, by the latest report produced by the other place.

Across Britain, the industrial base has been devastated since the Government came to power. Industrial output is now 20 per cent. below that of 1979. We have become a net importer of manufactured goods for the first time since the industrial revolution. Whole sectors of our industry have been destroyed. I do not blame the Government for all that. The world position has not been moving to our advantage. However, the Government have stood idly by,

hands in pockets, waiting for that to happen. They seem somehow to believe that it does not matter—Britain no longer depends on manufacturing industry because we have a service industry on which we can now count. It is true that we have a service industry, but the service industry depends in large part on a decent and healthy manufacturing industry. The Government seem conveniently to ignore that fact.

The Government say that we no longer need to be a manufacturing nation because we have the bonanza of North sea oil. That oil will not run out overnight, but the surplus that it gives us will begin to vanish in two or three years' time.

The Government seem to believe that the curious magic of monetary policy means that a new set of manufacturing industries and new prosperity will automatically take the place of our present manufacturing industry without assistance or encouragement. That view was substantially undermined by the House of Lords Select Committee report. The view is not shared by any of our industrial competitors. There is an alchemist, touchstone, belief that all things will come right in the end if we keep our hand off the tiller.

We are now running a massive annual deficit in the new technologies, the area that the Government say is strategically important for the future. All that is done to produce a lower inflation rate. I congratulate the Government on their achievement. It needed to be done and industry has no doubt benefited from it. However, industry is now paying a higher real interest rate than ever before because of the difference between interest rates and the inflation level. That may well be more crippling than higher inflation.

Prices have increased by 75 per cent. since the Conservatives came to power. However, that is still a good record. We still have one of the highest inflation rates of any west European country but the Government's achievement is still significant. If we study the matter a little more closely, we discover that the richer in our society have benefited while the poorer have paid a much higher price. I reminded the House that inflation has increased by 75 per cent. since the Government came to power, but if we consider some of the essential goods that represent such a high element of the expenditure of those on fixed or low incomes we find that inflation has been much higher.

Electricity prices have increased by a quarter more than the average rate of inflation. Water prices have increased by a third more than the average rate of inflation. Gas charges have increased by twice the average rate of inflation. Domestic rates have increased by two and a half times the average rate of inflation. Prescription charges have increased by 10 times the average rate of inflation. Once again, the poor have had to bear the burden and pay the cost, even of that achievement. It is an achievement in a way, because it may have helped industry, wherever the burden is placed.

In evaluating Industry Year, the essential question is how it will help to reverse the worrying decline to which I have referred. The size and importance of the task that we face must mean that Industry Year should be subjected to a little constructive criticism rather than being the subject of vacuous praise. Industry Year is not, as is sometimes claimed by some of the phraseology in the document, the solution to the problem, although it is part of the solution and an important ingredient.

I welcome the fact that Industry Year is looking at the identification of current good practice and how to put it into an attractive and available format. British Industry has many great individual achievements to its credit, and almost all our firms must have lessons to learn in terms of design, marketing, management skills and so on.

In more general terms, I welcome the fact that Industry Year recognises the non-cost factors, such as design reliability, and that they greatly improve competitiveness. In the past we have sometimes fallen down in that area. I hope that Industry Year will encourage us not to do so in the future.

I support the idea of making industry more valued in our culture. However, I must enter a strong note of dissent from some of the ideas set out in the promotional literature, which claims that we are

"an industrial nation with an anti-industrial culture".

That is partly true, so far as it goes.

The promotional literature then goes on to say that this and only this differentiates us from our industrial competitors. That is nothing short of rubbish. It is not only that which differentiates us from our competitors. What is more, it is damaging rubbish, which serves only to prop up the current deadening air of complacency emanating at times from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury, with their view that the Government's "hands off" approach is proving effective and that all we need to do is to bring about a change in industrial or cultural feelings. That concept is totally wrong, and I criticise the promotional literature in that respect.

In the longer term, perhaps the greatest single failure is the failure of investment. It is not only a failure of adequate investment but a failure in the direction of investment. Keith Smith, writing in his book "The British Industrial Crisis", identifies that clearly in saying that our research and development in particular go mainly to three key areas — aircraft, defence projects and nuclear reactors. They account for 55 per cent. of our total Research and Development expenditure. That needs to be corrected.

I recognise that investment has increased, and I congratulate the Government on that achievement. There has been a turn-round in investment in Britain. It is now beginning to climb, but all too late. I do not blame the Government for the long-term decline of investment in British industry, because it goes back many years, but it has taken six years to turn it round. Our investment is disastrously below that of our competitors—a third less than West Germany, half that of the United States and a quarter of that in Japan.

It is not a question of culture but of industrial policy. We need a framework that encourages people to invest, not in the hamburger-style economy that high interests rates create, and not in something that requires a small outlay today for a return in a year or 18 months. Real industrial investment in Britain depends on creating a framework that will encourage people to invest in projects that may not see a return for five, 10 or 15 years. That is what our competitors are doing. There is no impetus to see that in Britain yet.

Our successful competitors have been investing in civil electronics and chemicals, which are growing areas in world trade, while we have been pursuing a variety of essentially blind alleys. Industry Year, based as it is on a consensus between Government, the TUC and the CBI,

[Mr. Ashdown]

may not be able to tackle deep structural problems such as that but there can be no doubt that they need to be tackled if we are to succeed.

Our more successful competitors have had actual Government strategies. There is the well-know example of MITI in Japan. The Germans have not shown our bizarre repulsion for the idea of an industrial policy. If we are to succeed we must learn some of the lessons of success. If the Government have a medium-term financial strategy to govern the nation's economy, why will they not have a medium-term investment strategy? I do not mean an overall planning and detailed agreement of the sort that the Labour party would seek to foist upon us, and has foisted upon us in the past, but a set of outline targets, a framework within which the people who invest in Britain and take the key decisions that ensure our nation's prosperity can work effectively. We should consider raising the profile of the various National Economic Development Council groups, as between them they have a crucial expertise in all the various sectors of British industry.

We need a much more vigorous regional policy. At present, it is sadly starved of funds. I accept the comments of the hon. Member for Northfield that regional policy, as it was structured in the past, is not necessarily the most beneficial way of using the available money. That does not mean that we should let the baby out with the bathwater. The faults in regional policy could be changed. We could have a different style of policy that did not simply shunt jobs from one area of Britain to another, and allowed a decent system of consultation and local decision-making about how to encourage industry in our more depressed areas. The effectiveness of that can be clearly seen by the Scottish experience, but it demands a greater financial commitment than the Government have been willing to show and a new set of ideas.

We could usefully look for ways of complementing a sensible national industrial strategy with local initiative. That has much more far-reaching implications than is sometimes realised. We need a macro-economic framework, but we also need policies that encourage the micro-economy to create jobs. The Government have done a lot in that area, but much more can and should be done. The implications of a decent, lower level micro-economic strategy for investment would be very considerable for the financial sector, which needs to get involved and take decisions at a much more local level.

Another factor that has contributed to our decline and which industry attacks only tangentially is the structure of our industrial relations. In Japan and Germany industry is much more of a partnership than in Britain. However, there are encouraging signs that people are at last learning their lessons in Britain. Nevertheless, the institutionalised conflict that besets certain areas of British industry must be broken down through industrial democracy, allowing for a free flow of information through firms and a real role for all employees in decision taking. We should allow profit-sharing schemes through co-operatives and other ways, which would break down the current pattern of ownership.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Good Labour policy.

Mr. Ashdown: I hear the hon. Gentleman saying "Good Labour policy", but it is significant and interesting that when the Labour party sought to bring that into effect they did it through the discreditable and discredited Bullock report. That provided more power, not for workers but exclusively for the trade union movement, thereby excluding a vast number of workers who create the real profit and prosperity of our nation. That cramped and narrow view still persists because, as we all know, the paymasters of the Labour party are the trade unions and it is they who dominate Labour party policy.

I should like to see the Co-operative Development Agency given a much broader role, including a remit to promote industrial democracy on a broad base and given the funds to match the importance of its job.

Those ideas and policies may not lend themselves to years of implementation, but they would play a vital part in the regeneration of British industry. We must not pretend that the problems will dissolve if we suddenly begin to value industry more highly. They will not. A much more important, successful and committed Government policy is needed to do so.

I was delighted to see that the Industry Year campaign has a women's working group. I read the section of the booklet setting out the group's role with interest and rising enthusiasm. It said:

> "Women now form 40 per cent. of the workforce and over 50 per cent. of the population".

I expected the booklet to go on to talk of the valuable role that women should have in future, and outline a new strategy for involving more women in industry, particularly in top management. Not a bit of it. According to the literature, women's prime function in industry is this:

> "as mothers they have a particularly influential role in the decisions their children make about their careers."

For that reason

> "a full and active involvement of women in all aspects of Industry Year is essential."

That is different from the point made by the hon. Member for Northfield, with which I agree, about the essential role of women and their growing capacity to influence industry. Britain underuses the talents of its women. The approach in the booklet is hardly the way to reverse that trend. I hope that the Industry Year steering committee will look at that section again.

I should like to give a concrete example of the effect of the lack of a Government industrial policy. It is in my constituency, where last week 750 jobs were lost at the major employer, Westland Aircraft. It is a great firm, which has helped Britain in the past. It was praised to the sky when it contributed to the Falklands campaign. When the Government had a crisis, Westland came to their aid.

In certain areas, the Government have assisted Westland, and in some ways significantly. The Department of Trade and Industry has invested a large sum of money in developing the new W30 aircraft. That is an example of a policy that now seems to be vanishing. The aircraft has been sucessfully developed as a result of the Department's intervention. I am grateful and commend it for that. It is a prototype aircraft, which has had some problems, as any prototype will. From that has developed the new aircraft, the W30 1300, a truly magnificent aircraft specifically designed to meet the needs set out by the Ministry of Defence in air staff target 404. It did so better than any of the foreign competitors at one third of the operating cost. It is a great aircraft, in which there is

considerable foreign interest. If only the Government would put their imprimatur upon the aircraft, I have no doubt that many could be sold up and down Britain.

However, when Westland won the competition hands down, the Government simply moved the goalposts and changed the rules. We have allowed that great aircraft to be rubbished by others. Mr. Bristow is happy to rubbish it. There is no word from the Government about how good and useful it was.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, although the W30 is a good aircraft, it did not win the competition for military procurement, and that air staff target 404 was a preliminary stage before the services made up their mind about which helicopter they required? There was no question of the helicopter winning a competition and then being turned down by the Government. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that?

Mr. Ashdown: I accept that in the narrow way in which the hon. Gentleman puts it. The Government put in a sum of £50 million to Westland Aircraft through the Department of Trade and Industry to encourage the aircraft's development. They drew up a target to meet the Army's known requirements. Firms were then asked to put in submissions to meet the target. A British firm applied and met the target fully at one third of the cost. I think that it is fair to say that, in broad terms, a British firm headed the competition with the best aircraft, but the Government allowed it no longer to be required. What sort of policy is that? That would not happen in France. The French would say, "A French firm has got it and will get the orders. It might not be what the services want because they have changed their mind, but they will still get it because it will help our industry and exports." We are not always right to allow service offices to dictate terms down to the last nut and bolt, as they will always want more.

The W30/300 meets the original service requirement in full and at a lower cost than any of its comprtitors. If there had been any co-ordination between Government Departments, the aircraft would have been sold, created prosperity and provided British forces with the aircraft they need. It would have strengthened Britain and provided jobs in my constituency and in that of the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory). Such lack of co-ordination would not have occurred in our competitors' nations.

Industry Year is a welcome event and I hope that it will succeed in reminding people that we enjoy our prosperity largely because of industry. It cannot make up for a lack of Government industrial policy, but it could complement such a policy. Industry has made a positive contribution to Britian and to Industry Year and I am sure that the whole House wishes it well.

We face bigger problems than the excellent document to which I have referred considers. The price of failure for British industry is severe. The signs are that British industry is failing, not because of lack of commitment or because people are not working but because the Government have no structured industrial policy. We need such a policy if this dangerous decline is to be reversed and if Britain is to become a great industrial nation again, rather than one which is in danger of becoming an industrial has-been.

12.17 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I must compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) for generating such interest in this subject, which he tackled with great erudition and ability.

I was somewhat alarmed by the speech of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), however. It seemed that he would give his right arm to be ambidextrous in his criticism of the Government. He was clearly wrong. Industry Year requires the multi-dextrous support of all parties. I am pleased that other hon. Members have approached the subject in that way, and not taken the petty party political line of the hon. Member for Yeovil.

Hutchinson's dictionary defines industry as,

"diligence or the habitual employment in useful work; branch of trade or manufacture."

We must not fall into the trap of directing all our comments to heavy industry, necessary though it may be. Nor must we succumb to the arguments that any new service industry must erode the basis of heavy manufacturing. That is not true. In that regard, I commend the Government report entitled, "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs", which details in full the merits of the leisure and tourist industries. Regrettably, that is the only sector in which jobs have been created during the past few years. It is estimated that about 50,000 jobs a year have been created in those industries, although many of us believe that the true figure is about 100,000. Those jobs were created not to frustrate heavy manufacturing industry but to complement it, because the one cannot exist without the other. During the serious industrial decline in Birmingham, and especially in my constituency of Yardley, there was no competition to replace those industries. We are fortunate that we have been able to focus some of our attention on the development of leisure and tourism, in my case industrial tourism.

I am proud to chair the Conservative party tourism committee and the all-party recreation and leisure industry committee, and I wish to draw the House's attention to the many merits of those industries. For more than 40 years, since the time of the Board of Trade and Hugh Dalton, heavy manufacturing industry has been seduced—the word was used earlier in another sense—away from the west midlands and Birmingham by the positive creation of subsidies in almost every other part of the country. That has weakened the west midlands, which my old school song used to call "the iron heart of England." That heart beats feebly by comparison with its earlier strength.

Mr. Ashdown: Sing it.

Mr. Bevan: For the benefit of the hon. Member for Yeovil, I do so at an appropriate time. He should realise that, although the song talks about the iron heart of England beneath its sombre robe, that sombre robe has been dispelled. An area of beauty and industry has been created by the emphasis that the Government rightly place on the creation of new industries.

In praise of the lyricism of that song, I should say that, contrary to what the hon. Member for Yeovil tried to claim, the auguries have never coincided as much as they do now. British productivity is high and is increasing. The leisure sector is creating jobs, although every other sector is losing them. Interest rates are coming down for the sixth month in succession and the balance of trade figures are

[Mr. Bevan]

in the black. If I may be political for a moment, I praise the Government for having created this favourable climate.

I want to draw an analogy with Halley's comet, which unfortunately has not been seen by very many British people. I do not wish to draw too strict an analogy because a comet has to return to earth; it shoots up and it comes down. We are witnessing a convergence of factors, all of which are right. We hope that the ascending level trail across the sky will continue. I am certain that it will.

The Government have provided help for the west midlands. They have helped to restore the balance in Birmingham by the creation of intermediate status for the city, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield referred. This means that the problems connected with our industrial heritage are being dealt with. We are refurbishing the land and resuscitating our old, out-of-date factories.

One periodical states that in my constituency Land Rover has put up for sale two factories, on a total area of 11 acres. Land Rover produces an excellent article and employs many people. It has decided, quite wisely, to rationalise its manufacture and to site it in a new factory: the old Rover works in Lode Lane, Solihull, which is adjacent to my constituency. Nobody criticises the company for leaving those two factories and centralising its operations on one site. However, the old factories will have to be refurbished.

This is when new industries can exist alongside the old. If we refurbish old factories and landscape in those areas where factories are no longer required, we shall encourage industry to return to the area. It will be possible to attract industry back to the area of desolation between Birmingham and Wolverhampton when it has again been made presentable and environmentally acceptable. We shall encourage that to happen if we concentrate upon land reclamation and the service sector and leisure and tourism.

The tourist industry now has a turnover of more than £10 billion a year. It is creating jobs and, as I have said, it is worth some £700 million a year, to the west midlands alone. It is employing more and more people.

I must bring to the attention of the House the great success of the national exhibition centre near Birmingham. Many people are employed there. We hope that the inland free port which we were able to secure for Birmingham will be successful, and there is the contribution of the international station and the international airport with its new terminal to the leisure and tourist scene. Those facilities are attracting more and more people to, and employing more people in my constituency and they bring many advantages.

In November, unemployment in the United Kingdom fell to 13·3 per cent. That is high enough, but we must give credit for the fall. We must note, too, a fall of 1,264 in the number of school leavers out of work in my area. In the Birmingham travel-to-work area unemployment is now 16·3 per cent. Again, that is high enough; only a sliver —·2 per cent.—less than that in the west midlands county area. However, we were pleased to see a reduction in the unemployment figure of 6,877 in October and 3,967 in November. In Acocks Green ward, one of the three wards in Yardley, there is an unemployment rate of 20·4 per cent. In Yardley ward, it is 17·9 per cent. But in Sheldon, the third of my wards, I am delighted to see that unemployment is down to 12·8 per cent.

Why is that? Those three areas are cheek by jowl, yet the unemployment of one is over 5 per cent. less than another and nearly 8 per cent. less than the third. The reason is the development of tourist amenities and the leisure industry which have resulted in a greater take-up in employment, full and part-time. That is a welcome and excellent take-up.

I hope that, in the fullness of time, we shall be able to build upon that in Industry Year 1986 and to do what other enlightened countries do—create industrial and tourist "trails" so that our industrial visitors and tourists are able to go round and see the facilities that exist in industry and in the area generally. Those are the first attractions shown to me and my colleagues when we go on parliamentary delegations overseas. Because of the Government's policy we are now able to look at those matters.

I hope that in Industry Year we shall be able to concentrate on the creation of the Birmingham convention centre in the middle of the town which will add to the urban regeneration that is going on and create in some 50 acres a great new complex to complement the heavy industrial activities of my city.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The public sector?

Mr. Bevan: It will not come entirely from the public sector. Hyatt International will build a new 500-bed hotel in the centre. That will be private money. Perhaps the regeneration will be marshalled and triggered by actions in the public sector and perhaps that sector will contribute to the land assembly, but the money will come from both the public and the private sectors.

I recommend hon. Members to read a book produced by Glynwed International, whose headquarters are in New Coventry road, Sheldon, Yardley. The company produced the book, "The Phoenix Partnership — an Urban Regeneration for the Twenty-First Century" after sending a representative to America to study examples of land refurbishment in the United States. The book suggests that refurbishment can be carried out with a revolving fund. Money lent to viable projects would be recycled; it would replace grants and enable the same finance to be reused time and again. Locally based loans would attract further commercial and industrial development and the ripples of economic revival would spread throughout the community.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the old buck that the hon. Gentleman is giving us—I agree with much of it—is reported in his local newspapers, will it dawn on the reporters that there is a clear distinction between the hon. Gentleman's speech and that of his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King)? The hon. Member for Northfield was opposing public sector investment in recreation and leisure facilities. The hon. Gentleman is proposing it. There is a clear division. Is that division being debated as openly in Birmingham as it is in the House?

Mr. Bevan: My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield was careful to define his parameters. He suggested that the application of public funds should be limited and not limitless. I regret what I suspect was the innuendo in the intervention of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

We have to consider how funds should be limited and in what proportion the public and the private sectors should make their contributions. The lesson to be learned in Industry Year is that only private money can tackle regeneration and the clearance of derelict areas that have been abandoned because of the industrial scars of the past. After regeneration by local communities, institutions and banks, all involved in local schemes, areas that had nil or negative values have produced land of substantial value.

We are looking for progress in various sectors in 1986. We note that the youth training schemes have been successful. Not only are the training schemes being extended from one to two years, but 75 per cent. of the youngsters who have taken part in the schemes are finding permanent jobs. This is not a cosmetic subscription to industry. Tourism and leisure are not candyfloss industries. They are integral, producing real and lasting jobs. Industry in all its aspects is one and indivisible and all its components have a contribution to make.

12.40 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). With his luck in the ballot, he should enter the Irish sweepstake. This is the second time that I have had the opportunity to take part in a debate, thanks to his good offices.

We all congratulate Geoffrey Chandler and his colleagues who are so dedicated to Industry Year 1986. But it is sad that a country responsible for half the major inventions and half the major scientific breakthroughs in the post-war period has to overcome difficulties caused by lack of motivation and understanding amongst youngsters of what industry is about and how important it is.

Geoffrey Chandler and his colleagues have been somewhat sabotaged by the circumstances. The level of unemployment among the young makes motivation difficult. The Government have destroyed hope for most young people.

In one of the publications connected with Industry Year the team asks "What is Industry?" I understand the need to ask, particularly in parts of the country. After all, the north-west has lost 250,000 jobs under this Government, Yorkshire and Humberside has lost 160,000, Scotland 150,000, the north 100,000 and Wales 80,000. What is industry? Youngsters would like to know.

Youngsters hear about the newfangled technology. They would like to know where it is because not much of it is going their way in the regions. Nearly all of it is concentrated in the south of England. Only the screwdriver operations—the unskilled assembly work—goes to the regions. All the up-market, high-tec work goes elsewhere, mainly to the already prosperous south.

The document says that industry is fundamental to almost everything that we do. Hon. Members on all sides will approve that sentiment. But it is a little difficult to reconcile that with the Government's six-month moratorium on all financial aid for high-tec industry. It is difficult to reconcile that with the abolition of capital allowances, cuts in regional development grants and penal interest and exchange rates; it is difficult to reconcile that with the Government cuts that have forced the university grants committee to stop the intake of electrical engineers. Yes, industry is fundamental to almost everything that we do, but Ministers seem to be hard to convince of that.

On the abolition of capital allowances the CBI says:

> "The new system will tend to penalise firms who have heavy investment programmes in hand, undertaken to meet increasing competitive pressures and those using short-life, high technology assets. In addition, it makes no allowance for inflation."

It continues:

> "A resolution . . . at the National Conference which described this new system as a disincentive to investment, was overwhelmingly passed."

Yet the Government are paying lipservice to the idea that industry is fundamental to everything that we do.

The Minister and I recently took part in a question and answer session on electronics, against the background of the abolition of capital allowances, cuts in regional development grants and high interest rates. The Government have been told by the electronics components industry that it needs to invest £400 million for the remainder of this decade, which is three times as much as it has been investing. Yet the allowances have been removed.

It is small wonder that the deficit on electronics trade was £2·3 billion last year, and is prophesied by Cambridge econometrics to rise to £8 billion by 1993. Yet that is the industry of the future—we just do not seem to be in it. The Government are doing everything to ensure that we never get into it.

Let us consider state programmes for microelectronics from January 1982 to the end of 1984. Starting from an almost equal position, we increased our aid by 50 per cent. —ignoring the six months moratorium when there was nothing at all—while West Germany increased its aid by 120 per cent. and France by 900 per cent. Those countries did that from the same base of aid to an industry that is so essential to our survival over the whole spectrum of industry, manufacturing and services during the next couple of decades.

The document produced in support of Industry Year 1986, called "Education and Industry" states

> "Yet in Britain we hold industrial activity in low social esteem and the causes of our relative industrial decline are deeply embedded in our cultural attitudes.
>
> The aim of Industry Year 1986 is to encourage a better understanding of industry, its essential role".

My advice to Geoffrey Chandler and his team is that they had better look to the top rather than the bottom. As the Chancellor said last year

> "I am at a loss to understand the selective importance attached by . . . many Opposition Members . . . to the manufacturing sector." — [*Official Report*, 9 February 1984; Vol. 53 c. 1009.]

There is a good job to be done there. I hope that Geoffrey Chandler is sending the Chancellor that document and making sure that he reads it.

When we were taking regional legislation through Committee, the then Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry, who has now moved to the Department of Defence, said that the trouble with the Opposition was that they were dewy-eyed about manufacturing. He is another person who might be interested to receive that document. I do not suppose that he will ever get around to reading it, but I shall gladly send it to him because it is an important document

Mr. Rathbone: The right hon. Gentleman's quotation was completely out of context. The Chancellor was referring to the comparison between manufacturing contribution to exports and that of oil and invisibles. That is in no way denigrating what manufacturing is about. The Chancellor was talking purely about the proportion of the contribution to exports.

[Mr. Rathbone]

No Government have attached greater importance to the resurgence of industry, and the adoption by industry of high technology in new forms than this Government.

Mr. Williams: If the Government have given such priority to that, it is an incredible failure for them. We have had the first deficit on manufacturing trade since the time of Napoleon. A £2 billion surplus in 1979 was turned into a £4 billion deficit last year. Jobs as well as trade have been lost. According to the Department of Employment, even by early 1984, for every 100 jobs in manufacturing when the Government came to office, we had lost 23. The Germans and the French did not do as badly as that although they had to exist in the same world. They lost 10 each. The Swedes lost eight and the Japanese were employing three more.

If we are witnessing the Government's resurgence, I must tell the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) that he will be in for some mild disappointment when he examines some of the weaker parts of the Government's programme. If a resurgence is taking place, one would expect to see the results in manufacturing investment.

During the debate on the Gracious Speech, the Prime Minister boasted of a recovery in manufacturing investment. We were told that it was wonderful and that investment had increased by 14 per cent. over last year. That was great. At least there had been an improvement on last year. The right hon. Lady forgot to say that even on the best figures, manufacturing investment is still 21 per cent. below that of 1979. It does not equal any one year from 1974 to 1979 when the Labour Government were in office. The best year, about which the Prime Minister was boasting, is so pathetic that it equals only the level of manufacturing investment that was being achieved in Britain a quarter of a century ago. If only the Government had sustained the level of manufacturing investment at the level that they inherited in 1979, there would be an additional £10,000 million invested in manufacturing.

I hope that the Government and Conservative Members will not tell me that we are seeing success and a Conservative-led resurgence. I know that all things are relative and that by the standards of other parts of the Government's overall performance manufacturing investment might be seen as a success, but I cannot believe that anyone with any objective perspective would be eager to boast about it.

Mr. Cash: Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that he is talking about something which has developed over a long period, in respect of which the Labour party, when in Government, bears considerable responsibility? Will he accept also that the object of Industry Year 1986 is to try to change attitudes and to rectify the position in which, for example, the Japanese managed to increase their productivity by 500 per cent. while we increased ours by only 80 per cent. or thereabouts? Is he aware that a severe responsibility falls upon the Labour party for the manner in which it has exaggerated opportunities for employees to obtain higher wages, which by any reasonable standard —the right hon. Gentleman must accept this—do not bear comparison with what is acceptable in other countries?

Mr. Williams: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a genuine belief in what he is saying, but he is ignoring all the facts. We are in our sixth year of "successful revolution". I refer to the Conservative Government's revolution. All the terrible features of the previous Labour Administration have been left behind, such as high manufacturing investment. After six years of "glorious Conservative success", the level of manufacturing output is lower than it was in 1979. Indeed, it is lower than it was when the power stations were closed during the three-day week. That is another measure of Conservative "success" on the industrial front.

It was the well-known Socialist chairman of ICI who told the Select Committee in another place that 30 per cent. of ICI's British customers have disappeared since the Government came to office. There are other examples. A document has been produced for Industry Year on further and higher education. It tells us that we must examine the systems of learning that are used in colleges to ascertain how they can be improved to meet the needs of industry. We all agree that training skills are important, but this Government got rid of the training boards. The percentage of qualified workers in our work force is half that in the United States, Germany and Japan. British firms are spending half what the French spend on training and one sixth of what the Japanese spend. The Government have cut centralised spending on proper industrial training, and industry has done nothing to make it good.

Do not take my word for this—let us take another well-known Trotskyite document. On 24 January, *The Engineer* stated:

> "Britain has three million people out of work and skill shortages in virtually every industry using new technologies. So what are we doing about it? The answer in practical terms is that we're not doing a lot."

That statement may be an aberration. One might say that that is just what the engineers say. But the CBI says:

> "Three out of five employers are having difficulty in filling jobs requiring skill, qualifications or experience."

Why get rid of the training boards? Why make cuts?

Let us consider the Government's higher educational performance in relation to the needs of industry. One document asks how can further and higher education and industry work together. The answer is with increasing difficulty, because 4,800 fewer students have been admitted to the universities despite the fact that there are more than 7,000 more students with the qualifications needed to enter them. Much of the talent that we say we desperately need to motivate and direct to the national advantage is denied its place in the universities. Just to ensure that we cannot remedy the position too quickly, there have been staff cuts of 4,000 in the universities.

Unbelievably, when one considers the future role of electronics for the whole spectrum of industry and its abysmal performance under this Government, the high-tech universities were hardest hit by the Government's cuts. The EDC has prophesied a shortage of 30,000 information technology staff.

No doubt the Under-Secretary of State will say, "We have put an extra £40 million — belatedly — into the science and engineering side of our universities." That is not really "extra"—the Government have merely taken the money from all the other university departments. In the new era of high-technology industry which involves a dynamic change in technological content and, therefore, in the nature of jobs, we shall need a large number of highly qualified generalists with the ability to move, adapt and adjust; but instead the Government have cut 4,000 university places and are keeping out people of ability.

The background to Industry Year 1986 could hardly be less propitious. Nevertheless, I wish the promoters of the campaign well. What they say is amazingly reflective of and complementary to our "Jobs in Industry" campaign. We recognise, as they do, that the young must be motivated, that they must have the opportunities to be trained and educated and that they must feel that they have an opprotunity to get a job when their training and education has finished. Instead, the Government have seen £40 billion of income flow into the Treasury from the North sea and have wasted it all—£12 billion a year—in paying for the extra unemployment that they have created. They have allowed a further £50 billion to go overseas as a result of their exchange controls.

The trust and pension funds had £4 billion invested overseas when the Conservatives came to Government. There is now over £21 billion invested overseas. The Government have decimated industry and destroyed the regions. They have hardly any credentials which would enable them to sponsor Industry Year unless it is to be a commemorative year.

12.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I know that some hon. Members still hope to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the debate closes. I shall try to confine my remarks to the points that have been mentioned and to give some idea of the Government's position on the issues raised by the campaign of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce and to set in context some of the wider problems that have been mentioned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) is to be congratulated yet again on securing a debate on an important subject on a Friday morning. It is a mark of the interest that the House shows in the subject that we have a higher than average attendance for a Friday. The observations made by hon. Members have been of a high quality.

One of the phenomena that I think we unite in identifying, although we may not agree about the solution, is that in 1964 the United Kingdom had about 14 per cent. of the world share of exports of manufacturing and services. By 1979 that share had decreased to about 8 per cent. The CBI, which has already been quoted today, has advised us that each 1 per cent. of the loss of the share of world trade represents 250,000 jobs. Between those years, Britain exported 1·5 million jobs.

Today is not the day to argue about the responsibility of various Governments for that loss. It is, however, highly relevant to the debate. Our objective, like that of the royal society, is to examine which trends were malignant during that period and deterred us from becoming job creators, and which trends we can reverse.

Some key subsystems in the industrial strategy have been correctly mentioned. They include design, quality and productivity. I should like to deal first with my hon. Friend's reference to Sir Adrian Cadbury's paper in which he said that we have been sinking down the international league table.

The royal society and hon. Members have come to the same conclusion, which is that there seems to be a cultural, antipathy of some strength within the United Kingdom against industry and manufacturing. That is important, because if there is such a cultural antipathy it is one that is not shared by some of our competitors.

A form of economic, industrial and commercial warfare has been raging in the international markets since 1945, and is increasing in intensity. Bearing that in mind, the United Kingdom may have been sending its brightest and best people into any occupation other than commerce and industry — in other words, into the second-tier occupations, which are distant from the front-line trenches of the manufacturing sector. If we have been doing that, and to employ one of the mixed metaphors that sometimes bedevil our debates, I say that, in fighting an economic war, it would appear that as a nation we decided not to enrich the quality of the general staff, the junior officers and the NCOs but, instead, to create the most articulate and able corps of war correspondents that any nation has ever had. We became brilliantly equipped to comment on the problems that were bedevilling us but forgot that the army wished to have the very best recruits in fighting that battle.

I shall not go into the reasons why youngsters at school have made the choices that have caused the problem, but in politics, in industry and in the trade unions we must all do what we can to persuade the 14-year-olds—not the fifth-formers or sixth-formers—in our secondary system that the subject choices they make at that age will determine whether they can go into management in commerce and industry. It may well be that those careers in commerce and industry will become more attractive as the century progresses and as Britain re-enters the international race for market share.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I agree with my hon. Friend that the important factor is to enlighten 14-year-olds as to the importance of subject choice, but I suggest to him that it is not that that will determine whether they can go into industry, but whether industry will be successful. In other words, the problem is not one of gaining entry; it is getting entry of the right, properly qualified, people. Would my hon. Friend agree?

Mr. Butcher: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson). Industry and commerce are asking for an increase in the critical mass, male and female, of youngsters who are trainable and who have the appropriate skills, bedrock subjects and abilities to take advantage of companies' management training courses and requirements.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield used a very apt phrase when he said that he feared that home economics was put before business economics in some of our schools. It was a pungent and concise way of stating the scale of the problem.

I ask hon. Members in all parts of the House to conduct an experiment when they next visit the schools in their constituency. I invite them to ask for a show of hands on two questions. The first is whether the pupils can define what is meant by profit. Some might have difficulty in defining "profit" in the strict meaning of the word. Some might even think that it was vaguely unpleasant. The second question is whether any of the sixth formers have seen a balance sheet and know what it is. I suspect that the feedback would be very interesting. That is why I am delighted to endorse one of the major objectives of

[Mr. Butcher]

Industry Year 1986, which is to have much stronger contacts between schools and local commerce and industry.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the need to get more women into industry. The Government gave strong backing to the campaign to get women into science and engineering. The Government have identified themselves with the campaign of the Institute of Directors to pair sixth form schoolgirls with top female managers in commerce and industry, so that the girls can report back to their schools what they have learnt, and perhaps be able to say that commerce and industry is a much more interesting, stimulating and challenging field than they may have assumed hitherto.

My hon. Friend said that many people felt that industry, in the eyes of school leavers and university students, was often seen as dull, boring, repetitive and unhappy. I do not accept that that has always been the case, but we have to reverse that impression, however wide it may be. I also believe that the picture is changing very rapidly.

A rebirth of engineering is taking place. It is not about oily rags, dirt and noise. The engineering industry is transforming itself. We have had this debate before. The so-called sunset industries are now becoming sunshine industries. They are getting into higher added value, into manufacturing systems engineering, and into multi-disciplinary approaches, with the fusing together of mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering. The "mechatronics" engineer has arrived. Industry is cleaner, and industrial relations are improving dramatically. Industry is no longer the constant supplier of problems and fodder for our industrial correspondents. I met an industrial correspondent the other day who said that it was a long time since he had had a drink with his colleagues in a certain pub round the corner from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service because it is not like it was in the 1970s. They are no longer permanently camped outside, reporting current disputes and the lunacy involved in them. That pub may have lost some turnover but I am glad that he told me the story because it means that sanity is returning.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) gave a considered speech early in the debate and said that success will be judged on whether unemployment has been substantially reduced. I understand why he makes that observation, particularly as a Scottish Member. I understand why he wishes to see industry make its contribution to the employment stakes. I put this thought to him. In the House we have discussed jobs and job creation programmes on many occasions. Will he not join me in agreeing that the job creation programme, which is the most important programme of all, is defined as jobs created by reversing the erosion in our share of world trade in manufactured goods and services?

I sometimes wonder, when the Government go on, as they rightly do, about productivity, efficiency and markets, whether we should not enjoy a little more support from the Opposition, fixated as they are and we are by the need to create more jobs. It is the job creation programme to which we should be giving the highest priority. I agree with the right hon. Member for Rutherglen when he said that he did not agree with wholesale import controls. He will know that once retaliation and tit-for-tat measures start in selective import controls, in what the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) used to call "managed trade", it is difficult to define and control where that retaliatory campaign could end. It may be that as a nation that exports 30 per cent. of what it makes we would find ourselves hurt far more than some of those that we were retaliating against. It is the old parable of the first shot at Sarajevo. One never knows at which point such activity could get entirely out of hand. Therefore, as a nation we must resist, wherever possible, any pressures to move towards import controls here or in other nations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) ably congratulated the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce on bringing forward the programme at this time with these objectives. His Royal Highness Prince Philip and Sir Geoffrey Chandler were far-sighted in mapping out the chain of events some time ago. My hon. Friend also mentioned the impact of the anti-industrial culture and said that industry has to express itself better and adapt itself to new requirements. If the debates on industry and commerce have become stereotyped, it may be because the industrialists themselves have not taken time to put their heads above the parapet and address the wider constituency of the nation at large. I fully understand why they have to be concerned with their three-month profit and loss account and balance sheet and running their companies. However, many of our industrialists are a little shy of appearing on the media and reticent about expressing the values of the industrial and commercial lifestyle, to such an extent that it is often parodied, in my view inaccurately, in some of the news we see or read in the media today. Industry and commerce is very little like the stories we see on "Dallas" or our domestic soap operas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield was entirely correct about the way to get over the cultural problem, between the sectors and pillars of society. He said that we should have more secondment between industry and commerce and Whitehall, and in particular we should consider secondment into the Department of Trade and Industry. I agree, and I assure my hon. Friend that we keep that under constant review, particularly in my Department.

Training has to be—there can be no other way—the responsibility of the companies themselves. We have heard much about Japan recently. If one talks to a Japanese industrialist about the national training facilities and programmes, and asks how his company is participating, he looks at one with incredulity. He says, "This is just an integral part of my constant management effort within my own company. I do not need other people to come along and provide me with trained people. I need people who are trainable, whose skills can be enhanced by the training programmes that we have in-house." The Japanese have that obsession and fixation with their training culture.

I shall not refer to the Government's skill shortage exercise, but suffice it to say that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was not entirely correct when he implied that the additional £43 million had been found from other accounts. Contributions have been made from other Government Departments, but it is additional resource going into those engineering and technology programme courses. They were identified by the industrialists on my skill shortage committee. They got together with the higher education sector and helped to identify precisely where the money should go in the areas of greatest shortage. In my view, the new partnership that

has emerged will be seen as a seminal event, setting a precedent for the links between higher education and the private sector.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), in his customary style, generally laid about him ambidextrously, as we were reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan). I have to take him up on this, desperate though we all are to try to keep party politics out of the debate as much as possible. I have to take him to task on his assertion that the Government have stood idly by. That is not so. Neither is it the case that Government spokesmen have said that services can be depended upon to sustain our standards of living.

It is a great shame that somehow in the House we are stuck on a set of tramlines, with a service sector and a manufacturing sector on separate lines, almost in competition with each other. They are complementary. If we are considering the propensity for wealth creation, when we note that 80 per cent. of manufacturing output is internationally tradable, whereas 14 per cent. of service sector activities is, we see that manufacturing gives us a good return for our manpower and investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister has, more significantly than any other Minister, made precisely those points. He is well known for having made the point about the connection between the service sector and manufacturing industry. However, does he agree that other Ministers in his Department and the Prime Minister herself have somehow given the impression that the service industry will take up the slack where manufacturing industry is in decline? That is an unfortunate impression, which the hon. Gentleman has taken pains to correct.

Mr. Butcher: I do not accept that. Others have taken that impression because it may suit their purpose. I was at a meeting of the national assembly of the Engineering Council, when the Prime Minister was particularly supportive of engineering and the manufacturing sector. Because we in the Conservative party dwell on complementarity and integration of the various sectors, some of the comments made have been taken—perhaps deliberately—out of context, for constituency or other political reasons. There is a massive contradiction at the heart of alliance policy and I am surprised that nobody in the media has twigged to it. I watched the hon. Member for Yeovil and his colleagues carefully at their conference. They talked about the head and heart policies of the alliance. The alliance says that, with its heart, it wants to spend on various social programmes and that, with its head, it wants to protect the interests of commerce and industry, an independent deterrent and so on. I wonder whether the cost of the heart policies will make life exceedingly difficult for commerce and industry. I challenge the hon. Gentleman—I shall give way to him now—to tell me how much his heart policies will cost, how he will fund them and how he will protect interest rates from the effects of that expenditure.

Mr. Ashdown: I am especially grateful to the Minister for giving way as he related his comments to the effect on industry. I remind him that the detailed proposals in our alternative budget costed social policies and chimed in almost precisely with the CBI's proposals in terms of the extra expenditure needed and how it should be spent. I have letters from the CBI, of which I shall send copies to the Minister if he would like, which show that the alliance's proposals coincide with those required by British industry.

Mr. Butcher: I hope that the House will note carefully what the hon. Gentleman has said. I did not hear him say how he would protect interest rates from the implications of increased expenditure. He will know that, year after year, the CBI puts the level of interest rates at the top of its list of factors that determine business confidence. No doubt we shall return to that debate at another time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Yardley talked of the various sectors of industry complementing each other. He also talked with affection about employers in his area. He is some ways a fortunate Member of Parliament as he has in his area an international airport, a freeport, the Land Rover company and the national exhibition centre. As an ex-Birmingham councillor, I congratulate him and his ex-colleagues in Birmingham on continuing that tradition of looking to the future and bringing forward the imaginative proposal for a convention centre, which will create hundreds of jobs.

Mr. Bevan: My hon. Friend has mentioned job creation and the convention centre. Birmingham has more miles of canal than Venice, some adjoining the conference centre. If the canals were developed as part of a job creation scheme, they would provide an excitng scheme for 1986, and I would appreciate comment.

Mr. Butcher: I have spent some time on those canals and I can vouch for the fact that they are a major asset to the city. With appropriate programmes, they could be a strong attraction for the many tourists who now visit Birmingham.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West mentioned the moratorium on support for innovation programmes. As £138 million was allocated to innovation programmes in 1979, would he please note that some £380 million has been allocated in 1985-86, including an element of the Alvey money? The moratorium took place against a total spend of £230 million because awareness of the options and support for innovation arrived like an express train in that financial year. In previous years, there had been slight underspends against lower allocations. The allocation was higher when awareness was roused. The year's spend was consumed almost entirely in the first six months.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to the Minister for that information. However, does he accept that that happened as a result of the Chancellor's proposals and that industry was rushing to get through its investment proposals before the capital allowances were abolished?

Mr. Butcher: Several factors were involved, but the major factor, which outweighs that one, was that, at that precise time, most companies were cranking up their investment programmes, having come to the judgment that, for them, the recession had ended. Therefore, it was in their interests, if they wished, to help to discount that growing investment programme, sometimes at taxpayers' expense, through the support for innovation programme. It was a sign of a general, healthy increase in the rate of investment.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West will use another debate to explain why he said that industry, especially the high-tech industries, wanted generalists with flexibility. That was an interesting phrase.

[Mr. Butcher]

However, the position is far more complex than that. Key and specific skills have been identified as being required, but more general skills are also required.

Mr. Williams: This is a problem more of articulation than anything else. I was talking about the high-tech era and the work force that we shall need in the future. The essence of my point was that both were needed.

Mr. Butcher: Perhaps the last 30 seconds of the debate have produced a happy consensus. This is an appropriate moment for me to resume my seat, to thank all those who have contributed thus far, and to look forward to the further important speeches that will be made on this important subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield has allowed us to express our support for the royal society's admirable programme in Industry Year 1986.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The shortest speech in the debate so far has lasted for 19 minutes. No fewer than 10 hon. Members still wish to speak, and we have only just over an hour left, so may I appeal most strongly for short, sharp contributions.

1.27 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The longest speech in the debate was made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who knew that many hon. Members wished to speak. It was wrong of him to speak for so long when he could hear objections being voiced around him while he was on his feet.

The Minister said that industry was being cranked up at that time because of lack of investment. That was not the position. It happened simply because the capital allowance arrangements were being changed. Those hon. Members who served on the Finance Bill Committee that year were smothered by information from companies and the CBI saying that that was the case. Companies believed that that Budget created an artificial position, and they asked us to table amendments during the course of that Bill. Indeed, some Conservative Members tabled amendments.

The Minister tried to rubbish the idea of managed trade. To rubbish that principle is to be complacent about what is happening. While we ignore the vital principle of managed trade, others will exploit our markets. That is exactly what the Japanese are doing today.

I congratulate the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce, and especially Sir Geoffrey Chandler and his staff, on the initiative that they will take next year. I welcome any initiative that places more emphasis on industry.

I welcome that initiative to some extent, too, because from the age of 21 I was self-employed, either in the United Kingdom or abroad. Before I became a Member of Parliament I spent all my time running a business. I began in a very small way. I went down the route that today we are advising others to follow. I was the designer, the marketing manager, the advertising manager and I had to organise trade exhibitions. On a number of occasions I exhibited at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. That is why I intervened when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) referred to that matter. As a Socialist, I found that it was a thrilling and an exciting experience.

It is very sad that society has always looked down upon those who are engaged in trade. I am told that this is a historical pattern. In the 19th century trade was regarded almost as a second rate activity, while the professions were regarded as first rate. That pattern continues to this day. During the 1970s I went abroad on business. When I met management, particularly in Germany and also in France, I found that their attitude to business was completely different from ours. They had a different attitude to the position that they thought they held in society and on the shop floor. The demarcations in British industry—the white coat for the manager, the separate canteen for the workers and all that nonsense—has been responsible in many ways for what has happened in this country. I want those demarcations to be broken down. During the debate there has been an almost cross-party coalition on the need to intervene.

My period in business, which I remember with great affection, did me a great deal of good. It helped to remove any prejudices that I had about industry. Although I might be very ideological about the way I conduct my politics in this House, I pride myself upon adopting a very objective view towards industry and business. That is why the announcement of this campaign and the identification of three important priority areas, given the constraints imposed upon it by central Government and the limited finance that is available from the Department of Trade and Industry, will be successful to some extent.

The identification of the need to develop an increasing awareness of industry is important. Many people do not understand that this country has to generate wealth in order to provide the essential services for which I, as a Socialist, so vigorously campaign on the Floor of the House of Commons. I object strongly to the attitude that somebody else will pay. Those who sit on the Government Benches address this problem as though only the work force and those who are out of work adopt this attitude. However, it is also to be found among those who do not work but who are well heeled.

The worst prejudices that I have heard spoken in my life about the role of the state have come from the well heeled. They should know better but they do not. They are often articulate but they have never experienced life on the shop floor, so they do not understand what happens in factories. It is possible that half of this country's population has never been inside a factory. They do not know what is happening. Nevertheless, aided by the press, prejudices are built up, dwelt upon and developed and they serve to reinforce the prejudices of previous generations. That must be broken down by the campaign so that there is an increasing awareness of industry.

I can put in no better way than the Minister the link between education and industry. He put it excellently. It is important to educate young kids about industry. They should not regard becoming a barrister, a lawyer, an accountant, or even a Member of Parliament as their goal in life. They should realise that their aim should be to become a good industrial manager. That is where the real excitement lies: to go out into the market, to sell, to produce, to design, to get involved in wealth creation. If we can get young kids to follow that route, it will serve our country well.

I want to pay tribute today to the SATRO organisation in the county of Cumbria which to some extent has been involved in that area over a period of years. There are now 40 SATROs throughout the United Kingdom and the one in my county has been particularly active, thanks to the considerable efforts of Mr. Roger Day, the co-ordinator, who has been asked to help in the promotion of this initiative in the coming year.

However, SATRO in Cumbria has problems. It has a small grant from the Department of Trade and Industry of £350 and an annual grant from Cumbria county council of £4,000. It simply cannot manage. It is disturbed because it has found out that although some additional moneys are to be made available under the Industry Year 1986 programme, none is to go to SATRO operations in Cumbria.

I hope that the Minister will take note of what I am saying and write to me about whether we can re-examine that to ensure that more money is made available. I am not asking for a lot, but the hon. Gentleman knows how tight the budgets are. We are talking about only the lower thousands. He might be able to make some particular concession to help SATRO through its financial problems. It can do so much more if it is given just a little more money.

I am told by way of rumour that Energy Conservation Year, being next year, is being treated within the county as of more importance than Industry Year. If that is so, it means that industrialists might not support the scheme in the way that they should. I ask the Minister to look at that and perhaps, through the regional CBI, to advise industry to take an even greater interest in the matter and not to put energy conservation first.

There is some feeling that the centre at the RSA is consuming the lion's share of the cash. I hope that the Minister will look at that. I am not criticising the RSA. All I am saying is that if it is taking the lion's share it might look at its budgets to see whether more can be given to the regions to support the front-line battle that has to be waged next year on this particular front.

I am grateful for the support given to SATRO by Marchon, British Nuclear Fuels, the British Steel Corporation, High Duty Alloys, Camtex, Leyland, and Eskett Quarries in my county. Perhaps next year we shall be going to them for even more to help us with this important initiative. That is all the more reason why the Government should help us if possible.

Mr. Butcher: I wish to put it on the record that the direct grant to the RSA from the Department of Trade and Industry towards the central administration costs for the programme is about £500,000 and another £1·5 million associated with the programme will be given during the year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am grateful for that comment from the Minister. I hope that we get our share within the county, and perhaps even more. We have all the machinery set up to make the scheme work. We want to make it work and I hope that we will be given every support.

The third initiative is action in industry. Let me quote something from that because I want to raise a subject which arises directly from the proposals set out in the document for industry in 1986. It says:

"The success of Industry Year will depend crucially on action by industry itself and its component parts — directors, managers, trade unionists, employees and the companies or other institutions in which they are involved. All have a contribution to make in explaining the fundamental role of industry in society."

Then is says:

"Companies will be encouraged to develop a statement of principles or code of practice which will spell out their obligations and responsibilities to employees."

I want to look at those codes of practice because they are important. If we do not get the codes of practice right we will not attract people to industry and industry will be discredited. It is important that we ensure that the picture that industry paints of activities is one that entices, inspires and attracts.

There have been many developments, particularly over recent months, that have frightened our young people away from industry. Rows in the City, the activities of the Takeover Panel and the revelations of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) have all caused concern. My hon. Friend has to bring out those matters, because these evils have to be rooted out if we are to present industry in the right way.

A recent report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on a takeover bid affecting a brewery in my constituency recommended the closure of two breweries. When young people in Workington hear that an independent organisation, which is responsible, to some extent, for what is going on in industry, has recommended the closure of two breweries, they must feel alienated and think, "Industry is not for me." We must ensure that these silly mistakes are not made.

There was talk some weeks ago—I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, heard it—about Associated British Foods. I am told that that company, which owns more than 100 branches of Fine Fare supermarkets and makes Sunblest bread, is a particularly good firm with a fine track record.

However, we are informed that in 1984 that company made a £2 million contribution to the IRA. Reports suggested that Associated British Foods paid £2 million protection money into a Swiss bank account controlled by the IRA. The payment was traced via Switzerland and New York to a branch of the Bank of Ireland in Dublin. Information suggests that early this year the Government of the Republic passed a Bill to free from the bank several millions of pounds which, it was believed, belonged to the IRA.

Of course, the company is denying that claim. It has denied it today. The company says that it is rubbish. But what will the company say when the truth comes out? how will that affect the way in which people look at industry? When all that happened is finally revealed—we always find out in the end what happened—how will people respond? Surely the reputation of industry will fall.

In statements this morning, the company says that it did not pay £2 million to secure the release of a kidnap victim. That was a careful and selective use of language. I have never suggested that the company paid £2 million to secure the release of a kidnap victim. I say that it paid £2 million protection money. It paid that money after the kidnap victim had been released. The company is playing with words in the statements that it is making to the media today.

I believe that when the Attorney-General answers the questions that I tabled last night he will have to recognise that something that bears investigation has happened.

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

I am told that Scotland Yard is very angry, because it has been unable to get to the bottom of the matter. Scotland Yard knows that it happened. The security advisers to the company, Control Risks, are just across the road from Scotland Yard. It had the information, but, because of codes of practice in its business, felt unable to come forward.

The point is that money like this is used to kill soldiers in Ulster. What about young people when they——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the motion, wide as it is.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am being very careful to keep absolutely in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am talking about codes of conduct of business. Industry Year relates specifically to codes of practice in which companies spell out obligations and responsibilities to their employees. It is about the public relations efforts of industry to ensure that it is seen in the right light and perceived in the right way.

The truth is that Associated British Foods may have broken the law in a number of ways. It may have contravened section 1(2) of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, in relation to the payment of money to the IRA in the knowledge that the money would be used for the purposes of violence, section 243 of the Companies Act in relation to the fact that the company failed to provide full accounts for the purposes of taxation, section 393(2) of the Companies Act in relation to the misleading information that it supplies its auditors as to the use of money which it failed to declare as being contributions to the IRA.

Either we make the law work, or we pull the soldiers out of Ulster. We cannot condone——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must appeal to the hon. Member. Time is getting on and he has already made a long contribution. In fairness to the House and to other hon. Members who wish to speak, he must stick to the motion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps I can examine codes of practice; because the motion relates to principles and codes of practice.

Auditors who operate under the Companies Acts are subject to two types of control. They are governed by Companies Act legislation and by professional rules of conduct laid down by the institute of which they must be a member.

The Companies Act 1985 contains two relevant sections. Section 237 states the circumstances in which an auditor must qualify his report on the accounts. This includes cases where proper account of records has not been kept. Section 393 strengthens the powers of the auditor by making a criminal offence of anything which

"conveys or purports to convey any information or explanation which the auditors require"—

which is

"misleading, false or deceptive in a material particular."

The guidelines issued by the accountancy profession are more vague. I am dealing with codes of practice which is at the heart of the initiative for 1986. The guideline issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in guidance note 1306 on the disclosure of defaults or unlawful acts states:

"It is an implied term of a member's contract with his client that the member will not, as a general rule, disclose to other persons information about his client's affairs acquired during and as a result of their professional relationship, against his client's wishes. Therefore, where a member becomes aware that a client has committed a default or unlawful act, the member should in principle keep the matter between himself and his client by virtue of the contract. A member who acquires knowledge of the commission of a criminal offence (other than treason), or a default which is a civil wrong, is under no legal obligation to disclose what he knows to a proper authority. There are, however, circumstances in which in spite of the contractual position, a member may be obliged to disclose information to the authorities or may be free to do so if he wishes."

That is an important part of the code because if that guideline were exercised in the case to which I have referred and in other cases that will come up in 1986 during Industry Year it would help to ameliorate industry's reputation with the public.

Mr. Ryman: Surely any reputable company in those circumstances would simply refuse to certify the accounts.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That might be so, and I only wish that it had happened in one particular case. If it had happened I might not be standing here today.

"The circumstances in which it is envisaged that the non-disclosure principle need not apply are when,

(a) the auditor is obliged to disclose information by a Court;

(b) where the client has authorised disclosure; or

(c) where there is a public duty to disclose information.

The 'public duty to disclose' principle is triggered off by:—

(a) an intended criminal offence whether serious or trivial; or

(b) an intended civil wrong or breach of statutory duty if the damage to an individual is likely to be serious, or if the wrong may affect a large number of individuals".

The code of practice continues:

"Council therefore recommends that members, even though free to do so, should not disclose past or intended crimes or civil wrongs (except treason), which they are legally obliged to disclose unless they feel that the damage to the public likely to arise from the non-disclosure is of a very serious nature."

I believe that the killing of soldiers in Belfast is serious. The funding of that should have been reported by the auditors in the case to which I have referred.

I want to give another example which is not quite the same because it involves an hon. Member of the House. I make it clear that I am not criticising him personally.

A particular contract has been the subject of much public debate. That contract discredits Government and industry. I am arguing that it is important to clean up the show so that people outside know what efforts are being made to make industry enticing during 1986.

The £900 million contract for Nimrod, the early warning aircraft project, went to GEC. The contract is five years behind. The company was beginning to lose a lot of money and was in trouble. What did it do? It hired a right hon. Member of this House to negotiate with the Secretary of State on its behalf. The right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) was purchased by GEC's Lord Weinstock. He was simply purchased to negotiate with the Secretary of State for Defence on the question of that particular contract. I find that quite outrageous.

There was a meeting yesterday to discuss these matters. On the one side, there was Mr. Peter Levene and the Secretary of State for Defence, quite legitimately there to represent the Ministry of Defence and the interest of the taxpayer. On the other side were Lord Weinstock and the right hon. Member for Waveney. They were hassling over whether the Government should give £100 million for the

completion of the contract, or £400 million over the next four years for its completion to the required standard. That is unacceptable.

That sort of activity discredits the House. It certainly discredits industry, and we are discussing the reputation of industry in the country. It is wrong that a right hon. Member who represents his constituents in the House and sits on its Committees can be in contract negotiations with a Minister who is one of his own parliamentary colleagues where the public interest is served by securing the lowest possible price and the highest standard.

We must clean up the whole show. We must make this place cleaner than clean. We must ensure that industry is perceived as cleaner than clean. Only then will people be able to say, "I want to go into industry because it stands for all that I represent." Until we achieve that climate, we shall not succeed in the way that the House and the country demand.

1.53 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who is known in his constituency and in the House for his vigorous activity in the campaigns that he follows — an example of which is Industry Year 1986 — on raising this debate. I am sure that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) feels these matters strongly, but I always thought that it was one of the conventions of the House to give a colleague prior notice if one intends to refer to him in the Chamber.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I did.

Mr. Mills: I understand that the person concerned is the chairman of the company to which the hon. Gentleman referred and has declared that interest. The House has resolved that such an entry in the Register of Members' Interests is the proper way in which to declare an interest. I find it strange that the hon. Gentleman was so critical.

I welcome Industry Year 1986. I spent nearly 20 years in manufacturing industry and I have the honour to be associated with the industrial anti-counterfeiting group, as its adviser. I trained as an engineer and I worked on the drawing board for some years as a designer. Many of the problems which Industry Year 1986 is setting out to tackle are part of the cultural ethic of the United Kingdom. Wealth creators—for example, engineers and those who manage manufacturing and other industries — are somehow seen as lesser beings than those in the professions. That is sad. In Germany, I was called Herr Doktor Mills, in Italy, Ingegnere Mills, and in France, Ingenieur Mills. Those who knew of my profession in my home country thought that I was using spanners and hammers instead of drawingboard skills with my pen, which I hope brought some benefits to the company for which I worked.

Until we change that — my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has tried in his committees with the Engineering Council to upgrade the wealth-creators — Industry Year 1986 will not be successful. This part of the multi-disciplinary or multi-occupation base is an ideal one in which to advance industry's role and society's attitude to it. I wish that more colleagues had come from the roots of manufacturing industry. Perhaps the House of Commons is too attractive to those in the professions. We can but hope—I think that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who comes from industry agrees with me — for future Parliaments containing more manufacturing men and women.

We need a vast shift in the attitude of the country and the Opposition to profit. If Industry Year 1986 is to be successful in promoting understanding in society of industry's role, it must be genuinely accepted that profit is a good and honest motive so long as the profit is honest and good and cleanly and properly made. The creation of an enterprise culture demands the motive of profit. Companies that aim to profit properly and wholesomely will ensure our future in the manufacturing enterprises that we need. We need also a much higher standard of management. I deplore the way in which management standards declined in the 1960s. It is only in the past five years that British management has started to become sharp and professional. Marketing and professional skills are emerging to match those of the Americans and Japanese. This is matched by marvellous achievements in productivity by our companies, not the least of which is the Austin Rover group which covers the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield and supplies much employment to my constituency of Meriden. The company's achievements in the car group and in the Land Rover group, which is partly in my constituency, have been an excellent example. To those companies which, in Industry Year 1986, would see the high interest rates policy employed by the Government as limiting, I say that wage settlements must be low as part of the macro-arguments aimed at achieving the right level of the pound, low inflation and success for Land Rover, Austin Rover, Talbot and the other companies that provide many jobs in my constituency.

I congratulate the Government on the extension of regional aid to the west midlands. So far, many thousands of pounds have been spent in my constituency, and I hope that that will continue during Industry Year 1986. I welcome the credit that my colleagues gave to those institutions in my constituency such as the national exhibition centre and the airport. I very much regret the redundancies that have been announced in my constituency at Castle Bromwich by the Austin Rover group and SP Tyres, which was formerly Dunlop. I am concerned about these redundancies and shall closely look into them.

Locally we have a striving and thriving promotion of Industry Year. Mr. Glover, who works for Massey-Ferguson as a senior director, is chairman of the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region group which is planning excellent activities to promote the year, including video films and school and industry links. The Government have already established, through their technical and vocational initiatives in schools, the type of links that we used to see in technical schools and that which are important if our young people are to understand the joys and challenges of working in industry.

I welcome the extension of the young enterprise programme and the provision of a panel of speakers who can promote and talk knowledgeably about industry. This will further links not only with schools and industry but with higher education. This is imoportant for those at universities and polytechnics, such as the Lanchester polytechnic in Coventry, to establish the delights of working for industry.

[Mr. Mills]

During Industry Year 1986, there will be a commitment, which will continue, for major companies to provide specialist assistance and advice to smaller companies. There will be displays in Coventry, which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State — the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher)—and I represent. These proposals show that Coventry has done its bit under the chairmanship of Mr. Glover to ensure that Industry Year is well promoted. I hope that he does not forget the pressures that there are on the green belt around Coventry. My hon. Friend the Minister would not expect me to make a speech without mentioning briefly how appalling it would be in Industry Year 1986 if the many hundreds of acres of derelict land in the west midlands were not developed but, instead, the green fields between Coventry and Birmingham were unneccesarily despoiled. I hope that he will encourage the present initiative, and new initiatives, which will enable derelict land to be brought back into use.

We in the United Kingdom suffer from the cultural identity problem whereby we see wealth creators as less imoportant than others. That is partly because we had our industrial revolution last century. We struggled through the cycle of good economic fortune and recess to build our industrial foundation. We have had time, unfortunately, to forget how important wealth creators—engineers and others in industry—are. Newly developed countries are straight into their industrial revolution. With instant access to western technology their engineers suddenly become the most important people in the country. Their whole thrust in national economic terms is through the developing new industries. Their place in society, their role and their rewards are high.

We are competing with those countries on the basis of a relatively small domestic market which is why the establishement of the European Community is the single most important step towards establishing a large domestic market. We must foster that link. Part of the fostering of that link must be cross-European action against the illicit trade in counterfeit goods.

That is a subject upon which I have become knowledgeable because of my fascination with the many hundreds of thousands of jobs that our industry is losing. During Industry Year 1986 we must encourage the Government to act. I ask my hon. Friend to speak to the Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry about the points that I shall make briefly. We wish to see an end to the loss of those jobs from illicit counterfeit goods. They are identical in brand name, packaging and every other aspect except for quality to good British goods produced by big British names.

I want to see the Government introduce criminal penalties for industrial counterfeiting similar to those that exist in the United States. In a recent case, some counterfeiters of £7 million of perfume were arrested. They were acquitted because the law did not allow their conviction. I shall be happy to write to my hon. Friend because the time is short. It was a conspiracy under the Criminal Law Act 1977. The Government are reviewing the matter and it is most important that they introduce penalties that are sufficiently severe to deter that illicit trade.

The United States Counterfeit Act 1984 is a good model. It provides for five years' imprisonment for a second or subsequent offence of counterfeiting and fines of up to $5 million for a company. I should like to see such a measure introduced in the United Kingdom. I hope that the Government will soon respond to the recommendations in the Nicholson report.

In Industry Year 1986 it would be splendid if the European trade mark office were located in London. It is the last and most important European institution to be established. It will be talked about in Europe for many decades. It is vital to achieve that objective. I chair a committee that has been set up to promote the country's interest in that office. It has reported and identified a splendid site at the old boy's school at Blackfriar's bridge or, alternatively, in the borough of Harrow, should an outer London location be required.

I must apologise to my constituency interests in Coventry and Birmingham, but London is the Government's proposal. It is in the national interest that we shold have that most important European institution. In 1986, it will help to bring jobs and prosperity to our nation. The knock-on effect on jobs dependent upon that office will be considerable. I shall be grateful if the Minister will mention the matter to the Minister of State and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to ensure that our bids against Munich, Paris and The Hague are successful.

It is about time that the world achieved, through GATT, a far better approach to the prevention of barriers to trade, the production and sale of illicit and counterfeit goods, and other matters. It will require a degree of determination that has not been shown, unfortunately, since 1979. It would be a superb initiative in 1986, as well as ensuring that we quickened the change in cultural attitudes towards industry in Britain, if we were to achieve better controls internationally on British trade—the furnace of trade—and better opportunities for our goods and our manufacturers throughout the world.

I hope that the debate will be taken seriously and that it will be given wide circulation, with great publicity for my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield in the national press. Unless Britain can re-establish the identity of the industry man—the engineer and the creator of wealth—as holding a desirable position in society, aspired to by young people in our schools and universities, the achievement of an industrial base, such as we had in the past, will be much slower. I wish Industry year 1986 every success.

2.6 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I congratulate the mover of the motion, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), on initiating what has been a good debate, although I was somewhat appalled at the nonchalant complacency of the Minister in dealing with certain aspects of the subject. I want to deal briefly with two specific matters. The first is the role of women in industry. The second is the disgraceful misuse by various companies, particularly international companies, of industrial grants and regional aid in the north-east of England.

I share the views expressed by other hon. Members that women have not been sufficiently encouraged to go into industry. The problem starts at school. The teaching in girls' schools of subjects such as science, which are of use in industry, lags far behind the teaching of science in boys' schools.

The daughter of a family that I know wanted to be an electronics engineer. She was very bright, with all the necessary O-levels and A-levels. When she applied for a university place she was told that there were only two universities at which she could study the subject — Churchill college, Cambridge, and another university — subject first to being accepted for sponsorship by a company. She was lucky enough to get sponsorship and to get a place at Cambridge, but many girls of that age are not able to do so, because the opportunities are very slight.

Women are the greatest untapped source of manpower in Britain, and it ill becomes us not to encourage them to enter industry and take a leading role. The Government have tremendous responsibility for the lack of provision of nursery places because of their asinine policy of squeezing local authorities and putting many obstacles in the way of women who wish to have useful and successful careers in industry.

With regard to regional grants, until the Government were elected in 1979, we had a fairly intelligent policy of special development area status for certain parts of the north east where, because of high unemployment, it was necessary to offer a 22·5 per cent. capital grant for moving new industries into the area to create jobs.

As soon as the Conservative Government were elected in 1979 — indeed, by July of that year — the then Secretary of State for Industry, who is now the Secretary of State for Education and Science—Heaven help us—announced the abolition of special development area status for Blyth valley in my constituency and various other parts of Northumberland and the north east. The result of that was chaotic. As notice was given when the facts had not been examined carefully, much of manufacturing industry in the north east was suddenly without the regional aid programme which it had been budgeting on for several years. Several companies had to reduce their apprenticeship programmes drastically because they relied on the regional aid programme for funding.

It is worse than that, because experience has shown that firms such as Ronson, Courtaulds and Dunlop, before it was taken over, accept and seek large regional grants. When they are in difficulty in other parts of the country, the money from the regional grant is then taken out of the north east to other parts of the country where there is no development area. That is clearly an abuse of public funds.

I have referred that to the Department of Trade and Industry on several occasions, but I have never had a satisfactory explanation or investigation. I have given the Secretary of State and the previous Secretary of State detailed facts about companies in the north east that are doing that. Courtaulds is one of the biggest culprits. It had a factory called Exquisite Knitwear in Cramlington and Ashington. It closed that factory, making many people redundant, and it took the machinery, that had been bought with regional aid money, to the south east of England and the Channel Islands. It was clearly not intended that that money should be spent on machinery in the south east or the Channel Islands.

Before Dunlop was taken over fairly recently, causing massive redundancies in the north east, it shipped some of its machinery bought with the regional aid money to South Africa. That is scandalous. When the facts are drawn to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry I do not receive satisfactory replies. On one occasion, the Minister and the civil servant concerned asked me if I expected them to sit on the M1 watching to see if machinery was brought from the north east of England to the south.

There is insufficient monitoring by the Department of money spent for regional development. Grants and loans should be checked carefully. Courtaulds and Dunlop are two of the worst offenders, but a company called English Numbering Machines and various car component companies are also involved. The majority of those are international companies which are American-based. When they get into trouble, they throw hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women out of work in the north east, close factories and take the machinery out of the north east and ship it elsewhere.

There is a very strong case for an inquiry. The Government have pursued an asinine policy of regional aid in the teeth of the opposition and sensible advice that they have received from industrialists, the regional TUC and their own Department in Newcastle. The Department of Trade and Industry has a good regional office in Newcastle staffed by very experienced and able people. The Department in London has ignored its regional advice. That is a serious matter.

Time is short, and I do not wish to prolong my contribution because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. But it is a scandal, among a wealth of pompous platitudes coming from the Minister, for him to ignore the serious problem of an abuse of regional aid by international companies that come to the north east for the money. They rape the area, and when there is the slightest difficulty in one of their factories in another part of England or abroad, they get out of the north east, throw hundreds of men and women out of jobs, and keep the money that has been advanced to them by the Government because they were working in the north east.

2.18 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I declare an interest as an aerospace engineer. I shall try to speak at a pace that will be applauded by those who also wish to take part in the debate, without being supersonic and not heard at all.

I welcome Industry Year and hope that the Government will commit themselves to it wholeheartedly. My experience of industry is that we must operate as a team. I hope that the Government will join the team because, without their help, industry will not get the success that it deserves if it can restore its competitiveness.

I know how difficult it is to carve out a share in the market, hold on to it, make a profit and maintain competitiveness. When I started on the shop floor as an apprentice, I wasted a couple of years of my life, which is often done in the House as well. It took a long time to convince those in charge that we were all in the game together and it's a case not of "them and us", but of all of us working together to try to achieve the competitiveness which, so far, has eluded too much of industry.

It is not a new problem — it has been going on throughout the 20th century. In the past 80 years we have lost over half the share of world exports of manufactured goods that we had originally to people who are not employing better technology or better management but who are looking after the competitiveness of their products. That competitiveness is a factor for the Government as well as for industry.

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

In Industry Year 1986, I hope that the problems will be tackled by management. It is right and proper that those in industry should expect to receive good wages and salaries for the work that they do. It is not right and proper that management should pay workers for greater output than they achieve, because that leads to job losses and the unemployment that we have. We merely destroy our competitiveness by management's ineffectiveness and inaction. Neither is it right and proper that managers and directors should pay for increases far beyond the progress that they have achieved in the companies where they are responsible not only to their shareholders but to the workers whom they employ.

In Industry Year, the Government have a substantial part to play, rather than just mouthing words. These may be facts that I have tried to tell Ministers before, but I hope that in Industry Year the Government will pay attention once and for all, and do something about it. I refer first to public purchasing policy. There is no policy. The Government are the largest single customer in the whole of the United Kingdom for goods and services. Surely they can draw up a purchasing policy to give specifications not only to stimulate home production but to benefit exports overseas.

Secondly, I refer to the cost of industrial operations. The Government must not just say that rates and taxes are there to finance social services, which we all need. I hope that the Government will constantly and ruthlessly examine their costs of operating in the way that industry has to day-by-day to survive.

I welcome the substantial progress made by the nationalised industries, and I hope that they will play their part in Industry Year. I am delighted at the way in which Rolls-Royce and the twins in Northern Ireland—Short Brothers and Harland and Wolff—the British Steel Corporation and British Shipbuilders have made substantial progress over the past few years on a world competitive scale.

However, the Department of Trade and Industry should not just rest on the laurels of stimulating that achievement and getting in the right management at the top, but try to stimulate new technology. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is deeply involved in that in his day-to-day work. Will he look at the timing and the way in which the stimulation takes place? The way in which new businesses should be stimulated changes as time goes by. It is no good putting cash into prosperous companies. In government, we must be more entrepreneurial and take the risk with the cash, putting it into companies that deserve the chance, which they would not get unless the Government were there to help.

I ask the Government to re-examine the real values of regional policy. The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) drew attention to asinine regional policy. It is asinine in my part of the country, in Hastings and Rye, where we have difficult employment problems. We cannot get regional aid, yet our enterprises that are struggling to make a profit are taxed to help competitors in other parts of the country. That is nonsense. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) would agree with that entirely. Some of the Government's regional policies are encouraging inward investment. For example, a foreign company in Scotland is to receive £180,000 for every job that it creates. That is also nonsense.

I hope that the debate will not just set the scene but begin the discussions that will take place in Industry Year, at a time when not enough people in the House are involved in wealth creation. With respect, there is an imbalance of those who are used to the consumption of wealth and how to distribute other people's money to other people.

I have the honour to be Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. I hope that, in its report on tourism to be published in January, it will be able to identify new service industry opportunities. That is a nice trailer, but I hope that the Government will not hide behind the growth of the service sector and fail to recognise that it requires only energy and determination on their part to stimulate manufacturing.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) talked about the Westland saga. I hope that the Government will examine how they participate in industrial restructuring. I understand that the Department of Trade and Industry is the sponsor Department for aerospace, but that the Ministry of Defence has invited Westland's competitors to restructure the company. Such an argument should not be going on in government and I hope that those in government who play Monopoly with companies understand that companies such as Westland are a major British engineering resource that deserve every assistance to survive.

That takes me back to public purchasing policy. Two thirds of the products of a company such as Westland come from a wide range of other companies in Britain such as Racal Electronics, General Electric Company, Ferranti and Smiths Industries. It is not just Yeovil but the whole country that is involved. I am a loyal supporter of the Government, but I do not think that they have got it right when it comes to understanding their role in restructuring.

We have had an interesting debate—it is especially interesting how speeches have got faster and shorter. We are welcoming the start of Industry Year. I hope that it will turn the tide of fortune for Britain's manufacturing industry.

2.21 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am mindful of the lack of time and the courteous brevity of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and of the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman). I shall try to follow their example.

I welcome Industry Year and the opportunity to speak today. I shall confine myself to that part of the motion which says:

"that the most talented people are again attracted to work in industry to secure its future".

The debate has been wide-ranging but I shall talk only about this matter, of which I have some experience.

It has already been said that Britain has to live by manufactured goods. There are no two ways about that. I do not buy the proposition that our manufacturing base will inevitably decline. I was delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye ended on that note.

There is an increasing divide between industries that are modern in outlook and those that are not. The gap between industries that are standing still and those that are moving

forward is growing ever wider, and companies that believe in the future must accept that there is a divide which must be crossed. Making the leap takes real commitment. Change can sometimes be the responsibility of one person —a catalyst—but more often it is the responsibility of a whole team.

I worked for some years in the youth services department of the Industrial Society. One of my responsibilities was to run "challenge of industry" conferences in a wide range of sixth forms. Those conferences have since been developed and similar activities are carried out by other organisations. Their idea was to bring home to sixth formers the challenge presented by the management of people in industry and to combat reluctance to regard industry as an attractive career.

Why are the most talented youngsters uninterested in entering industry? First, there is a lack of understanding of what is involved. Secondly, they fear getting lost in large companies and believe that success will not be rewarded early. Thirdly, it still takes too long to attain major responsibility in many industrial careers. Fourthly, salaries are not good enough. That is especially relevant in terms of attracting people of the calibre of production engineers. It is also tied up with the problem of the status of those who work in industry. Yet those youngsters will be crucial to the future success of British industry.

As some hon. Members have said, industry is still regarded as culturally not necessarily the highest status career to pursue. That attitude must be changed. Above all, the picture of industry as not the most effective driving force in Britain, or the most successful part of British life, must be changed.

During Industry Year I hope that industry will do everything it can to publicise its successes and the difference between companies that are successful and those that are not. A recent survey conducted by the CBI revealed three extremely interesting points. In the 1980s, profitability, productivity and growth have moved forward dramatically in successful companies. The key factor perceived by the industrial managers who replied to the questionnaire was that successful management is the management of people. That ties in closely with attracting the most talented youngsters to the challenge which, in any industry, is the management of people. Those managers who replied rated people attributes as the key factor in whether management would be successful or unsuccessful.

The survey highlighted four essentials to good management: the ability to control costs; the ability to devolve responsibility; the need to pay more attention to customers, products and the motivation of staff; and communication within the company, which is vital if the challenges of foreign competition are ever to be met. Sometimes good communication networks arise from crises, but it is essential that managers continually explain to their workers what is going on, not merely in terms of organisation within the company but in terms of the problems faced by the company in the outside market. Workers should also be told about the financial position of the company. As many hon. Members said, teamwork is vital to effective management in any industry.

What are good managers required to be? The senior industrial managers who replied to the survey said that good managers are professional, that they maintain high standards, that they can delegate and give employees a clear idea of what is expected of them, that they are friendly, open and seem to be fair. They communicate easily and inspire confidence, they deal with queries and make decisions quickly. They have a "can do" attitude; they show imagination and intelligence and are realistic about strengths and weaknesses.

During Industry Year, industry will put itself across most effectively and will encourage the most talented people in the country to commit themselves to industrial careers, by demonstrating that those are the attributes required from people in industry. They must be effective managers who will ensure that our industry is more competitive than it has been in the past, and that it is in a position to improve our trade, exports and services so that through wealth creation, we can provide the social and educational services that all of us agree are necessary and important. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has given us the opportunity today to pay attention to wealth creation. I am grateful to him for providing the House with that opportunity.

2.29 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): The aim of Industry Year is to improve the attitude of the general public towards industry. I agree with those right hon. and hon. Members who have emphasised the disadvantages for so long——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

St. Andrew's Hospital, Billericay

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): This is the first occasion upon which I have sought to raise a matter on the Adjournment of the House. I do so now because of its importance and significance to my constituents. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health replied on 3 December to the Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). Both debates have their origin in the decision of the Basildon and Thurrock health authority to reorganise health services in its district. As my right hon. Friend indicated in his reply on 3 December, the health authority's proposed changes form a wide-ranging package of proposals and are largely interdependent, one upon the other.

The proposals are contained in a document from the health authority that is entitled

> "Consultative document for the reorganisation of hospital services, particularly involving the maternity, gynaecology, paediatric, regional plastic surgery/burns and some geriatric services and thereby the closure of in-patient facilities at St. Andrew's hospital Billericay and changes to Orsett and Basildon hospitals."

The previous Adjournment debate revolved around the proposal that, for clinical reasons, inpatient maternity services should be centralised on one site, namely Orsett hospital in my constituency. That decision has met with the approval of my constituents in the Thurrock part of my constituency, but understandably it has met with the disapproval of my constituents who live further away from Orsett hospital—in Laindon, Wickford and Billericay.

However, I wish to concentrate today on the proposal of the health authority, contained in its option 5, to close St. Andrew's hospital in Billericay and transfer the regional specialty units of plastic surgery and burns to Basildon hospital. It is this proposal that has met with universal condemnation not only from my constituents in Billericay but from across Essex and the country.

Several of my colleagues have generously given their support to opposing these proposals. My right hon. Friend will have seen the terms of early-day motion 99. It has been signed by eight other right hon. and hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who I am glad to see has joined our debate and who, with the agreement of the Minister and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will say a few words in support.

I have received over 600 personal, individual letters opposing the proposals. That is an enormous mailbag on any one subject. I have received nine petitions, including one from the Federation of Essex Women's Institutes that is signed by 4,200 people. More than 20 separate organisations have registered their opposition with me. The consultants' staff committee for the district is also opposed to the recommendations. On Monday I shall help to deliver a petition to the health authority that contains over 80,000 signatures. In total, that represents locally the strongest, unified body of opinion placed before me since first becoming a Member of Parliament in 1979. To that body of opinion I wish to add my support and hence this Adjournment debate.

I have had three separate meetings with county councillor Mrs. Joan Martin and Mr. Richard Taylor, the chairman and the administrator of the health authority. I thank them for their courtesy and frankness. I plan to meet them again after the consultation ends on 21 December —on 13 January. I urge all my constituents who have not already done so to let the health authority know their feelings before the 21 December deadline.

Let me try to explain briefly to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health why we all feel so strongly, although I appreciate that he will not be able to comment in any detail. St. Andrew's hospital is old. The oldest part of the site dates back to 1840 and some accommodation is contained in temporary huts erected during the second world war. But it is a well-loved local hospital with a deservedly high reputation and, with the plastic surgery and burns unit, a reputation far beyond the bounds of my constituency. However, most of the buildings on the site are in good condition, with the exception of the emergency medical services wards, and a considerable amount of money has been spent on the site and the hospital in recent years.

The hospital is well sited geographically. It is convenient. A recent survey shows that if the services are transferred to Basildon, 57 per cent. of current patients would experience an increase in return travelling time of an extra one hour and 26 minutes every time they visited the hospital. Basildon would be only marginally faster for only 23 per cent. of current patients.

Inevitably, a move will risk the break up of the team of specialists in various disciplines so important to the super specialties which operate at St. Andrew's. The team includes not just the consultants and surgeons but the physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and nurses, all of whom have pooled their expertise. A move will inevitably loosen up that team for no good purpose.

On 3 December my right hon. Friend said that we have to achieve a proper balanced judgment which will ensure

> "efficient use of resources to the benefit of everyone concerned."

However, a central plank of the current proposals is the move of a purpose-built burns unit which was opened only three years ago. It is the ideal burns unit format, separate and isolated from other services. I am afraid that my right hon. Friend was wrong on 3 December when he inferred that burns patients would be rehoused

> "in modern buildings more suitable for the practice of modern medicine."—[*Official Report,* 3 December 1985; Vol. 81, c. 279-80.]

Option 5 of the health authority report clearly envisages that the burns unit will be placed in existing ward accommodation vacated by the maternity unit. That is completely unacceptable. Cross-infection would be much more difficult to prevent and it would be a wholly backward step.

My right hon. Friend knows well the problems of recruitment for the NHS. Yet the Billericay site, I am pleased and not at all surprised to say, is the easiest site in the district for which to recruit. I am told that Basildon is not good and that the difficulties at Orsett are appalling. That is a fact which must weigh heavily with my right hon. Friend.

Remarkably, option 5 did not take into account another hospital in Billericay, the Mayflower. The 75 long-stay geriatric beds there in an old building must sensibly be considered as must the question of whether the 35 acute

geriatric beds at St. Andrew's hospital should not be placed at an acute hospital as best medical experience advises.

All the consultants at St. Andrew's hospital have supported an alternative proposal involving the closure of the Mayflower hospital for long-stay geriatric patients, as envisaged in the district strategic plan for 1983-93, the transfer of those beds to a redeveloped St. Andrew's and the switch of the acute geriatric beds to Basildon hospital, where there is no geriatric provision. The alternative has been submitted to the district health authority for consideration and I believe it to be a well-argued document.

If the proposals go through unamended, there will be a threat to voluntary endeavour. Building the burns unit cost £1·2 million, of which £400,000 was raised by the spectacularly successful burns unit appeal. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point for all that he did to get the burns unit established and for his help with that spectacular appeal.

Is that endeavour to be wasted? Not only will those who gave their time, effort and money feel hurt, offended and angry, but the goodwill that was generated will disappear. People in Billericay and Essex generally will never again respond to help the NHS and I, for one, would not blame them.

I have said outside the House, and I should repeat for the record, that we are not talking about cuts, although our political opponents will muddy the waters by suggesting that we are. In fact, we are talking about how sensibly to spend increased sums of money on the Health Service locally. We must remember that there is no limit to the amount of money that could be spent. The level is an arbitrary one and a matter of political judgment. Locally, we must get the best deal in the best interests of the patients. They must come first.

As a Government, nationally we have done well. We have 58,000 more nurses and midwives, over 5,000 more hospital doctors and dentists, 3,000 more family doctors and over 13,000 more radiologists, laboratory technicians and other professional staff than were in place in 1978. They are all caring for patients. Government spending on health services has increased by 23 per cent. in real terms. This year, the NHS will receive over double the amount provided by the Labour Government in 1978-79.

We must ensure that the money spent locally by our health authority is well spent. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will realise that I mean no disrespect when I say that I hope that these local matters do not come to him for his decision. I hope that cold logic and rational argument will win the day with the health authority. However, the Minister now knows the strength of feeling on the issue; that feeling will not abate until St. Andrew's hospital and the burns unit are saved.

2.43 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) for raising this matter. I think that I speak for many Essex Members when I say that it is high time that the subject was ventilated in the House.

My hon. Friend kindly said that I had an interest in the matter. When I was elected as the first hon. Member for Billericay 35 years ago, St. Andrew's hospital was dear to the heart of all the town's citizens, and I believe that it still is.

I intervene to support my hon. Friend, who deployed the case superbly, and to say something on my own account. I was involved from the beginning in the campaign to provide a regional burns unit. There was a powerful reason for my interest. As the House knows, I represent a constituency where 30,000 or 40,000 people are exposed to the largest concentration of gas, chemical and oil storage in this country, where there have been four public inquiries and where the Health and Safety Executive carried out its first environmental survey into those hazards and concluded that they were considerable. Canvey island is safer than it was, but the possibility of burns resulting from an industrial accident is high.

I lent all the enthusiasm that I could to a public appeal. The National Health Service was not concerned with providing a regional burns unit. Our region was the only one in the country at that time without a regional burns unit. If children were seriously burned at home or a man was burned at work they had to go either to a hospital on the west side of Middlesex or to East Grinstead. As anyone with any knowledge knows, in the treatment of burns it is essential to take the patient quickly to the right place with the right skills.

My task was to try to persuade the public to demonstrate an interest. By golly, they did demonstrate that interest. They raised substantial sums. I conducted the first negotiations, helped by Mr. Moonman, then the Labour Member for Billericay, to persuade the regional health authority and the Department of Health and Social Security to match pound for pound the money that we raised. So it was that after many years of struggle, led by the public, a magnificent regional burns unit was established at St. Andrew's hospital.

The reorganisation of other hospital matters in my hon. Friend's constituency is a matter for him. My interest is that this first-class, purpose-built unit should not be moved in defiance of the wishes of its medical staff, of the local authorities and of many people. I too have received many letters from former patients and people whose relatives have been patients there. They are deeply grateful for the magnificent treatment that they have received and for the lives saved. No risks should be taken with it. It should not be moved to Basildon.

Our purpose is to ensure that the Minister understands the deep sense of anxiety and anguish in our part of Essex that such a plan should be contemplated. I hope that the Minister will persuade the regional and district health authorities to scrap the plan, to clear it out and to start thinking again. Whatever is done about hospital reorganisation generally, they must leave the burns unit alone. It admirably serves the whole region, not just the people of Basildon. Staff morale and public confidence are high. Leave it alone!

2.48 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) on his "maiden" Adjournment debate. He has chosen a subject of considerable local and regional importance. He has had the spoken support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who intervened with his usual passion. My hon. Friend also has the unspoken support of my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip who, unusually, is present during an

[Mr. Barney Hayhoe]

Adjournment debate. That is a sign of my right hon. Friend's close interest in an issue which goes wider than my right hon. Friend's constituency.

I am left in no doubt about the strength of local feeling that the proposal arouses. As my hon. Friend kindly and courteously made clear, the proposal to relocate the regional plastic surgery and burns unit at St. Andrew's hospital, Billericay, at Basildon hospital and to close St. Andrew's hospital is part of a package of measures which may ultimately — if the community health council, which formally represents the views of the community, objects—come to me for a final decision. The only way in which that happens is if the district health authority wishes to go ahead with the proposal and the community health council objects to it. If the regional health authority endorses the proposal, it will be submitted to Ministers for a final decision.

As my hon. Friend acknowledged — he has been following these matters with care — it would not be appropriate for me to comment now in detail on the arguments one way or the other. My hon. Friend has concentrated on the transfer of the burns unit from St. Andrew's hospital, as he did in his recent early-day motion, which he said was signed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and a number of other local Members who have a particular interest.

It must be borne in mind—this was reflected in the speeches of my hon. Friend my and right hon. Friend—that we are dealing wth one facet of a wider proposed reorganisation involving the maternity, gynaecological, paediatric and geriatric services in the area. A number of hospitals are involved and the proposed reorganisation involves the closure of St. Andrew's hospital in Billericay.

As my hon. Friend acknowledged, this is the second debate on these matters that we have had during the past few days. On 3 December my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) spoke powerfully and eloquently on another part of the proposals. He directed his remarks to the proposed centralisation of the district's maternity services at Orsett hospital. Much of what I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon is relevant today to the subject of my hon. Friend and right hon. Friend's concern, which is the effect of the proposals on the burns unit at Billericay and the future of St. Andrew's hospital.

The proposals are wide-ranging and they intermesh. I am advised that they are largely interdependent. In considering the proposals, the overall interests of the many types of patient needs must be kept in mind. As the debate has shown the proposal to relocate the plastic surgery and burns unit is clearly a matter of considerable local interest and concern. St. Andrew's hospital is, I gather, a well-loved local hospital that offers a high standard of care. As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay recognises, there is provision for consultation and comments must be submitted by 21 December. I have little doubt that the two debates that have taken place in the House, one on 3 December and one today, will encourage local people to make their views known. It is an important part of our democratic process that individual matters of this sort can be raised in the House. They attract attention, and proper account will have to be taken of the views which have been expressed.

I said on 3 December that I understood that the district health authority believes that the move to Basildon would improve facilities for burns and plastic surgery cases by rehousing them in a modern building more suitable for the practice of modern medicine. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay has commented upon that and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point referred to the purpose-built character of the unit and the special consideration that should apply to it. I would not wish to go further than merely to note their comments and to reiterate that I am sure that they, along with the many other relevant factors, must be taken into account when decisions on this matter are made, whether at district, region or, if the matter reaches Ministers, national level.

I am told that the general condition of St. Andrew's hospital is not good and that considerable capital investment would be necessary to get it into a proper state of repair. I recognise the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay, which I am sure are well known to the health authority, about the travelling that some patients will have to undertake if the unit is moved. My hon. Friend commented with considerable precision on the extra time needed for travel. The health authority recognises that local people who have recently contributed to improvements in facilities—£400,000 was raised by local efforts, in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point played an important role — should be taken into account.

Sir Bernard Braine: I think that my hon. Friend made a slip of the tongue. In talking about contributions from local people, he used the word "recently". The point that we are trying to establish is that, from the beginning contributions came from local people—from all over the regions, but principally from Essex — and it was not until they had made a substantial showing that there was the slightest interest in NHS money being found. Our interests is not recent—we have been demanding this facility for a long time. We have only just got it, and now it is to be moved away. That is unacceptable to us.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that clarification. In trying to scramble through in the limited time available, I may have over simplified the point which my right hon. Friend made tellingly earlier. It is not appropriate for me to comment, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point recognises as well as any other hon. Member because he has served here for so long with such distinction. I face the difficulty of having to respond by saying that I have no substantive comment to make because of the procedures that have been set up to allow the committees in the Health Service at district and regional level to bring their consideration to bear on the problems and to provide opportunities for the expression of local views.

I want to emphasise what my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay said about the purposes of the review. There is a considerable difference of opinion between what we have heard today and the views of some of those who have brought these proposals forward as to what is right in terms of patient care. I am glad that my hon. Friend made it absolutely clear that the purpose of the proposals is not to save money but to meet clinical service needs. If any financial benefit arises, those resources will be used to improve patient care. This is not a cost-cutting exercise, although I recognise that local people, motivated by party

political considerations, may seek to misrepresent the position. I hope that the debate has gone a long way towards discrediting such comments.

Resistance to change in Health Service matters is often deep seated. When the proposed change is for the worse, one has total sympathy with that resistance. Over the years I have found that sometimes—I make no comment on this specific proposal—resistance to change is expressed even when the change is for the better and in the long-term interests of all concerned. I hope that we all want a more effective deployment of resources to provide better patient care and that proper account is taken of local wishes and desires in arriving at those judgments. I insist that the test —I hope that I carry my colleagues with me—is that of better patient care. That is what we are about.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 2 December 1985

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Statistics)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers of individuals who were working in the Palace of Westminster and associated buildings in 1970, 1975 and 1980; and how many of those were hon. Members, peers, secretaries, research assistants, Officers of either House and employees of either House.

Mr. Biffen: The table gives the information requested in respect of Peers, Members, and Officers and employees of either House. Central records are not held for the other categories mentioned in my hon. Friend's question.

	1970	*1975*	*1980*
House of Lords			
Peers*	770	841	914
(Daily average attendance of peers)	(225)	(262)	(290)
Officers and staff	184	234	263
House of Commons			
Members	625	635	635
Officers and staff	407	545	†860

* Excluding peers without writs or summons or on leave of absence.
† Includes 235 staff of the Refreshment Department, which became a Department of the House on 1 April 1980. In 1970 and 1975 the number of staff working in the Refreshment Department was approximately 185.

SOCIAL SERVICES

AIDS

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further plans he has to help in the fight against acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The Government regard reduction of the rate of spread of this serious virus infection as a matter of very high priority. We have already taken important steps. First, we have improved the safety of blood and blood products supplied through the blood transfusion service. All Factor VIII and IX clotting agents derived from pooled plasma used by haemophiliacs are heat treated; all donations of whole blood are screened for antibodies to the AIDS virus. Second, detailed advice on the disease, how to help those infected, and how to avoid infection has gone to health professionals. Third, counselling and testing services have been introduced in the National Health Service. Fourth, information is being provided to those at risk by the Government — funded Health Education Council, and by the key voluntary organisations — the Terrence Higgins trust and the Haemophilia Society. Both of those organisations receive Government grants. Fifth, this year we have provided an extra £1·8 million for the development and use of a test for the AIDS virus, a special allocation to the three Thames regions and haemophilia centres, additional money for voluntary organisations and for the training of councillors.

I am now announcing an allocation of an additional £6·3 million to support a package of measures to help those already infected and to reduce the number who become infected.

First £2½ million for a national information campaign to begin next Spring and run throughout the year. The campaign will be directed at the public in general and this will be coupled with a series of targetted campaigns for those known to be at special risk. The aim is to improve understanding of the disease and the ways in which its spread can be controlled. The necessary preliminary research and testing is already under way.

Second £2·5 million to help the three Thames regional health authorities, who will still next year carry the heaviest burden of the disease, to provide the necessary treatment and counselling services,

Third £270,000 for the six haemophiliac reference centres in England to continue support for the specialist counselling services which they have set up.

Fourth £100,000 for training health professionals in the counselling of AIDS sufferers. Courses have already been set up at St. Mary's hospital, Paddington, and these will continue along with new ones in Birmingham and Newcastle.

Fifth £750,000 for the public health laboratory service to continue its work in testing blood samples provided by the national blood transfusion service or the NHS for the presence of the AIDS virus.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Bolton Magisterial Panel

Mr. David Young asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the Bolton magisterial panel is currently not in full-time employment; what percentage is unemployed; what percentage is retired; what percentage is of independent status or means; and if he will list the panel by occupation.

Mr. Tebbit: Of the Bolton magistrates' bench, 46 per cent. are not in full employment, three per cent. are unemployed, and 16 per cent. have retired. I have no means of knowing—and do not wish to have any means of knowing — which members of the bench are of independent means.

At the last review of the bench, the occupations were:

	Number
Directors and professionals	49
Landowners and farmers	2
Wholesale and retail proprietors and managers	15
Managers in industry and commerce or service	16
Teachers, nurses and other medical, social and artistic workers	25
White collar workers	34
Industrial, agricultural and service workers	19
Total	160

PRIME MINISTER

UNESCO

Mr. Lester asked the Prime Minister what are the implications for the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards United Kingdom membership of UNESCO of her agreement to the Nassau declaration of world order.

The Prime Minister: Our decision to withdraw from membership of UNESCO, unless major reforms are secured, is entirely consistent with our commitment under the Nassau declaration to play a full part in revitalising international co-operation for development.

Mr. Lester asked the Prime Minister if she will list by major programme the changes sought by Her Majesty's Government in UNESCO's programme and the extent to which each objective was met at the Sofia congress; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are still considering the outcome of the UNESCO conference in Sofia.

Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to transfer Her Majesty's industrial air pollution inspectorate to the Department of the Environment; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No; but working arrangements in this and related areas are under review.

Asset Sales

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister if she will explain the criteria used to define capital receipts from the sales of public assets such as British Telecom and British Gas as negative public expenditure.

The Prime Minister: In accordance with the international convention on national accounting, purchases and sales of company shares are classified as "financial transactions" and, as such, are treated on a net basis. Unlike many other financial transactions they represent a direct expression of public policy and are therefore public expenditure (and government expenditure in the national accounts). It follows that, given the net treatment, when the Government buy shares, public expenditure is increased and when the Government sell shares, public expenditure is reduced. Since the Government incurred expenditure in acquiring the shares and assets of organisations being privatised, it is symmetrical and logical that expenditure should decrease when they are sold.

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister if she will explain the criteria used to determine the definition and status of local authorities' capital from asset sales for the purposes of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the control of public expenditure.

The Prime Minister: Capital receipts score as negative public expenditure in the year in which they are received. Local authorities may, in any one year, spend a prescribed proportion of receipts, new and accumulated.

The Government take account of the various sources of spending power local authorities enjoy, including capital receipts, when setting allocations designed to hold net expenditure to the relevant cash limit.

Rating Reform

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with co-ordination between the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for the Environment regarding the presentation of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards reform of the rating system in different parts of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Yes. My right hon. Friends, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, intend to publish a consultative document early in the new year.

The right hon. Harry West

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the text of letters exchanged in the last three months between her and the right hon. Harry West.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to publish correspondence between myself and a third party.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Sheerman asked the Prime Minister on what evidence she bases her statement in the *Official Report*, 6 November, column 22, that 675,000 new jobs have been created in the past two years; if she will give a breakdown in numbers and percentages according to *(a)* region, *(b)* industrial sector, *(c)* gender, *(d)* full or part time and *(e)* employed or self-employed; and if she will indicate which figures are estimated and which are based on recorded information.

The Prime Minister: There was an estimated increase of 675,000 in the employed labour force in Great Britain between March 1983 and June 1985 as published in the October issue of *Employment Gazette*. I have asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General to provide the hon. Member with the latest available breakdowns of the estimate, which has since been slightly revised. All these estimates will be further revised when the results of the 1984 census of employment and the 1985 labour force survey become available in the spring of next year.

Fraud

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister (1) what representations she has received from the Governor of the Bank of England relating to City frauds *(a)* by letter and *(b)* in person; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will place in the Library copies of correspondence between the Governor of the Bank of England and herself relating to fraud in the City of London.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to make public exchanges of this kind.

Hillsborough Summit

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Prime Minister what is her best estimate of the cost of the Hillsborough summit on 15 November including the wages costs of security forces.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *271*]: The best estimate of the costs of my meeting with the Taoiseach at Hillsborough castle on 15 November is £241,000. The greater part of this is accounted for by security. There were, in addition, costs of travel, communications equipment, press facilities, catering, staff and other services.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Pahoomal Family

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch on 25 November, *Official Report*, column *362*, if any warrant for the arrest of any member of the Pahoomal family has been issued.

The Solicitor-General: Yes. Warrants for the arrest of Mohan and Narender Pahoomal were issued on 11 November 1983 for forgery offences.

PCW Syndicate

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *362*, warrants have been issued for the arrest of Mr. Peter Cameron Webb, Mr. T. Dixon or any other person in connection with the PCW syndicate and Alexander Howden case.

The Solicitor-General: No.

Mr. Arnold asked the Attorney-General what have been the costs to date of the investigations into the affairs of the Peter Cameron Webb syndicate and Alexander Howden, referred to in his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *362*.

The Solicitor-General: Because of the diverse nature of the work undertaken it is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the total costs involved to date. Much of the work cannot be separated out from the ordinary running costs of the Police Service and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Fraud Investigation Group

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *362*, what further progress has been made as a result of the Solicitor-General's meeting with the fraud investigation group.

The Solicitor-General: Further inquiries are being made here and overseas and the case remains under vigorous investigation.

Johnson Matthey Bank

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions received any representations in 1983, 1984 and 1985 to the present day in relation to alleged fraud at Johnson Matthey Bank in respect of any person other than members of the Pahoomal family.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has considered police reports concerning three cases in which it is alleged that forged certificates purporting to be clean reports of finding issued by Societé Générale Surveillance were used.

Societé Générale Surveillance Certificates

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions received any representations in 1983, 1984 and 1985 to the present day in relation to alleged forged Societé Générale Surveillance certificates or was made aware of the existence of any such certificates in respect of any cases other than the case of the Pahoomal family.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions received such a report concerning one Ranjendra Sethia who is at present the subject of an application for extradition from India. That application remains in abeyance pending resolution of criminal proceedings in India.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions particulars of representations made by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch to him and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In addition, the Director of Public Prosecutions has discussed with the City of London police the progress of the investigation commenced in July this year at the present Johnson Matthey Bank Limited.

ENERGY

Global Warming

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment the Government have carried out of the implications of global warming for future energy policy.

Mr. Peter Walker: As the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution pointed out in its tenth report, the effect on the world climate of global warming through increased atmospheric concentrations of certain substances, including CO2, has yet to be established. The implications for energy policy cannot therefore yet be assessed.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he will respond to representations made by the hon. Member for Jarrow concerning the benefit entitlements of National Coal Board employees who became redundant after 1 January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has made it clear that no decisions have yet been made about the details of any scheme to succeed the current redundant mineworkers' payments scheme. As my right hon. Friend advised the House on 25 November, a statement will be made as soon as conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many persons were made redundant from collieries and other National Coal Board owned industries, prior to their eventual closure, in the 12 months prior to the implementation of the redundant mineworkers scheme order.

Mr. David Hunt: The present redundant mineworkers payments scheme was introduced in The Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) Order 1984, which came into operation on 1 April 1984. During the preceeding financial year 1983-84 some 20,400 men left the coal industry on RMPS terms.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is now able to reveal a framework of legislation which is designed to assist those coalminers who may lose the redundant mineworkers scheme benefits as a result of their 12-month long strike; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have made it clear that no decisions have yet been made about the details of any scheme to succeed the current redundant mineworkers' payments scheme. As I advised the right hon. Member during oral answers on 25 November, I will make a statement as soon as conclusions have been reached.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total cost of the National Coal Board's publicity campaign associated with the miners' strike.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the pupil-teacher ratios for primary, secondary and all maintained schools in January of each year since 1975; and if he will give the same figures for Leicestershire.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios within maintained primary and secondary schools and the overall pupil-teacher ratio for maintained schools in England and in Leicestershire for each year since 1975 are as follows:

	England			*Leicestershire*		
January of each year	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Overall*	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Overall*
1975	24·2	17·2	20·0	24·5	16·9	20·0
1976	24·0	17·0	19·8	24·4	17·1	20·2
1977	23·9	17·0	19·7	24·2	16·8	19·8
1978	23·6	16·9	19·4	24·0	16·6	19·5
1979	23·1	16·7	18·9	23·3	16·2	18·8
1980	22·7	16·6	18·7	23·4	16·3	18·9
1981	22·6	16·6	18·6	24·1	17·0	19·6
1982	22·5	16·6	18·5	23·7	16·8	19·2
1983	22·3	16·5	18·1	22·8	16·3	18·5
1984	22·1	16·2	17·9	22·5	16·0	17·8
1985	22·2	16·1	17·8	22·9	16·1	17·8

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures to show, aggregated for education authorities in London, for each year since 1978-79 *(a)* the number of pupils in nursery, primary and secondary schools, *(b)* the expenditure per pupil, in total and by sector, in cash and real terms, and *(c)* the total expenditure in cash and real terms; and if he will give the same information for Leicestershire.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

	1978-79		*1979-80*		*1980-81*	
	Greater London	*Leicester-shire*	*Greater London*	*Leicester-shire*	*Greater London*	*Leicester-shire*
Number of Pupils ('000)						
Nursery Schools	5·3	—	5·3	—	5·3	—
Primary Schools	578·9	85·3	553·1	82·8	528·3	79·5
Secondary Schools	514·8	73·8	506·8	74·1	494·7	74·2
Total	1,099·0	159·1	1,065·2	156·9	1,028·3	153·7
Institutional Expenditure (cash) (£m)						
Nursery Schools	5·3	—	5·7	—	7·1	—
Primary Schools	264·2	29·4	307·6	33·2	377·8	40·1
Secondary Schools	338·3	38·1	391·4	43·8	489·7	53·6
Total	607·8	67·5	704·7	77·0	874·6	93·7
Institutional Expenditure (1985-86 Real Terms) (£m)						
Nursery Schools	9·9	—	9·2	—	9·5	—
Primary Schools	495·5	55·1	493·6	53·3	510·4	54·1
Secondary Schools	634·4	71·5	628·1	70·3	661·6	72·5
Total	1,139·8	126·6	1,130·9	123·5	1,181·5	126·6
Expenditure per Pupil (cash) (£m)						
Nursery Schools	1,005	500	1,080	540	1,345	680
Primary Schools	455	345	555	400	715	505
Secondary Schools	655	515	770	590	990	725
Total	555	425	660	490	850	610
Expenditure per Pupil (1985-86 Real Terms) (£)						
Nursery Schools	1,885	915	1,740	875	1,815	920
Primary Schools	855	645	895	645	965	680
Secondary Schools	1,230	970	1,240	950	1,335	975
Total	1,040	795	1,060	790	1,150	825

	1981-82		1982-83		1983-84	
	Greater London	Leicester-shire	Greater London	Leicester-shire	Greater London	Leicester-shire
Number of Pupils ('000)						
Nursery Schools	5·4	—	5·5	—	5·6	—
Primary Schools	507·0	76·6	488·6	73·4	479·6	71·0
Secondary Schools	480·8	74·0	464·7	74·1	444·4	73·2
Total	993·2	150·6	958·8	147·5	929·6	144·2
Institutional Expenditure (cash) (£m)						
Nursery Schools	8·3	—	8·9	—	9·9	—
Primary Schools	408·7	43·8	430·7	48·5	455·2	51·5
Secondary Schools	537·5	60·5	570·0	68·8	597·3	75·2
Total	954·5	104·3	1,009·6	117·3	1,062·4	126·7
Institutional Expenditure (1985-86 Real Terms) (£)						
Nursery Schools	10·2	—	10·2	—	10·8	—
Primary Schools	501·5	53·7	493·8	55·6	499·5	56·6
Secondary Schools	659·5	74·3	653·4	78·9	655·5	82·5
Total	1,171·2	128·0	1,157·4	134·5	1,165·8	139·1
Expenditure per Pupil (cash) (£)						
Nursery Schools	1,540	875	1,600	960	1,760	1,040
Primary Schools	805	570	880	660	950	725
Secondary Schools	1,120	815	1,225	930	1,345	1,030
Total	960	695	1,055	795	1,145	880
Expenditure per Pupil (1985-86 Real Terms) (£)						
Nursery Schools	1,890	1,085	1,835	1,085	1,930	1,160
Primary Schools	990	700	1,010	760	1,040	795
Secondary Schools	1,370	1,005	1,405	1,065	1,475	1,130
Total	1,180	850	1,205	910	1,255	965

Notes:
(1) The Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator has been used to convert cash terms into Real Terms (1985-86=100).
(2) Leicestershire had 24 pupils in Nursery Schools throughout the period.
(3) The Greater London figures include the salaries and wages allowances for staff in the area.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the average salary for a teacher in April for each year from 1974 to 1985, *(b)* the average salary for a teacher during each year had the levels of pay recommended by the Houghton committee been maintained and *(c)* the loss of pay during each year for that teacher, and the total loss over the period expressed for each at cash and April 1985 prices.

Sir Keith Joseph: The table gives estimated average salaries (excluding allowances) for all full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales from April 1974 to April 1984 (the date from which the last settlement applied). The table also sets out the percentage pay settlements for each year, movement in the retail prices index for the same period, and indices showing cumulative year-on-year increases in average salaries and pay settlements from April 1974 and April 1979.

The table demonstrates the following movement in teachers' average salaries relative to RPI:

	Percentage
from April 1974 to April 1979	−14
from April 1979 to April 1984	+10
from April 1974 to April 1984	−6

All salary and index figures are rounded and the results should be construed accordingly. With that caveat these figures replace any previously given.

It is not possible to estimate what average salary levels would have been

"had the levels of pay recommended by the Houghton Committee been maintained".

The Houghton committee did not set teachers' pay levels for all time nor establish a settled formula by which they should be updated, though it did suggest certain factors which might be taken into account.

Year*	Average salaries for all school teachers (excluding allowances)			Percentage increases in school teachers' pay			Retail Price Index†		
	£	Index 1974= 100	Index 1979= 100	Percent.	Index 1974= 100	Index 1979= 100	Percent.	Index 1974= 100	Index 1979= 100
April 1974	3,100	100	—	‡37·0	100	—	15·1	100	—
April 1975	3,800	123	—	22·3	122	—	21·7	122	—
April 1976	4,200	135	—	8·3	132	—	18·9	145	—
April 1977	4,400	142	—	3·8	137	—	17·4	170	—
April 1978	4,900	158	—	9·9	151	—	8·0	183	—
April 1979	5,400	174	100	9·3	165	100	10·0	202	100

Year*	Average salaries for all school teachers (excluding allowances) £	Index 1974= 100	Index 1979= 100	Percentage increases in school teachers' pay Percent.	Index 1974= 100	Index 1979= 100	Retail Price Index† Percent.	Index 1974= 100	Index 1979= 100
April 1980	7,350	237	136	‖35·1	223	135	21·8	246	122
April 1981	8,050	260	149	7·5	240	145	12·0	275	136
April 1982	8,600	277	159	6·0	254	154	9·4	301	149
April 1983	9,100	294	169	5·0	267	162	4·0	313	155
April 1984	9,650	311	170	5·1	281	170	5·2	330	163

* For the purposes of the estimated average salaries all increases have been attributed back to April of the year in which they occurred (see also notes (‡) and (‖) below).

† All items.

‡ A negotiated settlement of 8 per cent. from 1 April plus an additional 27 per cent. by the Houghton Committee taking effect from 24 May and estimated as providing a further 2 per cent. in the long-term.

‖ 14·6 per cent. arbitration award plus an additional 17·9 per cent. awarded by the Clegg Commission.

Polytechnics (Grants)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department takes to check whether its grant payments to polytechnics are received in full by the institution concerned; what instances there have been in the current and last financial year of grant payments not having been received in total or in part; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The only grant payments made direct to polytechnics are in respect of research projects commissioned by my right hon. Friend. All claims that accord with the terms and conditions of the contracts concluded with the researcher or institution are met in full.

My right hon. Friend also determines, on the advice of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Education (NAB)

i. allocations from the advanced further education pool to local education authorities in respect of recurrent expenditure by polytechnics and other institutions on advanced further education. These allocations are then reflected in the calculation of block grant paid to local authorities by the Department of the Environment as part of the annual rate support grant entitlement. Block grant is not hypothecated and it is for authorities to decide how to deploy between services, including the provision of advanced further education, the expenditure in support of which block grant is paid.

ii. allocations of prescribed expenditure (ie expenditure of a capital nature) to be incurred by local education authorities in respect of polytechnics and other colleges. Such allocations are not earmarked and within the terms of the Local Government Land and Planning Act 1980 authorities are free to vire between service allocations and, subject to certain rules, to use capital receipts to supplement allocations.

Lunchtime Supervision

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he decided on the figure of £40 million for lunchtime supervision for a full year.

Sir Keith Joseph: The figure of £40 million was fixed following careful consideration of the likely range of costs of employing sufficient supervisory staff necessary to secure the reliable and adequate supervision of pupils at midday. Account was taken of the number of supervisors who might be required in schools of different sizes having regard to the substantial number of people already employed by local education authorities to assist with midday supervision.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations consulted by his Department on the question of the cost of lunchtime supervision.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's new initiative for providing adequate and reliable supervision of pupils at midday has been the subject of detailed discussion between the Department and the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of training places for occupational therapists available on 1 January 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Walden: Information about the places on courses for the training of occupational therapists is not collected centrally. The numbers of students attending such courses in maintained and assisted colleges of further education in England from November 1979 to 1984 are as follows. I understand that similar courses are also run in establishments maintained by the Department of Health and Social Security, and in institutions in the private sector.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Full-time & sandwich	210	459	462	502	536	557
Part-time	58	63	81	32	31	113
Total	268	522	543	534	567	670

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the number of occupational therapy places in educational institutions.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. He will shortly be receiving the advice of the National

Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education both on applications for advanced course approvals and on the distribution of the AFE pool for 1986-87.

Open University

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much Open University summer school and tuition fees rose between 1971 and 1986 against a 1971 index of 100; and how the retail prices index rose over the same period against the same base.

Mr. Walden: The Open university has not yet taken a final decision on summer school fees for 1986; neither is the retail price index known for 1986. 1985 is therefore given as the final year for the information requested. Using 1971 = 100 as a base, the increases are:

	1971 = 100
Summer school fees	376
Tuition fees	705
Retail price index	470

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average number of new undergraduate applications to the Open University between 1975 and 1979 and 1980 and 1986.

Mr. Walden: The information for new applicants in 1975 is not available. The average figure for the years 1976-79 was 32,677 and the average figure for the years 1980-86* is 38, 255.

* provisional

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the basis upon which his Department calculated the numbers and proportion of children statemented under the Education Act 1981 as having special educational needs in each local education authority, as published in his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East on 13 June, *Official Report*, columns *514-8*.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers and proportions of children statemented under the Education Act 1981 as having special educational needs, in each local authority in England in 1984, were derived from returns submitted by schools to the Department in January 1984 as part of the annual census of schools.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

National Weights and Measures Laboratory

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new steps he is taking to expedite the approving of new patterns at the National Weights and Measures Laboratory.

Mr. Howard: The Department is continually striving to reduce delays in pattern examination to the minimum possible. It is hoped that a special pay addition, which has recently been agreed for pattern examiners, will enable several vacancies at the national weights and measures laboratory to be filled in the near future. The vacancies are currently being advertised at the new rates.

The committee, on metrological control, which reported earlier this year, made several recommendations relating to pattern examination procedures. The Department is giving serious consideration both to the committee's recommendations and to any comments on them that arise during the consultation process which is currently taking place.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is the Government's intention to seek to obtain a European standard for citizens band radio; and if he will list the alternative systems which could form the basis of such a European standard, indicating which is the Government's preferred option.

Mr. Butcher: The Government's preferred option, and indeed the often stated intention, for CB is to adopt the CEPT recommendation which provides for common European frequencies at 26·96 MHz—27·40 MHz for an FM only service. My Department has been consulting existing users of the band about appropriate transitional arrangements and I have already announced that 1987 is the earliest realistic target date for the start of the new CB service.

Bankruptcies and Company Liquidations

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* bankruptcies and *(b)* company liquidations took place in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and to the nearest available date in 1985.

Mr. Howard: The information requested for the years 1979 to 1984 was published in *British business* on 1 November 1985, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Provisional estimates show that there were 5,708 bankruptcies and 12,328 company liquidations in the first ten months of 1985.

South Africa

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the total amount of exports from the United Kingdom to South Africa *(a)* in 1984 and *(b)* to the nearest available date in 1985;

(2) what was the total amount of imports to the United Kingdom from South Africa in 1984 and to the nearest available date in 1985.

Mr. Channon: The information can be found in table IB of the relevant issues of the Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, copies of which are in the Library.

Channel Fixed Link

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made, or has requested to be made, of the long-term impact of a Channel fixed link on each of the main industrial areas of Britain and that of north-eastern France, in as far as it will affect those areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: An assessment of the proposals for the Channel fixed link is being carried out jointly by the British and French Governments. The assessment will take account of all aspects of the proposals, including their economic impact.

Johnson Matthey Bank

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has asked for an inspector's report into the affairs of Johnson Matthey Bank under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. A section 432 investigation at this stage would add little to the extensive enquiries that have already taken place and the police enquiries now in train.

A fraud investigation group has been established. I am ready to help it and the police at any time through the use of section 447 powers to examine the company's records if this would be helpful.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *404*, he will estimate the amount of money involved in the deferment of payments from Nigeria between the date when moneys were due and 1989 in relation to guarantees by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Channon: It is estimated that the total amount involved will be about £500 million.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *404*, he will state the reasons for the agreement entered into between Her Majesty's Government and the Nigerian Government over deferred payments between the date when moneys were due and 1989 and when the agreement was entered into.

Mr. Channon: There is no formal agreement between Her Majesty's Government and the Nigerian Government concerning the trade debts for which the Nigerian authorities have sought relief from their international creditors. Formal agreement covering officially insured debts will be negotiated multilaterally once the Nigerian authorities have reached an agreement with the IMF. Meanwhile, Her Majesty's Government and the other creditor Governments have taken note of the Nigerian Government's expressed intention to bring deferred payments in general up to date by the end of 1989, and to pay interest meantime.

Textile and Clothing

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the value added to the national economy by the textile and clothing industry in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how this figure compares with that for the motor manufacturing industry and for the computer manufacturing industry in each of those years.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested for the textile and clothing industry is as follows:

1. Textiles & Clothing Industry†

	£ million Value Added	*per cent GDP**
1975	2,368	2·51
1976	2,562	2·32
1977	2,970	2·31
1978	3,362	2·27
1979	3,787	2·21
1980	3,725	1·87
1981	3,642	1·68
1982	3,722	1·56
1983	3,978	1·53
1984	n/a	n/a

2. Comparable information for Motor Vehicles and Parts Industry is as follows:

	£ million Value Added	*per cent GDP**
1975	2,004	2·12
1976	2,394	2·17
1977	2,980	2·31
1978	3,463	2·34
1979	3,347	1·95
1980	3,041	1·53
1981	3,033	1·40
1982	3,156	1·33
1983	3,423	1·32
1984	n/a	n/a

3. Separate information on the computer manufacturing industry is not available.

* before financial services adjustment

† includes footwear and leather

Source: UK National Accounts 1985 (The CSO Blue Book)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how textile and clothing exports from the United Kingdom in the latest year for which figures are available compare to those from other EC member countries.

Mr. Channon: The information is as follows.

Exports of textiles and clothing by the EC 1984*

Exports from	*US$ million*
Belgium/Luxembourg	3,615
Denmark	801
France	4,645
Federal Republic of Germany	8,269
Greece	1,079
Ireland	500
Italy	9,207
Netherlands	2,398
United Kingdom	3,327

Notes:

* Standard International Trade classification, divisions 65 and 84.

Source: OECD Trade series 'C'.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the total amount spent upon re-equipment in the textile industry over the past 10 years.

Mr. Butcher: Available information relating to capital expenditure in the textile industry is shown in the following table.

Capital expenditure in the textile industry at current prices

Year	Plant and machinery		All other assets		Total net capital* expenditure £ million
	Acquisitions £ million	Disposals £ million	Acquisitions £ million	Disposals £ million	
Order XIII, Standard Industrial Classification (1968)†					
1974	179·7	9·4	59·3	9·1	220·4
1975	161·6	11·1	44·3	8·3	186·5
1976	154·1	12·8	43·2	9·6	175·1
1977	160·2	14·5	47·4	14·9	178·2
1978	191·9	13·3	70·8	16·6	232·8
1979	225·2	14·1	79·9	19·8	271·2
Class 43, Standard Industrial Classification (1980)†					
1979	160·8	12·5	62·5	14·6	196·0
1980	138·1	28·8	50·2	17·9	141·6
1981	109·0	21·0	44·8	19·5	113·4
1982	122·7	20·7	42·8	16·6	128·3
1983‡	135·6	15·5	41·1	20·6	140·6

Source: Annual Census of Production Business Monitor PA 1002.

* Total expenditure on acquisitions less receipts from disposals.

† Results of the annual census of production for 1978 and earlier years are available only for industries defined in terms of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1968). For 1980 and later years results are available only for industries defined in terms of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980). To provide a link between the two classifications results for 1979 are available on both bases. For the textile industry a major difference between the two classifications is the exclusion of the production of man-made fibres from the latter.

‡ The latest year for which results are available.

Mr. Fox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if in view of the current discussions between the European Commission and the Turkish textile industry, he will make representations to the Commission about the implications of the Turkish export potential of cotton velvet at subsidised prices for the markets available to United Kingdom manufacturers.

Mr. Channon: The Commission is well aware of United Kingdom concerns over such competition, both in the United Kingdom and in other markets.

Manufacturing Industry (Exports)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all those manufacturing industries whose exports in the latest year for which figures are available exceeded £4 billion in value.

Mr. Channon: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Departmental Appointments

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointees and the number of these who are women.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is contained in the MPO publication "Public Bodies 1984", available in the Library of the House of Commons. The 1985 edition of this is to be published on 17 December and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and if he has any future plans for such meetings.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to implement those parts of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department is already working to encourage and facilitate the participation of women in areas of industry where women have not played a significant role in the past.

Specific schemes include WISE (Women into Science and Engineering) Year 1984, a women's working group to ensure that women take a full and active part in the Industry Year Initiative, and the recently announced national work shadowing project which is giving many girls the opportunity to experience industrial management at the highest levels. My Department has supported a number of other projects including:

i A grant to the National Electronics Council to promote activities including publicity to encourage schoolgirls to consider a career in electronics.

ii £9,000 for the Sheffield local education authority information technology project to produce computer software to appeal equally to boys and girls.

iii The Cambridge women's resource centre in receiving £22,000 towards the purchase of computer software.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, on the collection of statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Butcher: The statistics collected by my Department do not in general lend themselves to being categorised by gender. Relevant statistics on the employment of women are, however, collected by the Department of Employment. I would therefore refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and

learned Friend the Paymaster General to a question from the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) today.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will establish a special office within his Department to monitor periodically and accelerate the process towards the equitable representation of women along the lines proposed in paragraph 88 of the Nairobi United Nations conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has embarked upon a nationally agreed programme of action for the development of employment opportunities for women. This applies to the employment of women within the Department and the nomination of suitably qualified women for public appointments for which it is responsible.

Esal (Commodities) Ltd.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about progress by the Official Receiver in the liquidation of Esal (Commodities) Ltd.; and what information he has as to the amount of that company's debts.

Mr. Howard: The winding-up order was made against Esal (Commodities) Limited on 7 November 1984 under which the official receiver is investigating the affairs of the company. The realisation and distribution of the assets is in the hands of the joint liquidators Mr. G. A. Weiss and Mr. M. A. Jordon. The liabilities are estimated to be in the region of £245 million but it is not yet possible to say what the assets will realise nor the likelihood of a distribution to creditors.

Grants (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the amount of regional grants paid to Yorkshire and Humberside in the financial years 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Mr. Brittan: Details are as follows:

Regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982

	£ million
1979-80	6·761
1980-81	6·624
1981-82	7·083
1982-83	10·370
1983-84	8·772

Regional development grants under part II of the Industrial Development Act 1982

	£ million
1979-80	21·487
1980-81	38·710
1981-82	47·064
1982-83	36·368
1983-84	23·510

Grants (Job Creation)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the figures for grants related directly to jobs, as referred to in his letter to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West dated 27 November, for every constituency, giving in each case the number of related jobs and the time span over which they will arise; and if he will give the average grant for the United Kingdom, for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and each administrative region, respectively.

Mr. Brittan: I regret that the information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Grants and Loans (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the grants and loans under the regional and industrial policy in the last year within the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency referred to in his letter to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth dated 27 November.

Mr. Brittan: The amount and number of offers for regional selective assistance and of approvals for new regional development grant in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency were as follows in the period 29 November 1984 to 31 October 1985:

	Number	Value £000
RDG II	22	2,232
RSA	6	9,339

I regret that details of other assistance is not available on a constituency basis.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the total amounts offered to firms in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency under regional and industrial grants for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Brittan: I regret that information is not available for all regional and industrial grans because it would be too costly to transfer the historic records to the computer data base. However, the new Regional Development Grants are being recorded and regional selective assistance (RSA) under section 7 of the Industry Act is available for past years. The details for RSA are set out below:

Table of RSA offers for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Constituency

	Number of Offers	Value of Offers £000
1975-76	4	440
1976-77	6	318
1977-78	3	792
1978-79	5	142
1979-80	4	240
1980-81	Nil	Nil
1981-82	6	419
1982-83	5	862
1983-84	11	1,504
1984-85	6	6,956

Grants (Northern Region)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the grants paid in each parliamentary constituency in the Northern region in the last 12 months under *(a)* the new regional grants scheme and *(b)* the old regime.

Mr. Brittan: The total paid to date under the new regional grant scheme in the North East (old Northern region) by constituency is as follows:

	£
Bishop Auckland	868,798
Blaydon	66,777
Blyth Valley	9,000
Easington	236,092
Gateshead East	156,436
Hartlepool	264,828
Houghton and Washington	401,714
Jarrow	26,324
Langbaurgh	8,100
Middlesbrough	748,663
Newcastle upon Tyne Central	5,844
Newcastle upon Tyne East	100,336
Newcastle upon Tyne North	70,913
North Durham	15,892
North West Durham	269,973
Sedgefield	12,707
South Shields	18,000
Stockton North	283,623
Stockton South	29,510
Sunderland North	69,851
Sunderland South	22,725
Tyne Bridge	178,533
Tynemouth	82,123
Wallsend	238,234
	4,184,996

The payments made under the old scheme are not available on a constituency basis.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Students

53. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to increase the availability of scholarships to overseas students.

Mr. Raison: I announced last June a new shared scholarship scheme as part of the Government's targeted support for overseas students. The scholarships are for students of high academic ability from developing Commonwealth countries who are outside the scope of existing Government support schemes and who would not otherwise be able to study here. Costs will be shared jointly between ODA and the higher education institutions.

My initial target was 50 awards to commence next autumn. Owing to the excellent response to the scheme I have decided to double that to 100. The scheme will initially run for five years.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the direct United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency *(a)* in sterling and dollars at the prevailing rate of exchange for each year from 1979 to date and *(b)* as a percentage of the total budget from 1979 to date; and what will be the sterling contribution, and as anticipated in dollars, for 1986.

Mr. Raison: The Government's direct contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency since 1979 were as follows:

	British Contribution		*Percentage of total budget*
	£ million	*$ million*	
1979	4·4	9·34	5·61
1980	4·5	10·47	4·96
1981	5·0	10·14	4·25
1982	4·0	7·00	2·64
1983	5·0	7·58	3·65
1984	6·0	8·02	3·96
1985	5·0	6·53	3·47

At the United Nations pledging conference earlier this month we announced a pledge of £5 million to UNRWA for 1986. This is subject to parliamentary approval. It is not possible to forecast the 1986 sterling-dollar exchange rate.

World Bank Loans (Environmental Damage)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will take steps to seek to ensure that the World Bank does not make loans for projects which, if carried out, would be likely to cause environmental or rain forest damage.

Mr. Raison: I think the World Bank has an increasing awareness of the environmental implications of its projects, particularly involving tropical rain forests. We are in constant touch with the bank on its policies in this area.

The World Bank was a co-sponsor, with the United Nations development programme and others, of a study on rain forests published in October. We expect the bank to take full account of the findings of this study.

Falkland Islands (Hospital)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the number of beds which will be provided in the new Falkland Islands hospital and the cost per bed as compared with cost per bed for an equivalent hospital in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Raison: The new hospital in Stanley will have 28 beds including a two-bed intensive care unit. This figure excludes sheltered housing which will provide accommodation for up to 15 elderly people who would formerly have been accommodated in a residential wing of the old hospital.

The hospital has been designed to cater for the needs of the civilian and military communities in the Falkland Islands and includes such facilities as an operating theatre which would not be found in a hospital of similar size in this country. Direct comparisons with the cost of health care facilities in this country are therefore not possible. Standards in the new hospital conform to DHSS standards.

Bilateral Aid

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will undertake a major re-evaluation of bilateral aid and its effect upon British visible and invisible earnings and in particular a rationalisation of aid and trade provision procedures.

Mr. Raison: While the basic objective of the bilateral aid programme is to promote economic and social progress in developing countries, we bear British commercial and

industrial interests fully in mind. Bilateral aid funds are tied to the purchase of British goods and services except for the provision of local costs in some of the poorer countries. The aid and trade provision (ATP) procedures have recently been reviewed. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced to the House the introduction of a new soft loan facility as part of the ATP on 12 November. By these means we hope to double the business supported by the ATP each year by 1988-89. In the light of this I do not believe a re-evaluation necessary.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that the British aid programme places emphasis on strategies designed to assist women in generating and creating income as called for in paragraph 115 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Raison: We support the objectives contained in paragraph 115 of the United Nations forward looking strategies for the advancement of women. Procedures were introduced in the ODA in 1984 to ensure that project work took better account of the role and needs of women.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will, as set out in paragraph 122 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, take steps to strengthen the evaluation of the effect of Britain's aid programme on women.

Mr. Raison: Assessment of how aid projects affect women is already an integral part of our evaluation studies. With our partners in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, we are considering how to improve the information in this respect, particularly governing statistics at our disposal.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to seek to implement paragraph 177 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which calls for urgent measures to enhance the role of African women as food producers.

Mr. Raison: We support the recommendations in paragraph 177 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, and fully appreciate the importance of African women as food producers. We should be happy to consider requests from African Governments for help in enhancing their role in this respect.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department is doing to seek to ensure that women are given access to training programmes to widen their skills and widen the range of methods and technologies used for agricultural production, as called for in paragraph 186 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Raison: We should be happy to consider requests from developing countries, to which paragraph 186 of forward looking strategies for the advancement of women was directed, to help with the activities there specified, including, where appropriate, training in Britain.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to implement paragraph 299 of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relating to the establishment of special relief programmes.

Mr. Raison: We fully recognise the problems of refugees and displaced women and children, and have responded generously to special appeals from such international agencies as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In the calendar year 1985 our total refugee assistance is expected to exceed £27 million. In addition we are providing £5 million in the period 1984-89 in response to the second international conference for assistance to refugees in Africa, held in July 1984.

Britain has also ratified the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and takes every opportunity to encourage other governments to do likewise.

Colombia

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been given by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Colombia following the recent landslip disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: Her Majesty's Government responded immediately to this disaster by providing two RAF Puma helicopters and one Hercules aircraft from Belize to help with rescue operations. The British ambassador in Bogota was authorised to purchase locally such essential items as electric generators. In addition, medicines, food, tents and other urgently needed relief items were sent.

Crown Agents

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total of advances during each of the last five years by the Crown Agents for Property development in Scotland, England and Wales; and if he will include within the figures for England a separate estimate for London.

Mr. Raison: The Crown Agents have made no advances for property development during the last five years.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that the special needs of women are recognised in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Mr. Raison: We attach importance to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, and will do our best to ensure that the special needs of women are taken into account in this respect.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Tottenham (Disturbances)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in how many cases in relation to

investigations in connection with the recent disturbances in Tottenham the police have refused access to solicitors on the grounds that representing a particular client would create a conflict of interest or where in the opinion of the police it would be professionally improper for them to act;

(2) in how many cases of persons being interviewed in relation to investigations in connection with the recent disturbances in the Tottenham area a solicitor instructed by a third party asked to see the person being interviewed; in how many of these cases the request was denied; and what reasons were given for refusing the request in each such case;

(3) how many persons interviewed by the police in relation to investigations into the recent disturbances in the Tottenham area asked to see a solicitor; in how many cases the request was denied; and what reasons were given when the request was denied.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not held centrally. On the basis of the information which is currently available, and whose accuracy cannot be completely guaranteed, we believe that six people were denied access to a solicitor for less than 24 hours, 14 for between 24 and 48 hours, and five for more than 48 hours. Access was denied because, in the opinion of the police, granting it would have caused unreasonable delay or hindrance to the conduct of the investigation. No further information is available.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act (Police Practice)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in how many cases of persons being interviewed in Metropolitan police districts where the police are operating as if the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are in force a solicitor instructed by a third party, such as a relative, asked to see the person interviewed; in how many cases this request was denied; and what reason was given for refusing the request;

(2) how many people interviewed by police officers in Metropolitan police districts where the police are operating as if the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are in force have asked to see a solicitor; in how many of these cases the request was denied; and what reasons were given.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police districts in the Metropolitan police area are operating as if the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the codes of practice are in force; and on what dates they started operating in this manner.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police have introduced those provisions of the 1984 Act and the codes of practice which do not require statutory powers on the basis of trial runs. These were brought into operation in all Metropolitan police districts on 1 April 1985 in resepct of stop and search and road check powers, on 1 May 1985 in respect of the searching of premises, and on 1 July 1985 in respect of the detention, treatment, and questioning of persons by police officers.

Immigration

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions exist to repay from public funds the cost of return air tickets held by intending visitors to the United Kingdom who are refused even temporary admission and subsequently appeal successfully against the immigration officers' decisions in their country of departure.

Mr. Waddington: There is no statutory provision to make such payments.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what dates meetings have taken place between Ministers in his Department and officials of the Immigration Service Union in the past year; what have been the main issues discussed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether at meetings between Ministers in his Department and officials of the Immigration Service Union, officials of that union have indicated that the Immigration Service Union intended to instruct its members not to deal with correspondence from hon. or right hon. Members concerning immigration matters; and on what basis Immigration Service Union officials have passed correspondence from hon. and right hon. Members on immigration matters to Ministers in his Department.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on 20 November at columns *168-69*. At my meeting with officials of the ISU on 17 October, they did not indicate that they intended to instruct their members not to deal with correspondence from hon. Members on immigration matters, but they did express their concern at the increase in the number of cases attracting representations from hon. and right hon. Members.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fiancées have been granted admission to the United Kingdom since the change in August of the immigration rules requiring fiancées to have entry clearance; how many fiancées have been granted admission although they had not been granted entry clearance; and if the passports of such fiancées have been suitably endorsed in all cases.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Drug-related Offences

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of people who have been convicted of drug-related offences each year since 1979 and the range of prison sentences which were imposed for those offences during the same period.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the numbers of persons found guilty of drugs offences in each year since 1979 is given in table 8 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs in the United Kingdom, 1984" (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 23/85). Details about the lengths of sentences of imprisonment for such offences are published annually in "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs, United Kingdom, Supplementary Tables" (table 2.12 in the issues for 1983 and 1984 and table 3.3 in earlier issues). The published table for 1984 inadvertently excluded sentences of youth custody and so revised figures, including them, are given in the following table:

Persons sentenced to unsuspected imprisonment, including youth custody, for drugs offences by length of sentence, 1984—United Kingdom

Length of sentence given for principal drugs offence	*Number of persons*
Up to and including one month	501
Over one month up to and including three months	529
Over three months up to and including six months	436
Over six months up to and including one year	464
Over one year up to and including two years	682
Over two years up to and including five years	579
Over five years up to and including seven years	123
Over seven years	97
Total	3,411

Category A Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of category A prisoners at present held in Her Majesty's prisons; and how many of those prisoners have been convicted of offences connected with the present troubles in Northern Ireland both as an absolute figure and as a percentage, indicating those so convicted who give their place of origin as the Republic of Ireland, the six counties of Northern Ireland, England and Wales, Scotland or elsewhere, respectively, for the current year and each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: As at 12 November 1985 there were 315 convicted prisoners held in prison custody in England and Wales confirmed in category 'A'. Of these, 45, or 14·28 per cent. were convicted of terrorist offences relating to the present situation in Northern Ireland; 29 were born in Northern Ireland, 12 in the Republic of Ireland, three in England and one in Scotland. Similar information for earlier years is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of prisoners in category A who have been held in single cellular confinement in each year since 1979, indicating those who have been convicted of offences connected with the present troubles in Northern Ireland;

(2) what has been the average time spent by category A prisoners in single cellular confinement for each year since 1979; and what is the longest time and what is the shortest time so spent;

(3) what is the average time spent by category A prisoners convicted of offences associated with the present troubles in Northern Ireland in single cellular confinement; how many such prisoners have been so confined; and what has been the shortest and longest time of such detention.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what offences category A prisoners are placed in single cellular confinement.

Mr. Mellor: The prison rules provide that an award of cellular confinement may be made if a prisoner is found guilty of an offence against discipline. No distinctions are made on the grounds of a prisoner's security category.

Criminal Statistics

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of unlawful killing were *(a)* investigated by the police and *(b)* led to convictions for (i) murder and (ii) manslaughter, between 1955 and 1965, between 1965 and 1975 and between 1975 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: In the absence of a court decision, it is not possible to distinguish between offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide; they are, collectively homicide. The information available is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"; chapter 4 of the latest volume for 1984 (Cmnd. 9621) gives statistics for the period 1974-1984. The figures for 1955 to 1984 are summarised in the following table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Persons convicted of homicide by outcome of proceedings

England and Wales *Number*

Year	*Offences initially recorded as homicide*	*Persons convicted of*			
		Murder	*Section† Manslaughter*	*Other Manslaughter*	*Infanticide*
1955-64	2,891	384	*250	†n/a	†n/a
1965-74	4,317	832	654	†1,211	†130
1975-84‡	5,685	1,357	884	1,766	65

* 1957-1964. The Homicide Act 1957 came into effect on 21 March 1957; section 2 introduced the defence of diminished responsibility.
† Figures on the basis of offences initially recorded as homicide are not available before 1967.
‡ For offences recorded in 1984, there were 144 persons who had been committed for trial for homicide and for whom the outcome of proceedings was not yet known.
n/a Not available.

Fraud

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to the number of new investigations started by the City of London police company fraud squad for each year since 1979; how many of those investigations have been completed since 1979; how many of these investigations have led to prosecutions; and how many of these investigations have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to how many of the investigations commenced by the City of London's police company fraud department have

been referred to the Department of Trade and Industry or to the City Solicitor for assistance; of these how many have been completed; and how many led to prosecution.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the commissioner of the City of London police that it may not be practicable to provide information in exactly the form requested, but the information that can be made available will be provided as soon as possible.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to the number of new investigations into city fraud started by the Metropolitan police for each year since 1979 and how many of these investigations have led to prosecutions since 1979; how many of these investigations have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions; and of the latter, how many have led to prosecutions; and how many have been completed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that it is most unlikely, because of the geographical boundaries of his force, that any new investigations into city fraud were started by his force during the period specified. Such frauds are normally investigated by the City of London police.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners in prison on 31 October.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985 about 46,900 persons were held in prison department establishments in England and Wales.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers there were on 31 October.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 November 1985 — the nearest convenient date for which figures are available — there were 18,527 full-time and 49 part-time members of the prison officer class employed in prison department establishments in England and Wales.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisons have more than the certified number of prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: On 22 November 1985, 53 establishments had a population greater than their certified normal accommodation.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff other than warden staff or prison officers are employed in prisons in England and Wales; and what is the ratio of such staff to prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 November 1985 there were 6,577 members of staff, other than governor and prison officer grades, employed full or part-time in prison department establishments in England and Wales: a ratio of approximately one member of staff to seven prisoners.

Records of staff employed locally on a sessional basis are not kept centrally: this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average weekly cost of keeping a convicted prisoner in each of the various categories of prison.

Mr. Mellor: In the financial year 1984-85 the average weekly cost of keeping a person in each of the various types of penal establishment was as follows:

Type of establishment	£
Local prisons and adult remand centres	241
Dispersal prisons	482
Category B training prisons	255
Category C training prisons	196
Open adult prisons	164
Closed youth establishments	269
Open youth establishments	294
Female establishments	363

It is not possible to distinguish between the costs of keeping convicted and unconvicted persons in custody.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which local authorities have applied for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres, pursuant to regulation 4(1)*(a)* of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983, since 11 July;

(2) which local authorities have applied for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres, pursuant to regulation 5(1)*(c)* of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Function) Regulations 1983 since 11 July.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Listed below are those county councils and district councils which have applied for grant aid under regulations 4(1)*(b)* and 5(1)*(c)* respectively of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 since 11 July to establish, equip or maintain emergency centres.

County councils which have applied for grant aid for their emergency centres since 11 July 1985.

Bedfordshire
Cheshire
Cornwall
Dorset
Gwent
Gwynedd
Isle of Wight
Kent
Northumberland
Oxfordshire
Staffordshire
Warwickshire

District councils which have applied for grant aid for their emergency centres since 11 July 1985 (by county).

Avon
Wansdyke
Northavon
Cornwall
Bodmin
Carrick
Kerrier
Restormel
Devon
Plymouth
Dorset
Poole
Greater Manchester
Trafford
Greater London Council
Waltham Forest
Humberside
Holderness
Kent
Sevenoaks
Shepway
Tunbridge Wells

Lancashire
South Ribble
Leicestershire
Melton
Norfolk
Breckland
Northumberland
Alnwick
Castle Morpeth
Nottinghamshire
Broxtowe
Somerset
Mendip
South Somerset
Staffordshire
Lichfield
Surrey
Woking
North Yorkshire
Hambledon

Satellite Broadcasting

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to seek further powers of control over the operation of satellites, satellite transmissions and the content of programmes broadcast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A full regulatory regime for United Kingdom direct broadcasting by satellite is contained in part II of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, although no such service exists at the present time. It is expected that services transmitted from low-powered satellites in the United Kingdom will continue to be aimed primarily at cable head ends and so their content will fall to be regulated by the Cable Authority under the powers of part I of the 1984 Act. However, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State Department of Trade and Industry explained in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 23 May at columns *489-90*, if future services develop in this country which are intended exclusively for direct reception in the United Kingdom and clearly demonstrate the need for additional regulatory powers, the Government will consider what steps might be necessary to provide the appropriate regulation.

Satellite services transmitted from abroad fall under the regulatory control of the transmitting country. Services transmitted from member states of the Council of Europe will be subject to the general rules on advertising and programme content set out in Council of Europe recommendations No. R(84)3 and No. R(84)22, copies of which will be available shortly.

Rape (Anonymity of Defendants)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's review of the anonymity of defendants in rape cases;

(2) if he has any plans to bring forward legislation to remove the anonymity of defendants in rape cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In its report on sexual offences, published last year, the Criminal Law Revision Committee recommended that anonymity should be removed from defendants in rape cases. The Government will announce their conclusions on this matter in due course.

Public Houses (Flexible Licensing)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has recently received concerning flexible licensing hours for public houses.

Mr. Mellor: Since 24 October, we have received five letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents, one letter from an organisation, and 10 letters from members of the public about permitted opening hours for on-licensed premises. Of the 16, 13 supported relaxations in the law and three were opposed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to allow more flexible licensing of public houses.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) on 26 November at column *516*.

Stansted Hijacking

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what undertaking Her Majesty's Government gave to the Tanzanian hijackers in consideration of their surrendering during the Stansted hijacking incident in 1982; what intermediaries were involved; and in what way.

Mr. Hurd: The hijackers were told that, if they surrendered, they would not be returned to Tanzania, but would be arrested and charged with criminal offences. They were told that they would be tried by a British court and that any sentence passed by the court would be served in this country. Direct negotiations with the hijackers were carried out by the police. These undertakings were confirmed in writing on 29 April 1982 after the hijack was over to my hon. Friend the Member of Beverley (Sir P. Wall).

Dealings between Ministers and Members of this House rest on the assumption that undertakings between them will be honoured.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost of keeping in prison Mr. Yassin Membar and Mr. Mohammed Tahir Ahmed of Tanzania, convicted following the Stansted hijacking incident in 1982.

Mr. Mellor: It is not possible to determine the costs of keeping individual persons in custody. Mr. Yassin Membar and Mr. Mohammed Tahir Ahmed were held in a number of local prisons between 1982 and 1984. In the corresponding financial years, the average weekly costs of keeping a person in an establishment of this type were as follows:

Financial year	£
1982-83	200
1983-84	216
1984-85	241

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now take steps to deport Mr. Yassin Membar and Mr. Mohammed Tahir Ahmed following their recent release from prison.

Mr. Waddington: No. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on 27 November.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those paragraphs of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which Her Majesty's Government have already implemented.

Mr. Waddington: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that by the year 2000, Her Majesty's Government have comprehensive policies for the implementation of paragraph 78 of the conclusion of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the full and equal participation of women in society;

(2) what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to implement paragraph 77 of the conclusion of the Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relating to the removal of discriminatory attitudes and practices.

Mr. Waddington: The Government are committed to the elimination of sex discrimination by all appropriate means. These will include sensible and effective enforcement of the relevant legislation and support for the Equal Opportunities Commission in the pursuit of its statutory duties to work towards the elimination of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally and to keep under review the working of the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the action which the Equal Opportunities Commission proposes to take in pursuance of the aims of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women; and what funds will be made available for this purpose.

Mr. Waddington: It is for the Equal Opportunities Commission to determine how best to discharge its statutory duties under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 within the resources available to the commission.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often he has met the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women; and what future plans he has for such meetings.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission in London on 28 October and he intends to visit the commission in Manchester early in 1986. As is usual in the case of meetings with the commission he expects that they shall be discussing a wide range of matters of common concern.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an inter-departmental working group to discuss and plan the implementation of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Waddington: We have at present no plans to do so.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, in relation to the collection of statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 29 November 1985 at column 696.

Sexual Offences Act 1985

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received *(a)* about the law of rape generally and *(b)* about the operation of the Sexual Offences Act 1985 from (i) the city of Liverpool and (ii) the Liverpool, Riverside constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are not aware of having received any such representations within the last six months.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Liverpool as to his arrangements for interviewing and examining alleged rape victims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of the Merseyside police that interviews of rape victims are conducted by experienced and specially trained women police officers. Medical examinations are conducted with the victim's consent, by police surgeons, usually in the surgeon's room at a police station. The examination is carried out by a female surgeon if the victim so requests.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis as to his arrangements for interviewing and examining alleged rape victims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that statements by rape victims are taken at the police station by women police officers who are specially trained for this purpose. Medical examinations are carried out, with the victim's consent, either at a doctor's surgery or in a divisonal surgeon's room at a police station. If the victim so requests, the examination is conducted by a woman doctor. The Metropolitan police plan to open a number of special victim examination suites for the victims of rape and serious sexual assaults, comprising an interview room, an examination room and shower facilities.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the working of the Sexual Offences Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Sexual Offences Act 1985 came into force only on 16 September. It is too soon to form any reliable impression of its effectiveness.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many persons have been arrested under the Sexual Offences Act 1985 in England and Wales to the latest date.

Mr. Mellor: There is no power of arrest under the Sexual Offences Act 1985 and no information is yet available centrally on the numbers of offences under this Act.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside as to how many persons have been arrested in *(a)* the Liverpool, Riverside constituency and *(b)* the city of Liverpool under the Sexual Offences Act 1985 to the latest date.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Sexual Offences Act 1985 does not contain a power of arrest. Details of offences to date under the Act in the Merseyside police area are not available. From 1 January 1985 such offences will be recorded by the Merseyside police on a force-wide basis.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rapes have been reported in *(a)* the city of Liverpool and *(b)* the metropolitan county of Merseyside in each of the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: The information available centrally is for police force areas and is published annually in table S.3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", supplementary tables, volume 3.

Rape Crisis Centres

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much funding was made to rape crisis centres in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The rape counselling and research project receives a grant from the Department of Health and Social Security. The amount of that grant in each of the last five financial years, including supplementary payments, was as follows:

	£
1981-82	10,000
1982-83	20,000
1983-84	26,000
1984-85	23,953
1985-86	22,000

Local rape crises centres are not provided with direct Government funding, but can apply in the same way as other voluntary organisations for financial assistance under various general Government programmes, such as the urban programme. The Department has no information about the funding obtained by rape crises centres under general Government programmes or from local authorities.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make a grant to the Liverpool rape crisis centre.

Mr. Mellor: Financial assistance from the Home Office to the victim support movement is confined to a grant made to the National Association of Victim Support Schemes for the purpose of its headquarters operations. My right hon. Friend is considering the possibility of making some limited provision for assisting local schemes which help the victims of crime in general, but we regret that we can offer no prospect of a Home Office grant being made specifically to the Liverpool rape crisis centre.

Rape Victims (Compensation)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board has any plans to increase the general level of compensation to victims of rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Under the terms of the criminal injuries compensation scheme, compensation is assessed in each individual case by the board on the basis of the damages to which the applicant would be entitled in a civil action. It is not open to the board to revise the general level of awards except in recognition of changes in the level of civil damages.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Equal Opportunities Commission's budget for the current financial year; and for what purposes this money is allocated.

Mr. Waddington: The Equal Opportunities Commission's budget for 1985-86 is £3·434 million. Within this total £1·933 million is allocated to salaries and commissioners' fees, and £1·501 million to administrative expenses, including legal costs and provision for the commission's own grant-aiding activities.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed by the Equal Opportunities Commission; and in what capacities.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that on 31 October 1985 the Equal Opportunities Commission employed 180 persons, of whom 39 were part-time. The commission's staff are available for duties appropriate to their grade in relation to any of the work of the commission.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Midlothian can expect a final reply to his most recent letter concerning a constituent about whom the hon. Member first wrote to him on 24 April.

Mr. Waddington: The necessary inquiries have now been completed and I shall be writing to the hon. Member very shortly.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amendments are currently proposed to the Treaty of Rome in respect of the European monetary system; what is the attitude of Her Majesty's Government to each; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Commission and Belgium have proposed a number of amendments to the monetary provisions of the treaty. In the Government's view, the key to progress in the monetary field lies not in treaty

amendment but in practical steps, and in particular the liberalisation of capital movements as provided for in the existing treaty.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to implement paragraph 259 of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the position of women under apartheid.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom was pleased to join consensus on the document "Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women", but we reserved our position on several paragraphs, including paragraph 259. Our reservations were placed on record in the report of the world conference, copies of which are in the Library of the House (A/CONF. 116/28).

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to implement paragraph 264 of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the participation of women in United Nations International Year of Peace 1986.

Mr. Eggar: During 1986 Government information on defence and disarmament questions will draw attention to the international year of peace. Individuals must decide how best they can contribute to the aims of the year; we hope they will do so by supporting policies which genuinely further the cause of peace.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now publish the document, "The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women".

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 29 November at column *707*. The report of the world conference of the United Nations decade for women will also be available from booksellers as a United Nations sales publication.

International Institutions (Government Expenditure)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the Government expenditure during the last financial year on the Council of Europe, the Western European Union, the North Atlantic Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: Payments to the Council of Europe, Western European Union Secretariat and Assembly and the North Atlantic Assembly in respect of the United Kingdom share of their budgets during the financial year 1984-85 were as follows:

	£
Council of Europe	5,040,000
Western European Union	932,000
North Atlantic Assembly	171,000

Expenditure on the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, I understand that expenditure was as follows:

	£
Inter-Parliamentary Union	325,000
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association	445,000

International Peace Year

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the conference that Her Majesty's Government have undertaken to hold to mark the United Nations international peace year.

Mr. Eggar: The conference will be held at the Wiston House conference centre at a date to be decided. Its purpose will be to examine international peacekeeping and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. We shall invite eminent individuals with practical or academic experience of these issues and hope that deliberations will make a significant contribution in this important field.

Gibraltar

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will ultimately be responsible for payments to former Spanish workers in Gibraltar of their pensions which were frozen as a result of Spanish Government action under European Economic Community regulations.

Mr. Eggar: Under Gibraltar law and under EC regulations, responsibility for payments of pensions rests with the Gibraltar Government. We are having discussions with the Gibraltar Government about how this responsibility will be met.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the £28 million provided by Her Majesty's Government for the Gibraltar dockyard is monitored; and if he will make a statement on the extent to which information on the application of these funds is available to right hon. and hon. Members, the Gibraltar Government and other people of Gibraltar, and from where information is available in each case.

Mr. Raison: Monitoring is effected through ODA representation on the board of directors of Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited and by regular visits by officials.

Gibraltar company law requires published annual audited statements that are readily available to interested parties. Matters concerning the company are also discussed in the Gibraltar House of Assembly and reported locally.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to secure a comprehensive test ban treaty on nuclear weapons; and what proposals have been made as to how verification techniques could be improved to ensure compliance.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 20 November at column *271*.

Achille Lauro

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis his Department charged the British subjects involved in the hijack of the Achille Lauro passenger ship for their return flights to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The British subjects involved in the hijack of the Achillo Lauro were charged on the basis of the undertakings to repay and requests for repatriation which they signed, the terms of which made it clear that the advances for their return fares to the United Kingdom were temporary and repayable. We have, however, absolutely no wish to cause financial hardship to the victims of this hijacking. I have written to the six people involved and instructed officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to discuss with them possible methods and sources of repayment. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be as helpful and sympathetic as it can.

WALES

Drug Addiction

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been made available by the Welsh Office for the combating of drugs problems in Gwynedd during the present year; how much is likely to be actually spent on this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Forty four thousand and five hundred pounds has been made available in 1985-86 to Gwynedd health authority to fund the appointment of two community workers to provide advisory and counselling services for drug misusers and their families and a specialist health education officer concerned with addiction. A further £10,000 has been made available to the health authority for the production of a Welsh language curriculum pack on drug education. I understand that the health authority's current estimate is that £40,000 in total will be spent in the financial year.

Literacy Service

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons he has working on the literacy service in Wales within his own Department.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Matters related to literacy in Wales are dealt with as part of the functions carried out by our Education Department. There are no officials in our Department whose sole responsible is literacy policy.

Refuse Disposal (Water Pollution)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for a survey to be undertaken of all locations of refusal disposal in Wales in order to ascertain to what degree water from the refuse finds its way into the food cycle in the area, or potentially becomes a source of contamination of subterranean water supplies.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am satisfied that such a survey is not necessary as under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 waste disposal authorities in consultation with water authorities are required to ensure that waste disposal sites do not cause pollution of water or danger to public health. Water authorities regularly monitor discharges from such sites and the quality of ground and surface water.

Ambulance Workers (Pay Increases)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how he anticipates that the necessary funds will be found by health authorities in Wales to fund the recently announced pay increases for ambulance workers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what he expects to be the total effect on public expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales arising from the recent proposals for a restructuring of ambulance workers' pay.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Health authorities are expected to meet all pay increases within the total sums available to them. There has as yet been no pay settlement covering all ambulance workers in 1985-86 but any increase would be contained within 4·7 per cent. on the pay bill. The trade union side of the ambulance council is consulting its members on a proposal for a salaried structure, the cost of which will depend upon the outcome of local agreements on productivity.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for 1985-86 and for each of the past 20 years the total expenditure on the services provided by: *(a)* health authorities in Wales and their predecessors and *(b)* the Gwynedd health authority and its predecessors, respectively.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not available for years prior to 1974-75, and not yet available for 1985-86.

For the years 1974-75 to 1984-85 the information is as follows:

	All health authorities in Wales £000	*Gwynedd health authority* £000
1974-75	198,288	14,983
1975-76	256,151	19,101
1976-77	287,100	21,568
1977-78	327,552	24,525
1978-79	377,939	28,058
1979-80	447,420	33,913
1980-81	569,440	43,429
1981-82	638,931	48,212
1982-83	706,147	53,067
1983-84	749,682	57,003
1984-85*	813,160	64,400

Source:
Annual accounts of health authorities
Notes: * The figures for 1984-85 are provisional.

Welsh Language Development Body

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* those bodies with which he consulted concerning the possibility of establishing a Welsh language development body; and if he will state the basis on which he decides with whom to consult on such matters.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The bodies which were consulted formally are listed below. In addition my hon. Friend the

Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas) met representatives of six bodies having a particular interest in the Welsh language. The selection of the bodies to be consulted on this matter, as in other cases, is based on the relevence of their particular responsibilities and functions to the matter under consideration.

Welsh Counties Committee
Wales Advisory Board for Local Authority Higher Education
Welsh Provincial Council for Education.
Catholic Education Council
Council of Churches for Wales
University of Wales
Society of Education Officers
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
National Union of Teachers
National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
National Association of Headteachers
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru
National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers
Secondary Heads Association
Professional Association of Schoolteachers
Institute of Careers Officers
Welsh Secondary Schools Association
National Association of Inspectors and Education Advisers
Association of Vice Principals of Colleges
Association of Principals of Colleges
Association of Agriculture Education Staffs
Committee of Directors of Polytechnics
Association of Colleges of Higher and Further Education
Association of Polytechnic Teachers
National Association of Teachers in Higher and Further Education
Parent Teacher Association of Wales
Parents for Welsh Medium Education

Felinheli bypass

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now publish the anticipated timescale for decisions and action relating to the construction of the Felinheli bypass.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There will be a public exhibition of the proposed scheme from 11 to 13 December 1985. Taking account of the work on the detailed design of the scheme and the need to complete statutory procedures, the provisional planning target is to have the project ready to start early in 1989.

Goat Farmers

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what support is given by his Department and the European commission to goat farmers.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Grant aid is available under the agriculture improvement scheme for goat farmers who have an approved improvement plan. The scheme implements EC regulation 797/85. Grant is available on most types of farm improvement and rates vary from 15 per cent. in the lowland to 60 per cent. in the less favoured area.

Member states are free under Community regulations to pay hill livestock compensatory allowances on goats, but the United Kingdom restricts payment of these allowances to sheep and meat producing cows.

National Health Service Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each district health authority in Wales, the total number of beds in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information relating to the number of hospital beds for each health authority in Wales is published annually in "Bed Use Statistics". A copy of the publication for each of the years 1979 to 1984 is available in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each district health authority in Wales, the total number of National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Health authority	*Number of NHS hospitals at 31 December*					
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Clwyd	28	28	27	27	27	27
Dyfed/East Dyfed	16	16	16	13	13	13
Gwent	21	20	19	19	18	18
Gwynedd	24	23	23	23	24	22
Mid Glamorgan	33	33	33	33	33	33
Powys	15	15	15	15	15	15
South Glamorgan	16	16	16	16	16	16
West Glamorgan	20	20	19	19	19	19
Pembrokeshire*	—	—	—	3	3	3

* Figures included with Dyfed prior to 1982.

Departmental Appointments

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he if he will list all those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointees and the number of these who are women.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1984" a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. The 1985 edition will be published shortly.

Advancement of Women

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and if he has any future plans for such meetings.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have not met the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the strategies and have no plans to do so.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to evaluate progress towards

implementation of those parts of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Copies of the strategies document have recently been received by my Department. Some of its recommendations are relevant to the Welsh Office's responsibilities, and are being studied at present.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the collection of statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department collects and publishes many statistics in which information is disaggregated by sex.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will establish a special office within his Department to monitor periodically and accelerate the process of equitable representation of women as called for in paragraph 88 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department has appointed an equal opportunities officer who is responsible for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy on non-discrimination within the Welsh Office.

Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospital development schemes costing over £5 million in Wales *(a)* completed since May 1979 and *(b)* started since May 1979, giving for each the district, the number of beds involved, the completion date and the cost.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information on hospital development schemes in Wales costing over £5 million is given in the following tables:

(a) TABLE 1. *Schemes completed since May 1979*

Scheme	*District health authority*	*Completion date*	*Number of beds*	*Cost £ million*
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	Clwyd	May 1979	354	12·5
Royal Gwent—scheme 5	Gwent	December 1979	218	5·1
St. Woolos hospital development scheme 1	Gwent	October 1982	230	5·8
Ysbyty Gwynedd	Gwynedd	June 1983	508	36·6
Princess of Wales hospital, Bridgend	Mid Glamorgan	March 1985	384	23·6
Wrexham district general hospital—scheme 1	Clwyd	March 1985	238	14·6
Morriston hospital, development scheme 1	West Glamorgan	May 1985	304	20·5

(b) TABLE 2. *Started since May 1979*

Scheme	*District health authority*	*Estimated completion date*	*Number of beds*	*Cost £ million*
Llandough obstetric unit	South Glamorgan	June 1988	90	7·4
Royal Gwent—scheme 6	Gwent	November 1988	320	9·2
New Llanelli hospital	East Dyfed	June 1989	188	20·0
Singleton hospital development—phase III	West Glamorgan	December 1992	284	32·0

National Health Service (Revenue and Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in Wales the revenue and capital expenditure in each year since 1974, expressing the figures *(a)* in money terms, *(b)* adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted by the movement of National Health Service pay and prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not readily available. I shall however write to the hon. Gentleman and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

National Health Service Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health and social services board, the total number of National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Health and social services board	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern	21	21	21	19	18	18
Southern	21	21	21	20	20	21
Eastern	30	30	29	30	30	30
Western	14	14	14	14	14	14
All boards	86	86	85	83	82	83

National Health Service Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health and social services board, the total number of beds in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Health and social services board	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern	2,454	2,473	2,486	*	2,518	2,478
Southern	2,661	2,607	2,596	*	2,607	2,606
Eastern	8,730	8,769	8,801	*	8,753	8,585
Western	3,280	3,212	3,141	3,132	3,100	3,049
All boards	17,125	17,061	17,024	*	16,978	16,718

* Not available due to industrial action.

Anglo-Irish Summit (Security)

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much it cost to secure Hillsborough castle on the occasion of the Anglo-Irish summit on 15 November.

Mr. King: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Planning Procedures

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in view of the delays in planning application decisions arising from the indefinite close-down by the majority of district councils, he will make a statement about alternative procedures to consider and decide upon planning applications.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is required to consult district councils on all planning applications. This consultation takes the form of a presentation to councils on a regular basis of a schedule of applications received, indicating the preliminary opinion of the Department as to how the application is to be determined. Following established procedure if the Department does not receive the comments of the council within a reasonable period a decision issues in accordance with the preliminary opinion.

National Health Service (Revenue and Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each health and social services board the revenue and capital expenditure on National Health Service services in each year since 1974, expressing the figures *(a)* in money terms, *(b)* adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted by the movement of National Health Service pay and prices.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the hospital development schemes costing over £5 million in Northern Ireland *(a)* completed since May 1979 and *(b)* started since May 1979, giving for each the health and social services board, the number of beds involved, the completion date and the cost.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Rail Services (Strathclyde)

55. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied that those rail services in Strathclyde which are currently being supported under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968 will continue to be so after the Transport Act 1985 comes into operation.

Mr. Ancram: This is a matter for Strathclyde regional council, which is responsible for the subsidy paid under section 20. The future operation of these services should however be much assisted by the implementation of the Strathclyde rail review proposals for which my right hon. Friend has offered grant assistance.

National Health Service Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health board, the total number of National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows.

Health Boards	*September 1979*	*September 1980*	*September 1981*	*September 1982*	*September 1983*	*March 1984**
Argyll and Clyde	44	37	37	37	37	37
Ayrshire and Arran	19	19	19	20	19	18
Borders	16	16	16	17	17	15
Dumfries and Galloway	13	13	13	13	13	13
Fife	16	16	18	18	18	18
Forth Valley	14	14	14	14	14	14
Grampian	43	43	42	42	43	43

Health Boards	September 1979	September 1980	September 1981	September 1982	September 1983	March 1984*
Greater Glasgow	46	46	45	46	47	45
Highland	24	24	24	23	23	23
Lanarkshire	26	25	24	24	24	24
Lothian	36	36	36	35	36	36
Orkney	2	2	2	2	2	2
Shetland	3	3	3	3	3	3
Tayside	33	33	32	31	30	29
Western Isles	4	5	5	5	5	5
Scotland	339	332	330	330	331	325

* the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health board, the total number of beds in National Health hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: The average number of available staffed beds in each health board in the years concerned was as follows:

Health Boards	September 1979	September 1980	September 1981	September 1982	September 1983	*March 1984
Argyll & Clyde	4,599	4,523	4,488	4,472	4,438	4,433
Ayrshire & Arran	2,837	2,822	2,827	2,794	2,918	3,051
Borders	898	897	943	928	928	925
Dumfries & Galloway	1,676	1,595	1,571	1,548	1,540	1,538
Fife	2,953	2,913	2,929	2,989	3,026	3,106
Forth Valley	3,611	3,616	3,583	3,498	3,446	3,465
Grampian	5,392	5,391	5,393	5,462	5,486	5,571
Greater Glasgow	14,045	14,084	14,032	13,547	13,355	13,206
Highland	2,455	2,422	2,427	2,347	2,290	2,288
Lanarkshire	5,517	5,536	5,538	5,528	5,491	5,442
Lothian	8,374	8,389	8,397	8,452	8,522	8,505
Orkney	119	126	131	131	131	131
Shetland	160	159	160	160	160	159
Tayside	5,648	5,522	5,408	5,377	5,354	5,312
Western Isles	216	212	202	207	210	208
SCOTLAND	58,500	58,207	58,029	57,440	57,295	57,340

* The latest date for which information is available.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects the Forestry Commission's review of its regional advisory committees to be complete.

(2) if the Forestry Commission will be consultanting the voluntary bodies as part of its review of the commission's regional advisory committees.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend expects to receive in the new year the Forestry Commission's proposals on the public accountability of regional advisory committees. Consultations will be held thereafter with a number of bodies, including voluntary bodies, before final decisions are taken.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what public meetings have been arranged by the Forestry Commission in each of its seven conservancies to consult on the implementation of the new broadleaf policy;

(2) which national organisation the Forestry Commission has notified in advance of public meetings arranged in each of its seven conservancies on the implementation of its new broadleaf policy.

Mr. John MacKay: No public meetings have been arranged in the sense of meetings which have been advertised and to which the general public have been invited. The commission has, however, held or arranged a number of meetings with those bodies and individuals likely to have an involvement in the implementation of the policy.

The national organisations participating in such meetings include:

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Association of Trusts for Conservation in Wales
British Association for Shooting and Conservation
British Timber Merchants Association
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
British Trust for Ornithology
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Council for the Protection of Rural Wales
Country Landowners Association
Countryside Trust
Farmers Union of Wales
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Earth (Scotland)
Institute of Chartered Foresters
Landscape Institute
National Coal Board Open Cast Executive
National Farmers Union
National Trust
National Trust for Scotland
Royal Forestry Society
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Society for Nature Conservation
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Scottish Conservation Projects
Scottish Field Studies Association
Scottish Landowners Federation
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Timber Growers United Kingdom
Tree Council
Woodland Trust

In addition, the Agriculture Departments, the Countryside Commissions, the Nature Conservancy Council and local authorities have been involved.

The numbers of meetings that have been organised in each of the Commission's Conservancies are:

	Number
North England	11
East England	18
West England	9
Wales	8
North Scotland	1
Mid Scotland	2
South Scotland	3

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the senior officer designated by the Forestry Commission in each of its seven conservancies who will be responsible for co-ordinating the new broadleaf policy; and for each officer, if he will give his or her previous position within the commission.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Conservancy	*Name*	*Previous position*
North England	Mr. R. O. Smith	Forest district manager, Lothian and Tweed
East England	Mr. N. Dannatt	Assistant conservator (forest management) North West England
West England	Mr. M. H. Orrom	Assistant conservator (forest management) South West England
Wales	Mr. A. H. Scott	Assistant conservator (forest management) North Wales
North Scotland	Mr. A. M. Calder	Assistant conservator (forest management) North Scotland
Mid Scotland	Mr. R. D. L. Toleman	Assistant conservator (forest management) West Scotland
South Scotland	Mr. J. Y. Ogilvie	Assistant conservator (forest management) South Scotland

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Forestry Commission will make site visits on a full or sub-sample basis to check whether the management objectives of the new broadleaf scheme are being achieved.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission will inspect each site which is the subject of an application for entry to the broadleaved woodland grant scheme to determine whether the objectives of the application are in accordance with the management guidelines for broadleaved woodlands. When claims for grant are subsequently made under the scheme, the commission will make sample checks to ensure that the work has been carried out to a satisfactory standard and that this is in accordance with the objectives approved at the time of the approval of the application.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements the Forestry Commission has made for monitoring its new broadleaf policy.

Mr. John MacKay: Quantitative aspects of the policy will be monitored by collecting information on the planting and natural regeneration of broadleaves under the Forestry Commission's grant schemes and on the licensed felling of broadleaves. Qualitative aspects will be monitored by commission staff in the course of field visits. The commission is discussing with the Nature Conservancy Council ways in which the nature conservation aspects of the policy might best be monitored.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, as part of its broadleaf policy, the Forestry Commission plans to monitor *(a)* the number of grant applications, *(b)* the area (in hectares) covered by each successful grant application, *(c)* the composition of tree species being planted and regenerated and *(d)* the planting density of grant-aided works.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes. The Forestry Commission will be monitoring each of these aspects.

Cemeteries

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to give powers to local authorities to enforce reasonable standards of maintenance in commercially-owned cemeteries and burial grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Maintenance of commercially-owned cemeteries and burial grounds is primarily the responsibility of their owners. Planning authorities are, however, empowered by section 63 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972, if they consider that the amenity of any part of their district is seriously injured by reason of the derelict, waste or neglected condition of any land, to serve on the owner a notice requiring steps to be taken to abate the injury. Section 88 as applied by section 63(3) of the 1972 Act provides that, if such a notice is not complied with, the planning authority may themselves take the steps specified in the notice, and may recover from the owner any expenses reasonably incurred by them in doing so. Against this background, I see no need for further legislation to be introduced.

Maternity Beds

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maternity bed provision by each health board in Scotland expressed as a percentage of the population served by each board.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest comprehensive data available relate to the average number of staffed beds in the year to 31 March 1984. These are expressed below in terms of the number per 10,000 resident population: in some cases individual maternity units also serve patients from neighbouring boards.

Health Board	*Number of Obstetric beds*	*Number per 10,000 population*
Argyll and Clyde	247	5·5
Ayshire and Arran	216	5·7
Borders	32	3·2
Dumfries and Galloway	72	4·9
Fife	145	4·2
Forth Valley	149	5·5

Health Board	Number of Obstetric beds	Number per 10,000 population
Grampian	256	5·2
Greater Glasgow	522	5·3
Highland	116	5·9
Lanarkshire	243	4·3
Lothian	402	5·4
Orkney	12	6·2
Shetland	11	4·7
Tayside	218	5·6
Western Isles	17	5·4

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to health boards on defining catchment areas for maternity beds.

Mr. John MacKay: None. This is a matter for each health board to determine in the light of local circumstances.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to health boards on maternity bed provision.

Mr. John MacKay: None. The provision of maternity services is a matter for health boards in the first instance although specific proposals for major capital developments require the approval of the Scottish Home and Health Department when such matters may be discussed.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many births took place each year for the past five years in each health board area expressed as a percentage of the population served by the boards.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Births as a percentage of population 1980-84

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Scotland	1·34	1·33	1·28	1·26	1·27
Borders	1·13	1·16	1·06	1·10	1·05
Forth Valley	1·35	1·29	1·25	1·23	1·20
Dumfries & Galloway	1·25	1·24	1·18	1·14	1·21
Fife	1·36	1·39	1·31	1·29	1·28
Grampian	1·38	1·33	1·32	1·32	1·26
Highland	1·51	1·47	1·34	1·32	1·34
Lothian	1·25	1·23	1·20	1·17	1·21
Argyll & Clyde	1·37	1·38	1·33	1·32	1·29
Ayrshire & Arran	1·35	1·36	1·30	1·28	1·28
Greater Glasgow	1·32	1·33	1·29	1·28	1·30
Lanarkshire	1·47	1·48	1·39	1·35	1·34
Tayside	1·21	1·24	1·19	1·20	1·22
Orkney	1·44	1·31	1·23	1·15	1·24
Shetland	1·69	1·25	1·42	1·35	1·34
Western Isles	1·26	1·29	1·26	1·13	1·08

Maternity Units

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many maternity units currently serve the city of Glasgow and its environs; and what is the total maternity bed provision.

Mr. John MacKay: There are five maternity units within Greater Glasgow health board with, in the year ending 31 March 1985, a total average staffed bed number of 524.

Health Boards (Consultation)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to health boards on consultation with interested parties when any service provided by a board is proposed for withdrawal.

Mr. John MacKay: The procedures to be adopted by health boards are set out in the Scottish Home and Health Department circular 1975(GEN)46, a copy of which is being placed in the Library today.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he or his hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, last met the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. John MacKay: I last met the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board on 12 November 1985 at one of my regular meetings with all chairmen. A wide range of issues affecting the health service were discussed.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Greater Glasgow health board proposing the closure of the Stobhill hospital maternity unit; when he intends to respond; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: As yet I have received none. In due course, however, the Greater Glasgow health board will have to seek my right hon. Friend's agreement to the proposed closure.

Students (Module Fees)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish students who are being refused their national certificate by the Scottish Vocational Educational Council until they pay their module fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) on 22 November 1985 at column *330*. I have received representations from the deputy president of the National Union of Students in Scotland. I will see that the hon. Member receives a copy of my reply to the National Union of Students.

Certificate of Education

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received regarding the outcome of the 1985 Scottish certificate of education awards.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I have received 42 letters specifically related to awards received by candidates in the 1985 Scottish certificate of education examinations. In addition the 1985 SCE results have been mentioned in more general terms in correspondence about the teachers' dispute.

National Health Service (Revenue and Expenditure)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the outturn revenue spending of each area

health board in Scotland for each year from 1979-80 to 1984-85 and the budgeted revenue spending for 1985-86, all expressed in constant 1985-86 prices on the basis of the cost and price factors relevant to the National Health Service, along with indices for each year for each board's spending taking 1979-80 as 100.

Mr. Younger: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the revenue and capital expenditure in each year since 1974, expressing the figures *(a)* in money terms, *(b)* adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted by the movement of National Health Service pay and prices.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospital development schemes costing over £5 million in Scotland *(a)* completed since May 1979 and *(b)* started since May 1979, giving for each the health board, the number of beds involved, the completion date and the cost.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Hospital developments in Scotland costing more than £5 million
A—Completed since May 1979

Health Board	*Date of Completion*	*Total Cost* £ million*	*Number of beds*
Argyll and Clyde			
Merchiston Mental Handicap phase I	June 1984	6·6	120
Ayrshire and Arran			
Crosshouse	December 1982*	36·3	710
Fife			
Victoria hospital, Kirkcaldy, Whytemans Brae	March 1983	5·4	‡180
West Fife phase I	End 1984	10·5	‖ 240
Greater Glasgow			
Glasgow Royal infirmary phase I	November 1981	55·3	214
Highland			
Raigmore stage I	July 1984	¶ 30·3	600
Lothian			
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary phase I	May 1981	15·2	NIL
Royal Victoria hospital phase III	March 1985	7·0	•180
West Lothian district general hospital, Advance works	June 1984	6·8	NIL

* Total cost includes building and engineering work, fees and equipment. † Phased opened since 1980.
‡ Plus 80 day places. ‖ Plus 130 day places. ¶ Including stage II. • Plus 80 day places.

Hospital developments in Scotland costing more than £5 million
B—Started since May 1979

Health Board	*Start Date*	*Completion Date (estimated)*	*Total Cost* £ million*	*Number of beds*
Borders				
Borders District General Hospital	May 1983	May 1987	30·6	404
Forth Valley				
Falkirk Royal Infirmary	April 1984	Mid 1986	8·7	176
Stirling Royal Infirmary phase I	November 1984	1988	13·2	216
Greater Glasgow				
Leverndale Psychiatric	June 1984	August 1988	9·9	240
Highland				
Raigmore stage II	March 1978	March 1988	†30·3	92
Caithness Central	May 1983	1986	7·8	97
Lothian				
Western General phase II	January 1983	Mid 1986	11·6	144
West Lothian District General Hospital phase I	January 1983	January 1988	26·1	340

* Total cost includes building and engineering work, fees and equipment.
† Including stage I.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Decisions

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that local planning decisions taken by local authorities are overturned by his Department only in exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Tracey: Appeals against decisions on planning applications can be decided by the Secretary of State only in accordance with the provisions of section 36(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, that is, inter alia, having regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as relevant to the appeal, and to any other material considerations.

Brixton (Job Creation)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his discussions with the Greater London Enterprise Board on job creation measures for Brixton.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with the Greater London Enterprise Board on this matter.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long he expects the discussions with local authorities on the implementation of the repairs identified in the departmental report into the condition of local authority housing stock in England to last; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The report was discussed with the local authority associations during the Housing Consultative Council meeting on 27 November. It was agreed that there should be further discussions. We have not set any time limit for these.

Use Classes Order (Review)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made with the review of the use classes order under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, announced in paragraph 3.6(iii) of the White Paper "Lifting the Burden," Cmnd 9571.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Use Classes Order, which has not been substantially changed since it was first introduced in 1948, was in need of review in the light of today's conditions. As a first step, I invited a sub-group of the Property Advisory Group to undertake an urgent study of the order and to make recommendations on ways in which it needs amendment, in particular so as to reduce the number of classes to the minimum consistent with retaining effective control over changes of use which, because of their environmental consequences or relationship with other uses, need to be subject to specific control.

I am grateful to the sub-group for completing its work so promptly. In sum the recommendations propose significant changes in the present system which are designed to reduce its detailed constraints. I welcome this approach, but I will need to consider the comments of interested persons and bodies before reaching conclusions on the sub-group's detailed recommendations. I am arranging for the report to be published so that all those interested in the revision of the Use Classes Order will have the opportunity to express their views.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library. Copies are also being sent today to the local authority associations and other interested bodies with the request that they should send to the Department by 3 February 1986 any comments which they may have on the sub-group's proposals.

Water Rates

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage increase in domestic water rates in each year since 1979, respectively; and, in each case, what has been the whole increase between 1979 and 1985 in cash and real terms.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire North-East (Mr. Freud) on 21 November 1985 at column *260*.

New Houses

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the value at constant prices of new orders obtained by contractors for all new housing in the first three quarters of 1985 compared with 1984 and 1983.

Mr. John Patten: The following is the information for Great Britain at 1980 constant prices.

First three quarters

	£ million
1983	3,305
1984	3,027
1985	2,897

These values do not include orders for home improvement work.

Rented Properties

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is his intention to bring forward proposals in this Parliament to seek to encourage potential resident landlords to let.

Sir George Young: Resident landlord lettings are not subject to fair rents or to security of tenure under the Rent Act. We introduced measures in the Housing Act 1980 to assist resident landlords and we shall consider further action in the context of the legislation which we hope to introduce, probably in the next Parliament, to stimulate the supply of private rented accommodation.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the average gross return yielded by registered fair rents on the vacant possession value of privately rented properties.

Sir George Young: Information about the relationship between fair rents and capital values is collected via the "Beacons" exercise, which provides estimates of fair rents for specified dwelling types by area, together with

estimates of capital values assuming vacant possession. The results of the Beacons exercise on 1 January 1985 are published in a rent officer statistical note, RO(S)72, a copy of which is available in the Library. The mean gross return on capital values in England and Wales for the specified dwelling types varied between 3 per cent. and 4 per cent. Data for 1 July 1985 will be published shortly.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the current breakdown of the total numbers of dwellings occupied in the private rented sector including fully protected tenancies, holiday lets, lets with board, lets with attendance, lets by absent owner-occupiers and lets on licence;

(2) what is his estimate of the current numbers of dwellings occupied in the private rented sector; and what proportion of total dwellings this represents.

Sir George Young: Latest estimates of the current stock of privately rented dwellings, and the proportion this represents of the total dwelling stock, are published in Housing and Construction Statistics 1974-1984, table 9.4, a copy of which is available in the Library. This shows that the private rented sector in England is now estimated to include about 1·65 million dwellings, 8·9 per cent. of the total stock. Information enabling this estimate to be broken down according to type of lettings is not collected.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he can give any information about the change in the supply of privately rented accommodation as a result of the House of Lords' decision in Street *v.* Mountford.

Sir George Young: My Department has no information on this.

Rent Acts

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to amend the Rent Acts in the light of the House of Lords' decision in the case of Street *v.* Mountford regarding licences.

Sir George Young: The implications of this decision will be one of the matters to be taken into account when the Government consider legislation, probably in the next Parliament, to stimulate the supply of private rented accommodation.

Development Proposals

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures have been adopted to ensure that development proposals within areas which are recognised as being of sufficient importance to merit listing as special protection areas under directive 70/409 are given rigorous scrutiny.

Mrs. Rumbold: The United Kingdom obligations in relation to sites which meet the criteria for listing under the EC birds directive are covered by the site protection measures enacted in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Where development proposals affect an SSSI, the NCC must be consulted so that conservation interests can be taken into account. The NCC may ask the appropriate Secretary of State to consider determining any application which in their view may have a significant effect on the nature conservation interest of a site.

Inner City Aid

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to involve the private sector in his reform of inner city aid; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The ministerial guidelines for the urban programme indicate that local authorities should work with the private sector and should in particular consult the local private sector on the scope and content of inner area programmes as they are being drawn up. Within the urban programme, encouragement is given to economic projects, those which stimulate wealth creation, increase economic activity and employment opportunities, bring idle assets of land and buildings into use, remove obstacles to development and investment, and improve business confidence. Local authorities are also encouraged to make full use of urban development grant, which is intended to bring about private sector investment in inner urban areas.

Yorkshire Water Authority

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that the Yorkshire water authority repays its existing debt only when it falls due, and not earlier.

Mr. John Patten: No, although at present the authority is continuing to increase its indebtedness.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of charges by the Yorkshire water authority to its customers for the year 1986-87.

Mr. John Patten: The authority does not fix its charges until it makes its budget early next year but on present indications an average increase of about 9 per cent. appears likely.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy not to require the Yorkshire water authority to finance capital spending from charges to customers.

Mr. John Patten: No. Such a rule has no more general application in the public sector than it does in the private sector.

Water Authorities

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will set the external financing limits for the regional water authorities for the year 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The external finance limits I have notified (excluding MAFF grants which are additional and will be notified separately in due course) are:

	£ million
Anglian	40·5
North West	54
Northumbrian	20

	£ million
Severn Trent	2·5
South West	4
Southern	0
Thames	−85
Wessex	25
Yorkshire	32

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that water authorities should be able to raise capital to finance their capital programmes on the open market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is Government policy at present that water authorities and other nationalised industries should normally take their loan finance from the national loans fund. This has the benefit of lower costs for the public sector and the industry itself.

Glanford and Scunthorpe

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate what effect regional aid grant of three enterprise zones, his Department's special employment measures, grants and cheap loans from the European Economic Community, derelict land grants, urban aid grants and the activities of English Industrial Estates have had upon employment in the parliamentary constituency of Glanford and Scunthorpe.

Sir George Young: I will answer this question shortly.

Water Supplies (Nitrate Content)

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of water supplies exceeds the European Economic Community guidelines for nitrate content for each water authority.

Mr. John Patten: The EC drinking water directive's maximum admissable concentration for nitrate is exceeded in one or more supplies in the following water authority areas (including water companies):

Percentage of total population to area

	Per cent.
Anglian	10
Severn-Trent	5
Thames	0·4
Yorkshire	0·045

Council Houses (Rent Arrears)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest available figure for arrears of council house rents in England and Wales.

Sir George Young: Almost all the returns for English local authorities giving information on rent arrears of current and former tenants have now been made. The provisional indications are that gross rent arrears had risen to over £200 million by April 1985. They then represented 5·9 per cent. of gross rent collectable, compared to 5·1 per cent. at April 1984.

Arrears on this scale represent a scandalous and avoidable waste of resources. My Department and the Audit Commission have issued comprehensive guidance on how to deal with rent arrears. We will continue to press local authorities with significant arrears to put their affairs in order. I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for figures for Welsh local authorities.

John W. McKay

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the cable-laying ship John W. McKay is owned by the London Docklands development corporation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the annual revenue budget set aside by the London Docklands development corporation for 1986-87 and 1987-88 for maintenance and running costs in respect of the cable-laying ship John W. McKay.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 15 November at column *312*.

Housing Land Price Inflation

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the influence of housing land price inflation on the level of expenditure on *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* mortgage interest tax relief.

Mr. John Patten: The level of mortgage tax relief is determined by mortgage interest rates, tax rates, the size of mortgages raised relative to the price paid for the houses being bought, as well as by house prices. What determines the level of house prices is itself a complex matter and the cost of land is only one component.

The connection between the price of housing land and expenditure on housing benefit is even more tenuous. This is particularly so because most housing benefit is paid to tenants or residents of dwellings which are long established and for which current land prices are not a relevant consideration: capital expenditure by local authorities on land for new building is much smaller than their expenditure on their existing houses and flats.

No reliable estimate can therefore be made of how far movements in the price of housing land have influenced expenditure on housing benefit or the amount of tax relief on mortgage interest.

Empty Dwellings

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the percentage of empty dwellings in *(a)* the public sector, *(b)* the voluntary sector, *(c)* the private sector and *(d)* those owned and controlled by Her Majesty's Government, giving the numbers represented by the percentage.

Mr. John Patten: I will answer this question shortly.

Departmental Appointments

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointees and the number of these who are women.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Secretary of State for the Environment makes appointments to the bodies listed in this Department's entry in the HMSO publication "Public

Bodies 1984"—a copy of which is in the Library and which gives information on membership — with the following exceptions:

Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas
Commons Commissioners
Development Commission
Local Valuation Panels for England
National Heritage Memorial Fund
Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments
Royal Fine Art Commission

The Commission on Energy and the Environment has now been wound up.

In addition, he makes appointments to:

	Total number of Appointees	*Women*
Architectural heritage fund	5	1
Building research establishments visitors panel	15	Nil
Committee of inquiry into the handling of geographic information	10	Nil
Committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business	5	1
Dartmoor steering group	1	Nil
Imperial War Museum	1	Nil
London & Metropolitan Government Staff Commission	5	2
National House Building Council	1	Nil
National Parks planning boards and committees (7)	62	15
Ordnance Survey Advisory Board	5	Nil
Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England	1	Nil
Residuary bodies (7)	42	Nil
Sutton housing trust	4	1

In addition there are numerous Departmental working committees on which non-civil servants are invited by the Department to serve jointly with officials. Detailed information on these Committees could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what meetings he has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementations of those parts of the Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and what future plans he has for such meetings;

(2) what steps he is taking to evaluate the success of those parts of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, which calls for the collection of timely and reliable statistics on the situation of women;

(4) whether he will establish a special office within his Department to monitor periodically and accelerate the process of equitable representation of women as called for in paragraph 88 of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department of the Environment is already reviewing its policies and procedures to ensure equality of opportunity for women in the Department. A joint committee of management and trade unions was set up in 1984 to consider such matters as recruitment, promotion, training and flexible working patterns; its work continues. Equal opportunity officers have already been appointed to oversee progress in this area. The Department of the Environment is also participating in further service-wide work on this subject including the creation of the necessary data-base, which should go a long way to meeting the recommendation in paragraph 88 of the strategies document.

As to equal opportunities in the environment field generally, the Department of the Environment is studying the text of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women and will be considering with other Government Departments and the Equal Opportunities Commission how best to take its conclusions forward.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the local authorities in England owning more than 40,000 dwellings, indicating the number for each authority;

(2) if he will list the numbers of housing authorities in England owning *(a)* between 20,000 and 30,000 dwellings and *(b)* between 30,000 and 40,000 dwellings.

Mr. John Patten: The authorities are listed below, with the numbers of their dwellings reported to my Department in their 1985 housing investment programme returns or 1985 subsidy claim forms.

Local authority dwelling stock—England

Local authority	*Number of dwellings at 1 April 1985*
Local authorities owning 20,001 to 30,000 dwellings	
Croydon	20,231
Ealing	20,318
Hounslow	20,406
St. Helens	20,438
Waltham Forest	20,600
Derby	21,100
Enfield	*21,239
Tameside	21,287
Brent	21,615
Southampton	21,844
Rochdale	21,866
Plymouth	22,410
Westminster	23,163
Portsmouth	*23,471
Norwich	23,541
Wirral	25,001
Haringey	*25,342
Coventry	25,519
Bolton	26,193
Oldham	26,251
Knowsley	26,516
North Tyneside	29,006
Stoke-on-Trent	29,217
Local authorities owning 30,001 to 40,000 dwellings	
South Tyneside	30,544
Newham	31,098
Barnsley	31,630
Barking and Dagenham	33,161
Camden	33,900
Wigan	33,983
Leicester	34,401
Rotherham	34,638
Doncaster	34,755

Local authority	Number of dwellings at 1 April 1985
Kirklees	36,060
Gateshead	36,157
Dudley	36,930
Greenwich	37,014
Bradford	37,721
Walsall	38,750
Wandsworth	38,986
Local authorities owning over 40,000 dwellings	
Wolverhampton	40,408
Islington	41,138
Bristol	42,082
Lewisham	42,207
Salford	42,502
Greater London Council	43,680
Wakefield	44,970
Hackney	45,807
Sunderland	45,872
Nottingham	45,919
Kingston upon Hull	46,730
Newcastle upon Tyne	47,037
Lambeth	48,850
Sandwell	56,046
Southwark	62,376
Liverpool	*66,884
Sheffield	91,681
Leeds	93,004
Manchester	*99,098
Birmingham	121,519

* Figure from subsidy claim form, including dwellings owned outside the authority's area.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of empty council properties in each of the 13 districts in Hampshire on 31 October.

Sir George Young: Information for 31 October is not available. The numbers of their dwellings within their own areas, which were vacant at 1 April 1985 were included in the authorities' housing investment programme returns and are listed in col A 81 of the "HIP1 (1985) all items print" which is available in the Library.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has for each housing authority in England as to the number of dwellings classed as difficult to let, indicating the percentage this figure represents of the authority-owned stock; and what are the changes in these figures compared with 1984.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns include numbers of dwellings owned within their own areas, which they class as difficult to let. Numbers reported are not necessarily comparable as authorities' criteria may differ. The total for England at 1 April 1985, including estimates for those councils which did not provide a figure, was about 320,000, 7·1 per cent. of the stock, and was 10,000 fewer than the estimate for a year earlier. The figures for each authority are as follows:

Difficult to let local authority dwellings—England

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
REGION—NORTH (EXCLUDING CUMBRIA)			
Tyne and Wear			
Gateshead	942	2·61	−1,829
Newcastle upon Tyne	4,014	8·53	100
North Tyneside	4,182	14·42	−92
South Tyneside	1,072	3·51	133
Sunderland	3,369	7·34	−425
Cleveland			
Hartlepool	324	2·82	124
Langbaurgh	1,150	6·61	200
Middlesbrough	262	1·44	−108
Stockton-on-Tees	890	4·67	−385
Durham			
Chester-le-Street	91	1·21	6
Darlington	0	0·00	0
Derwentside	0	0·00	0
Durham	328	2·85	−6
Easington	586	3·07	542
Sedgefield	56	0·37	−250
Teesdale	14	1·06	4
Wear Valley	505	6·12	−17
Northumberland			
Alnwick	136	4·49	0
Berwick-upon-Tweed	0	0·00	0
Blyth Valley	305	3·02	0
Castle Morpeth	0	0·00	0
Tynedale	0	0·00	0
Wansbeck	539	5·59	−52
	18,765		−2,055

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
REGION—YORKS & HUMBERSIDE			
South Yorkshire			
Barnsley	6,008	18·99	−6·7
Doncaster	7,070	20·34	−475
Rotherham	2,500	7·22	0
Sheffield	4,437	4·84	−763
West Yorkshire			
Bradford	1,550	4·11	0
Calderdale	1,776	11·17	720
Kirklees	3,050	8·46	50
Leeds	7,663	8·24	605
Wakefield	N A	N A	N A
Humberside			
Boothferry	0	0·00	0
Cleethorpes	0	0·00	0
East Yorkshire	0	0·00	0
Glanford	0	0·00	0
Great Grimsby	700	8·40	0
Holderness	51	2·00	0
Kingston upon Hull	603	1·29	−207
Scunthorpe	300	3·23	−50
The E. Yorks. Bgh of Beverley	79	1·45	−6
North Yorkshire			
Craven	0	0·00	0
Hambleton	0	0·00	0
Harrogate	0	0·00	0
Richmondshire	0	0·00	0
Ryedale	0	0·00	0
Scarborough	650	8·66	0
Selby	0	0·00	0
York	545	5·10	−112
	36,982		−855
REGION—EAST MIDLANDS			
Derbyshire			
Amber Valley	20	0·26	0
Bolsover	124	1·46	−90
Chesterfield	300	2·18	−84
Derby	2,739	12·98	250
Erewash	527	6·16	0
High Peak	519	8·30	−21
North East Derbyshire	121	1·08	−63
South Derbyshire	0	0·00	0
West Derbyshire	0	0·00	0
Leicestershire			
Blaby	0	0·00	0
Charnwood	0	0·00	0
Harborough	0	0·00	0
Hinckley and Bosworth	0	0·00	0
Leicester	1,784	5·19	−2,100
Melton	20	0·71	0
North West Leicestershire	0	0·00	0
Oadby and Wigston	0	0·00	0
Rutland	0	0·00	0
Lincolnshire			
Boston	60	1·02	0
East Lindsey	156	2·59	−9
Lincoln	600	5·71	0
North Kesteven	156	2·95	−2
South Holland	436	7·79	0
South Kesteven	0	0·00	−24
West Lindsey	149	2·99	17
Northamptonshire			
Corby	0	0·00	−315
Daventry	0	0·00	0

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
East Northamptonshire	0	0·00	0
Kettering	10	0·16	0
Northampton	907	4·93	512
South Northamptonshire	6	0·13	0
Wellingborough	0	0·00	0
Nottinghamshire			
Ashfield	736	6·82	−154
Bassetlaw	150	1·47	4
Broxtowe	210	3·06	−56
Gedling	132	2·22	−37
Mansfield	905	8·47	0
Newark and Sherwood	180	2·18	0
Nottingham	1,952	4·25	−380
Rushcliffe	0	0·00	0
	12,899		−2,552
REGION—EASTERN			
Bedfordshire			
Luton	0	0·00	0
Mid-Bedfordshire	0	0·00	0
North Bedfordshire	0	0·00	0
South Bedfordshire	0	0·00	0
Buckinghamshire			
Aylesbury Vale	0	0·00	0
Chiltern	48	0·93	−6
Milton Keynes	9	0·13	3
South Bucks	26	0·70	26
Wycombe	0	0·00	0
Cambridgeshire			
Cambridge	0	0·00	0
East Cambridgeshire	66	1·30	−7
Fenland	160	2·86	0
Huntingdonshire	0	0·00	0
Peterborough	2,220	22·39	2,220
South Cambridgeshire	0	0·00	0
Essex			
Basildon	450	7·48	0
Braintree	0	0·00	0
Brentwood	0	0·00	0
Castle Point	6	0·24	−1
Chelmsford	74	0·74	0
Colchester	0	0·00	0
Epping Forest	0	0·00	−373
Harlow	609	3·41	109
Maldon	64	2·52	0
Rochford	N/A	N/A	N/A
Southend-on-Sea	0	0·00	0
Tendring	0	0·00	0
Thurrock	110	0·69	−290
Uttlesford	0	0·00	0
Hertfordshire			
Broxbourne	0	0·00	0
Dacorum	420	2·53	4
East Hertfordshire	0	0·00	0
Hertsmere	173	2·13	0
North Hertfordshire	0	0·00	0
St. Albans	0	0·00	0
Stevenage	400	2·83	66
Three Rivers	0	0·00	0
Watford	0	0·00	0
Welwyn Hatfield	0	0·00	0
Norfolk			
Breckland	160	2·08	18
Broadland	0	0·00	−12
Great Yarmouth	2,110	26·35	2,110
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	374	3·83	128

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
North Norfolk	0	0·00	0
Norwich	1,667	7·08	−61
South Norfolk	75	1·25	0
Suffolk			
Babergh	50	0·95	−6
Forest Heath	0	0·00	−10
Ipswich	0	0·00	0
Mid Suffolk	0	0·00	0
St. Edmundsbury	343	3·76	−30
Suffolk Coastal	47	0·77	−9
Waveney	6	0·09	0
	9,667		3,879
REGION—LONDON			
Greater London			
Greater London Council	N/A	N/A	N/A
City of London	0	0·00	0
Barking and Dagenham	3,000	9·05	0
Barnet	0	0·00	−326
Bexley	36	0·32	0
Brent	5,435	25·14	435
Bromley	0	0·00	0
Camden	4,450	13·13	−300
Croydon	845	4·18	−15
Ealing	1,000	4·92	0
Enfield	1,261	6·32	0
Greenwich	7,000	18·91	0
Hackney	6,500	14·19	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	3,219	16·99	1,400
Haringey	1,550	6·41	0
Harrow	54	0·63	54
Havering	692	4·12	−108
Hillingdon	0	0·00	0
Hounslow	3,000	14·70	−500
Islington	8,500	20·66	1,900
Kensington and Chelsea	502	6·65	0
Kingston upon Thames	89	1·33	0
Lambeth	17,350	35·52	−650
Lewisham	7,000	16·58	0
Merton	0	0·00	0
Newham	0	0·00	−396
Redbridge	590	5·20	0
Richmond upon Thames	1,100	12·09	0
Southwark	14,000	22·44	0
Sutton	0	0·00	0
Tower Hamlets	2,500	13·39	0
Waltham Forest	3,000	14·56	−347
Wandsworth	7,575	19·43	0
Westminster City of	0	0·00	0
	100,248		1,147
REGION—SOUTH EASTERN			
Berkshire			
Bracknell	25	0·24	25
Newbury	0	0·00	0
Reading	162	1·65	−40
Slough	0	0·00	−5
Windsor and Maidenhead	149	1·94	0
Wokingham	0	0·00	−28
East Sussex			
Brighton	443	3·91	−17
Eastbourne	343	6·67	−6
Hastings	0	0·00	0
Hove	68	1·49	−27
Lewes	136	3·06	136
Rother	175	4·28	−2
Wealden	0	0·00	0

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
Hampshire			
Basingstoke and Deane	0	0·00	0
East Hampshire	0	0·00	0
Eastleigh	0	0·00	0
Fareham	0	0·00	0
Gosport	0	0·00	0
Hart	0	0·00	0
Havant	0	0·00	0
New Forest	99	1·36	−60
Portsmouth.	200	1·33	−406
Rushmoor	122	2·19	122
Southampton	0	0·00	0
Test Valley	0	0·00	0
Winchester	0	0·00	0
Isle of Wight			
Medina	3	0·09	3
South Wight	0	0·00	0
Kent			
Ashford	684	7·71	239
Canterbury	114	1·56	42
Dartford	0	0·00	0
Dover	530	6·66	−70
Gillingham	0	0·00	0
Gravesham	0	0·00	0
Maidstone	248	2·78	−36
Rochester upon Medway	0	0·00	0
Sevenoaks	250	3·25	0
Shepway	9	0·20	9
Swale	568	6·64	−32
Thanet	0	0·00	0
Tonbridge and Malling	0	0·00	0
Tunbridge Wells	0	0·00	0
Oxfordshire			
Cherwell	150	1·78	0
Oxford	55	0·65	0
South Oxfordshire	174	2·23	0
Vale of White Horse	20	−0·31	5
West Oxfordshire	0	0·00	0
Surrey			
Elmbridge	491	8·07	−45
Epsom and Ewell	0	0·00	0
Guildford	0	0·00	−80
Mole Valley	0	0·00	0
Reigate and Banstead	0	0·00	0
Runnymede	0	0·00	0
Spelthorne	0	0·00	0
Surrey Heath	0	0·00	0
Tandridge	1	0·02	1
Waverley	0	0·00	0
Woking	0	0·00	0
West Sussex			
Adur	219	5·39	0
Arun	0	0·00	0
Chichester	0	0·00	0
Crawley	0	0·00	0
Horsham	0	0·00	0
Mid Sussex	58	1·16	−79
Worthing	2	0·06	−6
	5,498		−357
REGION—SOUTH WEST			
Avon			
Bath	0	0·00	0
Bristol	0	0·00	0
Kingswood	0	0·00	0
Northavon	0	0·00	0
Wansdyke	0	0·00	0

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
Woodspring	250	2·80	−50
Cornwall			
Caradon	0	0·00	0
Carrick	0	0·00	0
Isles of Scilly	0	0·00	0
Kerrier	0	0·00	0
North Cornwall	0	0·00	0
Penwith	0	0·00	0
Restormel	0	0·00	0
Devon			
East Devon	11	0·18	0
Exeter	0	0·00	0
Mid Devon	0	0·00	0
North Devon	0	0·00	0
Plymouth	0	0·00	0
South Hams	0	0·00	8
Teignbridge	0	0·00	0
Torbay	0	0·00	0
Torridge	0	0·00	0
West Devon	0	0·00	0
Dorset			
Bournemouth	0	0·00	0
Christchurch	209	11·73	−2
North Dorset	16	0·46	16
Poole	0	0·00	0
Purbeck	0	0·00	0
West Dorset	0	0·00	0
Weymouth and Portland	0	0·00	0
Wimborne	0	0·00	0
Gloucestershire			
Cheltenham	0	0·00	0
Cotswold	0	0·00	−20
Forest of Dean	12	0·22	0
Gloucester	0	00·0	0
Stroud	76	1·00	−9
Tewkesbury	194	4·54	0
Somerset			
Mendip	33	0·50	33
Sedgemoor	150	2·23	0
South Somerset	0	0·00	0
Taunton Deane	628	7·25	5
West Somerset	0	0·00	0
Wiltshire			
Kennet	0	0·00	0
North Wiltshire	20	0·26	9
Salisbury	2	0·02	0
Thamesdown	601	4·17	−6
West Wiltshire	0	0·00	0
	2,202		−32
REGION—WEST MIDLANDS			
West Midlands			
Birmingham	18,150	14·94	150
Coventry	3,661	14·35	—823
Dudley	741	2·01	−37
Sandwell	1,808	3·23	−359
Solihull	246	1·48	−132
Walsall	7,000	18·06	600
Wolverhampton	2,572	6·37	−828
Hereford and Worcester			
Bromsgrove	0	0·00	0
Hereford	274	5·29	274
Leominster	57	2·70	0
Malvern Hills	200	3·53	0
Redditch	629	6·20	345

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
South Herefordshire	0	0·00	0
Worcester	600	9·14	−30
Wychavon	0	0·00	0
Wyre Forest	225	2·84	−77
Shropshire			
Bridgnorth	0	0·00	0
North Shropshire	125	3·43	−139
Oswestry	0	0·00	0
Shrewsbury and Atcham	316	4·38	−19
South Shropshire	86	4·46	2
The Wrekin	250	2·20	−50
Staffordshire			
Cannock Chase	1,085	12·24	0
East Staffordshire	0	0·00	0
Lichfield	150	2·35	0
Newcastle-under-Lyme	1,000	8·08	1,000
South Staffordshire	0	0·00	0
Stafford	300	3·54	0
Staffordshire Moorlands	0	0·00	0
Stoke-on-Trent	2,000	6·85	0
Tamworth	271	3·45	0
Warwickshire			
North Warwickshire	40	0·82	0
Nuneaton and Bedworth	267	2·83	0
Rugby	0	0·00	0
Stratford-on-Avon	0	0·00	−30
Warwick	152	1·89	−10
	42,205		−163
REGION—NORTH WEST (INCLUDING CUMBRIA)			
Greater Manchester			
Bolton	2,271	8·67	−4
Bury	210	1·79	0
Manchester	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oldham	1,730	6·59	−336
Rochdale	6,084	27·82	1,047
Salford	6,572	15·46	−507
Stockport	1,486	8·92	−164
Tameside	1,174	5·52	0
Trafford	955	6·66	0
Wigan	5,411	15·92	82
Merseyside			
Knowsley	1,845	6·96	−351
Liverpool	16,642	26·23	−6,378
St. Helens	450	2·20	0
Sefton	2,381	13·09	−392
Wirral	1,030	4·12	180
Cheshire			
Chester	900	10·36	90
Congleton	0	0·00	0
Crewe and Nantwich	74	0·86	−141
Ellesmere Port and Neston	0	0·00	0
Halton	470	4·77	−68
Macclesfield	503	5·84	0
Vale Royal	0	0·00	0
Warrington	1,316	9·97	80
Cumbria			
Allerdale	352	5·39	0
Barrow-in-Furness	0	0·00	0
Carlisle	0	0·00	0
Copeland	218	3·32	−2
Eden	0	0·00	0
South Lakeland	0	0·00	0
Lancashire			
Blackburn	2,452	17·44	−297

	Local authority difficult to let dwellings at 1 April 1985	Difficult to let as percentage of local authority stock	Change in difficult to let stock in 12 months to 1 April 1985
Blackpool	0	0·00	0
Burnley	1,511	20·57	−49
Chorley	131	2·99	−435
Fylde	0	0·00	0
Hyndburn	20	0·43	−2
Lancaster	541	9·59	0
Pendle	903	17·15	−229
Preston	387	3·37	−161
Ribble Valley	0	0·00	0
Rossendale	672	11·09	−2,128
South Ribble	0	0·00	0
West Lancashire	681	6·03	590
Wyre	0	0·00	0
	59,372		−9,595

N/A=Not available.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the percentage of those registered as unemployed who were single, widowed or separated women or women with dependent children under the age of 16 years in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The labour force survey showed that about 19 per cent. of those in the unemployment count in Great Britain in the spring of 1984 were single, widowed, divorced or separated women, including some 3·5 per cent. who had dependent children aged under 16. Corresponding estimates for 1983 are 18 per cent. and 2·5 per cent., respectively. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Mr. Foulkes: asked the Paymaster General if he will list all changes which have occurred in the method of compiling employment, unemployment and vacancy statistics since 1979; and if he will estimate the quantitative change in those statistics which has occurred as a result.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dormand asked the Paymaster General what is the number and percentage of unemployed persons in the northern region in each of the years from 1979 to the latest available date in 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The figures are adjusted for discontinuities and are consistent for all the years shown. They are the numbers of unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, in the northern region at October of each year from 1979 to 1985.

	Number	Percentage rate
October 1979	99,900	7·3
October 1980	135,900	10·1
October 1981	182,500	14·0
October 1982	199,100	15·4
October 1983	210,800	16·7
October 1984	224,300	17·8
October 1985	227,500	18·1

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate for each regional area, Scotland and Wales and in total, the number of jobs in *(a)* banking, insurance and finance, *(b)* public administration and defence, *(c)* wholesale distribution, hotels and catering, *(d)* education, health and social services and *(e)* construction in June 1979, December 1982 and June 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures for the regions, categories and dates specified are in the following table. Separate regional statistics are not available for social services employees which are included in the education, health and other services grouping.

Employees in employment

	Banking, insurance and finance	Public administration and defence	Wholesale distribution, hotels and catering	Education, health and other services	Construction
South East					
June 1979	808,000	728,000	692,000	1,442,000	364,000
December 1982	868,000	658,000	706,000	1,470,000	322,000
June 1985	950,000	670,000	772,000	1,540,000	305,000
Greater London (included in South East)					
June 1979	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
December 1982	578,000	368,000	371,000	662,000	151,000
June 1985	627,000	373,000	381,000	672,000	142,000
East Anglia					

	Banking, insurance and finance	Public administration and defence	Wholesale distribution, hotels and catering	Education, health and other services	Construction
June 1979	42,000	55,000	64,000	126,000	41,000
December 1982	45,000	50,000	66,000	129,000	35,000
June 1985	52,000	50,000	83,000	140,000	33,000
South West					
June 1979	108,000	127,000	189,000	317,000	86,000
December 1982	114,000	120,000	165,000	320,000	78,000
June 1985	126,000	118,000	206,000	342,000	76,000
West Midlands					
June 1979	115,000	169,000	183,000	326,000	102,000
December 1982	126,000	155,000	179,000	313,000	84,000
June 1985	142,000	159,000	202,000	305,000	73,000
East Midlands					
June 1979	71,000	132,000	122,000	218,000	71,000
December 1982	78,000	111,000	119,000	227,000	61,000
June 1985	90,000	103,000	127,000	241,000	59,000
Yorkshire and Humberside					
June 1979	98,000	131,000	175,000	347,000	108,000
December 1982	108,000	127,000	172,000	346,000	87,000
June 1985	120,000	128,000	193,000	337,000	78,000
North West					
June 1979	158,000	220,000	226,000	466,000	135,000
December 1982	171,000	216,000	230,000	456,000	110,000
June 1985	192,000	223,000	244,000	477,000	97,000
North					
June 1979	57,000	99,000	104,000	215,000	84,000
December 1982	60,000	86,000	94,000	215,000	59,000
June 1985	64,000	83,000	98,000	222,000	46,000
Wales					
June 1979	44,000	114,000	87,000	187,000	61,000
December 1982	48,000	109,000	77,000	188,000	48,000
June 1985	53,000	107,000	84,000	198,000	44,000
Scotland					
June 1979	123,000	177,000	197,000	396,000	157,000
December 1982	131,000	171,000	181,000	413,000	128,000
June 1985	144,000	172,000	207,000	425,000	114,000
Great Britain					
June 1979	1,624,000	1,952,000	2,039,000	4,041,000	1,211,000
December 1982	1,749,000	1,802,000	1,990,000	4,077,000	1,012,000
June 1985	1,934,000	1,814,000	2,217,000	4,227,000	926,000

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer of 28 November, *Official Report*, column 399, on unemployment statistics, he will now publish *(a)* figures of the numbers of those unemployed for over 12 months in April 1979 in the area which corresponds as closely as practicable to the present Dudley and Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall travel-to-work areas and *(b)* the percentage increases between April 1979 and October 1985 in the numbers of those unemployed for over 12 months in the United Kingdom and west midlands, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: In April 1979, there were 8,164 people, who had been unemployed over 12 months, registered at jobcentres within the Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas as defined in 1978. The following table gives the available information for the United Kingdom and west midlands.

Unemployed—Over 12 months

	United Kingdom	West Midlands
Unemployed Registrants		
April 1979	366,711	34,154
October 1982	1,169,558	155,741
Percentage increase	+219 per cent.	+356 per cent.
Unemployed Claimants		
October 1982	989,306	129,706
April 1983	1,143,436	154,460
Percentage increase	+15·6 per cent.	+19·1 per cent.
April 1983	1,143,439	154,460
October 1983	1,142,874	152,423

Comparisons over this period are affected by the provisions in the 1983 Budget, which removed 160,000 people, overall from the count, some 18,700 in the west midlands.

October 1983	1,142,874	152,423
October 1985	1,351,857	164,848
Percentage increase	+18·3 per cent.	+8·2 per cent.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to collect information about how many registered disabled people are in employment in any given month.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At present I have no plans to do so.

Employment Protection

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Paymaster General whether he will seek to amend the law in Scotland so as to protect the employment of employees of a company that has been bought by another company.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Existing law in Great Britain provides adequate protection for such employees.

Advancement of Women

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to institute programmes that would inform women workers of their rights under legislation and other remedial measures as set out in paragraph 72 of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A comprehensive range of Government booklets explaining individuals' employment rights, including those of special significance to women, can be obtained free of charge through this Department's offices or where appropriate from the Equal Opportunities Commission. The commission itself does valuable publicity work. In particular, it publishes a series of leaflets called "Sex Discrimination Decisions" which present case law in an accessible fashion; and its code of practice which was approved by the House this year contains useful guidance on the steps which employers and others may need to take to comply with the Sex Discrimination Act.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General (1) what steps he is taking to promote the occupational desegregation of women and men, as called for in paragraph 137 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women;

(2) what steps he is taking to evaluate those parts of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government are fully committed to eliminating sex discrimination in employment and are promoting women's entry into non-traditional occupations by a variety of means. For example, we are encouraging employers to observe the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice; we have designated 27 training bodies this year under section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act to run women-only courses in such skills as engineering and management, bringing the total of designations since 1975 to 120; and we have given encouragement and financial support to the women into science and engineering (WISE) campaign. Women are encouraged to consider the full range of Manpower Services Commission training opportunities, and the MSC funds pump-priming projects within industry to demonstrate to employers the benefits of developing female employees for a wider range of jobs. We recognise that additional barriers need to be tackled early in working life and efforts are being made to overcome sex-stereotyping in the youth training scheme and technical and vocational education initiative. Programmes are systematically invaluated to assess their effectiveness and we also take note of the results of the annual labour force survey and other surveys in assessing the advancement of women in the labour market.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what meetings he has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and what future plans he has for such meetings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My colleagues and I frequently meet the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss women's employment and training issues, the last occasion being on 28 November at our advisory committee on women's employment. I am also meeting Lady Platt this afternoon to discuss the Government's proposals to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and expect to continue to meet her frequently in the future.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, which calls for the collection of timely and reliable statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's regular statistical series and special feature articles on labour market topics, which are published in *Employment Gazette*, normally quote separate figures for men and women. The Department also commissioned the wide-ranging women and employment survey. The annual labour force surveys and general household surveys are also major sources of statistics relating to the situation of women.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General whether he will establish a special office within his Department to monitor periodically and accelerate the process of equitable representation of women as called for in paragraph 88 of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am fully committed to increasing the representation of women on bodies to which this Department makes appointments. I wrote to the CBI and TUC earlier this year urging them to identify and put forward a larger number of female candidates and have also been in touch with the chairmen of ACAS, the Health and Safety Commission, the Manpower Services Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission on this subject. I am monitoring progress, and I wrote to the EOC last month giving the latest figures of female appointees to public bodies sponsored by this Department.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to implement paragraph 162 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategy for the advancement of women relating to measures to enhance the occupational health and safety of women in areas where women predominate or work with the new technologies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as is

reasonably practicable, that the work place is safe and without risk to health. Employers must take account of individual needs and capabilities in making health and safety arrangements. The Health and Safety Commission takes into account any special needs of women when developing legislative proposals.

Parental Leave

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to ensure that parental leave following the birth of a child should be available to both women and men as set out in paragraph 140 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government believe that negotiation of voluntary arrangements for parental leave between employers and employees offers the best prospects of contributing to improved childcare while safeguarding job prospects.

Departmental Appointments

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointees and the number of those who are women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table gives the information as of 1 November 1985 in respect of bodies sponsored by the Department. Appointments of members to the employment appeal tribunal are made by Her Majesty the Queen and appointments of chairmen of industrial tribunals are made by the Lord Chancellor. Appointments to the other bodies are made either directly by my right hon. and noble Friend or by the appropriate executive body concerned.

(1) *Name of body*	(2) *Total number of appointees*	(3) *of which, females*
EXECUTIVE BODIES		
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	10	1
Community Industry Ltd	11	1
Health and Safety Commission	9	Nil
Industry Training Boards	142	6
Manpower Services Commission	10	Nil
National Dock Labour Board	14	Nil
Remploy Ltd	15	1
Wages Councils	660	112
ADVISORY BODIES		
DE bodies		
Advisory Committee on Homeworking	12	3
Advisory Committee on Women's Employment	21	17
Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal	9	Nil
Race Relations Employment Advisory Group	13	4
Retail Price Index Advisory Committee	21	3
Tripartite Steering Group on Job Satisfaction	9	Nil
Health and Safety Commission bodies		
Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens	20	3
Advisory Committee on Dangerous Substances	11	Nil
Advisory Committee on Genetic Manipulation	18	1
Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations	17	Nil
Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances	14	Nil
British Approvals Service for Electrical Equipment in Flammable Atmospheres Advisory Council	10	Nil
Certification Board for Diver Training	4	Nil
Certification of Electrical Equipment for Mining Advisory Council	5	Nil
Industry Advisory Committees	159	10
Medical Advisory Committee	17	2
Mining Qualifications Board	9	Nil
Safety in Mines Research Advisory Board	13	Nil
Manpower Services Commission bodies		
Advisory Committee on Resettlement of Ex-Regular Members of Her Majesty's Forces	12	Nil
Area Manpower Boards	932	86
Careers Materials Advisory Committee	11	6
Committees for the Employment of Disabled People	1,233	176
Manpower Services Committee for Scotland	10	1
Manpower Services Committee for Wales	10	Nil
Industrial Language Training Advisory Committee	18	2
National Advisory Council on the Employment of Disabled People	25	5
Open Tech Programme: Steering Group	19	4
Services Resettlement Committee for Scotland	7	Nil
Sheltered Employment Consultative Group	17	1
Special Employment Measures Advisory Group	13	2
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative National Steering Group	17	3
Youth Training Board	14	2
Youth Training Board Advisory Group on Content and Standards	12	Nil
TRIBUNALS		
Central Arbitration Committee	49	11
Employment Appeals Tribunal	40	6
Industrial Tribunals	2,476	455
Levy Exemption Referees	7	Nil
Panel to consider representations about Employment Agency Licences	5	1

National Communications Union

Mr. Golding asked the Paymaster General why, in view of the facts that the certification officer recorded in May that 27,827 members of the National Communications Union were contracted out of the engineering group political fund and in the ballot on maintenance of the fund 17,757 members voted against, his Department issued a press notice stating that the National Communications Union had recorded more votes against its political fund than there were members contracted out at the time of the ballot.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I made a mistake. I apologise.

Textile and Clothing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to how many people are currently employed in textile industries of each of the member countries of the EEC.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available data for most countries relate to 1983, and are given in "Employment and Unemployment 1985", page 146, published by the Statistical Office of the European Communities, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the total number of people employed in the textile industry throughout the EEC in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total labour force of the manufacturing industries of the EEC in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is given in the following table:

Employees in employment in the textile industry European Community 1974 to 1983*

	Thousand	*As percentage of employees in employment in all manufacturing industries*
1974	2,094·5	17·3
1975	1,985·2	17·0
1976	1,823·3	16·1
1977	1,807·7	16·0
1978	1,738·6	15·5
1979	1,657·7	14·8
1980	1,595·1	14·4
1981	1,494·8	14·0
1982	1,419·5	13·7
1983	1,346·7	13·3

* Excluding Greece and Luxembourg, for which figures are not available.

Source: Derived from Statistical Office of the European Communities "Employment and Unemployment 1985".

Clothing and Footwear

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what information he has to how changes in the prices of clothing and footwear in each of the last 10 years compare to changes in the retail prices index as a whole.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is as follows:

The 12-month percentage changes in the annual average indices for retail prices 1975-1984 are:

*	*RPI Clothing & Footwear*	*RPI all items*
1975	14·9	24·2
1976	11·0	16·5
1977	12·8	15·8
1978	8·6	8·3
1979	9·5	13·4
1980	9·7	18·0
1981	1·4	11·9
1982	1·1	8·6
1983	2·0	4·6
1984	−0·1	5·0
Jan-Oct 1985†	3·6	6·2

* Average 1975 compared with average 1974 etc

† Average level of price in the 10 months to October 1985 compared with corresponding period in the previous year.

Glanford and Scunthorpe

Mr. Hickmet asked the Paymaster General (1) what the unemployment figures and percentages were for the Glanford and Scunthorpe constituency in September 1983, September 1984 and September 1985, respectively;

(2) if he will give the percentage by which unemployment in the Glanford and Scunthorpe constituency has been reduced since June 1983;

(3) what trend the unemployment figures from September 1983 to September 1985 reveal for the parliamentary constituency of Glanford and Scunthorpe.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library.

The numbers of unemployed claimants in the Glanford and Scunthorpe parliamentary constituency are as follows:

	Number
September 1983*	7,701
September 1984	7,586
September 1985	7,012

* provisional.

Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Between September 1983 and September 1985 unemployment in the area fell by 689 or 8·9 per cent. Between June 1983 and October 1985 unemployment in the area fell by 782 or 10·5 per cent., but this comparison will be affected by seasonal factors.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Paymaster General what special employment measures are available in the Glanford and Scunthorpe parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Alan Clark: The current ranges of employment measures are all available to people living in the Glanford and Scunthorpe constituency:

Community Industry
Community Programme
Enterprise Allowance Scheme
Job Release Scheme
Job Splitting Scheme
Part-Time Job Release Scheme
Voluntary Projects Programme
Young Workers Scheme

Mr. Hickmet asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have been created in the Glanford and Scunthorpe constituency since June 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics. Net changes in employment can be given, but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken.

The latest available information is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 censuses of employment. In that period the number of employees employed in the area covered by the jobcentre areas of Scunthorpe and Gainsborough, of which the Glanford and Scunthorpe constituency forms part, fell by just over 17,000. More up-to-date employment figures will become available following the publication of the 1984 census of employment in the spring of 1986. A September 1984 inquiry confined to employment in the Scunthorpe and

Glanford enterprise zones showed a net increase of 160 employees since dates of designation in September 1983 and spring of 1984 respectively.

"The Sex Discrimination Act and European Community Legislation"

Mr. Millan asked the Paymaster General if he will list the bodies to which his Department's consultative document, "The Sex Discrimination Act and European Community Legislation", issued in September, was distributed for comment; why the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff was not included in the distribution; why the closing date for submission of views was fixed at 30 November; and if he will extend the date for submission of views in such a way as to allow interested trade unions a greater opportunity to make their views known.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The document was published on 19 September and was sent to the CBI, TUC, Equal Opportunities Commission and 30 other interested organisations. It was not sent to individual employers' associations or trade unions since it is our normal practice to look to the CBI and TUC to represent the interests of these bodies in the first instance. The Department issued a press release announcing the document's publication and we have since then responded to some 100 requests for copies, including one from APEX. The closing date for responses to the document was fixed at 30 November to enable us to prepare a Bill for introduction as soon as possible in the current Session of Parliament. I am willing to consider representations from APEX or other interested trade unions at any time before the legislation is passed, but I do not think it would be generally welcomed to hold up preparation of the Bill.

Childcare Services

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to implement paragraphs 228 of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relating to Government incentives to employers to provide childcare services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have approved the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice. Paragraph 43 encourages employers to

"consider with their employees whether child-care facilities are available locally or whether it would be feasible to establish nursery facilities on the premises or combine with other employers to provide them".

The code came into operation on 30 April this year. The forward looking strategies are related to goals for the advancement of women over the period 1986-2000.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Millan asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals to deal with disputes relating to rights of notice, and rights to payment in lieu of notice, on termination of employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are at present no plans to exercise the power to extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals in this way.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards development of the practice of positive discrimination in favour of young persons of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin in the private sector.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Race Relations Act 1976 does not permit positive discrimination in favour of any particular racial group. Sections 37 and 38 of the Act do permit certain forms of positive action by training bodies and employers to allow encouragement and training when a racial group is seriously under-represented in particular work. The Government are seeking to encourage greater use of these provisions as a means of reducing the level of racial disadvantage.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what evidence he has that young persons of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin get proportionately fewer jobs and stay at the bottom of the promotion ladder when in work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Research studies over recent years have shown that the racial minorities in Britain have an inferior position in the labour market. The recent Policy studies Institute publication "Racial Discrimination—17 Years After the Act" concluded that racial discrimination by employers remains as common as it was a decade ago with at least a third of employers discriminating against black jobseekers. The PSI publication "Black and White Britain" published in 1984 showed that people of Asian and West Indian origin at work tended to have jobs with lower pay and lower status than those of white workers. The 1984 labour force survey shows that unemployment rates were generally considerably higher for the ethnic minorities than whites with similar characteristics in terms of age and qualifications. For the age group 16 to 24, the survey showed that in the spring of 1984 the unemployment rate for those of Caribbean or Asian origin was about a third compared with less than a fifth for those of white ethnic origin. It is generally accepted that the best person should get a job, without discrimination. Positive action within the existing law should reduce discrimination.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) what procedures are adopted at unemployment benefit offices to ascertain whether claimants are available for work; whether he is satisfied with these procedures; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of these procedures compared with a system of compulsory registration at an employment office;

(2) how the work test operates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployed people making a claim for benefit have their availability tested for work by a direct question on the unemployment benefit claim form, and subsequently at regular signing intervals and whenever doubt arises about their availability for work.

The initial availability test requires all claimants to declare whether or not they are willing to take any full-time job which they can do. A negative reply causes the unemployment benefit office to make further detailed inquiries about the nature and conditions of the work

which an individual claimant is prepared to accept. Any doubts about the individuals' availability are then referred to the independent adjudicating authorities. In 1984, the last full year for which fugures are available, over 49,000 claims were disallowed on these grounds.

I am not fully satisfied with this availability test and its adequacy is currently being reviewed. I have recently set in hand arrangements to improve links between unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres and, following discussion with colleagues, the role played by the DHSS unemployment review officers is being strengthened.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 28 October at columns *334-35*.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many persons who were unemployed had their benefits terminated because of refusal to accept employment in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The answer is not available in the precise terms asked. The number of people who were disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit for refusing without good cause to apply for or accept suitable employment in the years 1979 to 1984 was:

	Number
1979	6,812
1980	8,227
1981	4,194
1982	2,248
1983	1,450
1984	*1,972

* Estimated.

Coal Industry

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General how the Manpower Services Commission will decide which coalfield areas will benefit from the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. joint training initiative.

Mr. Trippier: Through the NCB job and career change scheme, redundant mineworkers can apply for training at any skillcentre in Great Britain, and the NCB will also consider applications for training with training providers other than the skillcentre training agency of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General how the funds allocated to the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. joint training scheme are to be divided among coalfield areas; and how much these funds amount to.

Mr. Trippier: This is an internal matter for the National Coal Board.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General what criteria the Manpower Services Commission will use to decide the nature of the training to be carried out under the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. joint training initiative.

Mr. Trippier: The skillcentre training agency is prepared to offer training in all occupational and skill areas which it is experienced and equipped to provide. The training programme for each individual applicant to the NCB job and career change scheme is tailored to meet his/her specific experience and requirements and to reflect local labour market opportunities.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General how, in the case of the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. joint training scheme, the Manpower Services Commission proposes to ascertain market requirements for new skills.

Mr. Trippier: The MSC-NCB agreement required the skillcentre training agency to undertake appraisals for each geographical area to ensure that any training which the board may request the agency to provide relates to the needs of local labour markets.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General how many redundant miners have applied for re-training under the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. joint training scheme; and how many have received or are receiving training.

Mr. Trippier: To 31 October 1985 (the latest figure available) skillcentres had received 161 applications for training under the NCB job and career change scheme. By 31 October 1985, 74 applicants had commenced skillcentre training.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General how the Manpower Services Commission proposes to monitor the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. joint training initiative; and what criteria it will use to do so.

Mr. Trippier: Skillcentre training agency (STA) management requires all operating units to provide monthly details of NCB job and career change scheme (JACCS) activity. Through this the agency's management can monitor the level of applications received, training places offered, NCB employees in training, training courses completed, and so on.

Both STA and NCB are maintaining records of employment and further training entered by those completing JACCS training.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General if he will list the centres where training is available under the Manpower Services Commission-National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. point trading scheme, what courses are available at each centre, how many places are available on each course at each centre, the length of each course, the type of qualification gained on completion of each course and the number of places currently filled on each course.

Mr. Trippier: Through the NCB job and career change scheme, redundant mineworkers can apply for training at any skillcentre in Great Britain and the NCB will also consider applications for training with providers other than the skillcentre training agency.

Skillcentres will make available training in every occupational and skill area which they are experienced and equipped to provide.

Local Enterprise Agency Funding Scheme

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Paymaster General when details of the new local enterprise agency funding scheme will be announced.

Mr. Trippier: Details of the new support scheme for enterprise agencies in England, the local enterprise agency grants scheme, are now available. A copy of the guidance notes on the scheme has been place in the Library.

The aim of the scheme is to help promote the establishment of viable enterpirse agencies across the country, particularly through encouraging greater private sector support. Agencies will be encouraged to expand and develop their services to small businesses, and to act as the focus for local networks of people and organisations similarly committed to helping local economic growth. The private sector is making a substantial contribution to local enterprise agencies. But we are very aware that many agencies currently face considerable difficulties in obtaining sufficient private sector funding to ensure their long-term future.

The new scheme will run for five years from 1 April 1986; £2·5 million has been set aside in 1986-87. In years one and two, assistance may be available to qualifying agencies up to a maximum of £20,000. The level of grant in individual cases will be dependent on the level of private sector funding but will also take account of the agency's business plan and, to ensure that support only goes to those who require it, the overall cash income of the agency. To encourage greater private sector support, the maximum level of Government grant will be reduced in later years while at the same time the private sector funding to trigger that grant will be increased. There will be no automatic entitlement to assistance.

To qualify for support, local enterprise agencies will need to be approved under the terms of section 48 of the Finance Act 1982. Applications will have to be supported by a three-year business plan as well as a five-year funding strategy. The business plan will have to show how Government assistance will be used to extend the scope and effectiveness of their services. The business plan will also contain indicators against which the agency's performance will be monitored. Assistance in subsequent years will be subject to satisfactory performance against targets in the plan.

The Government have asked business in the community to support local enterprise agencies in developing the business plan and funding strategies and in formulating their applications.

The Government are demonstrating through this scheme their commitment to helping develop a network of viable LEAs. But the success and strength of LEAs largely stems from the private sector's support for agencies. The Government look therefore to the private sector to step up its support to local enterprise agencies and to play its part in local economic development.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Malone asked the Paymaster General what evidence is available on the longer term success of enterprise allowance scheme businesses; and what steps are taken to help those businesses prosper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Latest survey evidence shows that over three in five of those people taking advantage of the full 12 months' enterprise allowance are still trading three years after setting up in business and on average every 100 of these businesses have created 99 additional jobs. This is a very satisfactory success rate for a scheme which assists people who have been unemployed for some months to set up new businesses of their own.

People on the scheme are entitled to take advantage of free business start-up training provided by the Manpower Services Commission. They also have access to free advice and counselling from the small firms service. Some local enterprise agencies have also been providing support. Despite the success of the scheme in stimulating self-employment and new enterprises, we believe that its success could be further improved if there were a greater take-up of the training and counselling services available. I have therefore asked the Manpower Services Commission to look urgently at ways of increasing take-up. I particularly believe that local enterprise agencies can make a bigger contribution in advice and counselling for these new businesses.

DEFENCE

School Leavers

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any discussions have taken place concerning the possibility of recruiting large numbers of unemployed school leavers into the support arms of the forces.

Mr. Stanley: This possibility is not under consideration.

Nuclear Tests (Cancer)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many military personnel, representing what percentage of the task force during the Christmas Island nuclear weapons test explosions, were provided with protective clothing and respirators or alternative breathing apparatus;

(2) how many civilian personnel representing what percentage of the task force during the Christmas Islands nuclear test explosions were provided with protective clothing and respirators or alternative breathing apparatus.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Appropriate protective equipment, including the items that are referred to, was issued to all personnel, whether civilian or military, when it was needed for the duties on which they were engaged. The decision to employ protective measures was taken on the advice of health physicists. Such duties were undertaken by a very small proportion of the task force. Radiation exposures were recorded but not the issue of every item of protective equipment.

Defence Contracts

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Hatfield-Lostock division, at (i) Hatfield, and (ii) Lostock were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(2) how many employees at British Aerospace, Weybridge division, at (i) Weybridge and (ii) Woodford were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(3) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, dynamics group at (i) Bristol division, Bristol and (ii) Bristol division, Weymouth were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(4) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Bracknell division, at (i) Bracknell and (ii) Plymouth were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(5) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Weybridge division, at (i) Dunsford, (ii) Hamble and (iii) Kingston-on-Thames were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(6) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Weybridge division, at (i) Bristol, (ii) Brough and (iii) Chadderton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(7) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Warton division, at (i) Preston, (ii) Samlesbury and (iii) Warton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(8) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, civil division, at (i) Bristol, (ii) Chester, (iii) Hatfield and (iv) Prestwick were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(9) how many employees of British Electric Traction Company plc, at (i) Rediffusion Radio Systems, London and (ii) Rediffusion Simulation, Aylesbury, Brighton and Crawley were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(10) how many employees at Leyland Vehicles working on self-changing gears in Coventry were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(11) how many employees of British Leyland plc at (i) Leyland Vehicles, Preston and (ii) Leyland Vehicles, Watford, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(12) how many employees in Cambridge Electronics Industries plc, defence and electronic systems division, at Graseby dynamics in (i) Surbiton, (ii) Watford and (iii) Weybridge were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(13) how many employees in BTR plc at Dunlop, Coventry and Dunlop, Loughborough, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(14) how many employees in Cable and Wireless plc, London, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(15) how many employees at the warship building division at (i) Brooke Marine, Lowestoft, (ii) Swan Hunter, Hebburn and Wallsend and (iii) Vickers, Barrow-in-Furness were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(16) how many employees in the merchant shipbuilding and composite division at Cammell Laird, Birkenhead, and Hall Russell, Aberdeen, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(17) how many employees in British Shipbuilders at (i) Cammell Laird, Birkenhead, and (ii) Hall Russell, Aberdeen, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(18) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, space and communications division, at Bristol and Stevenage were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(19) how many employees at Marconi Secure Radio Systems, Dunfermline, Kidsgrove and Portsmouth were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(20) how many employees at Marconi Space Systems, Portsmouth, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(21) how many employees at Marconi Underwater Systems at (i) Farlington, (ii) Frimley, (iii) South Wirral, (iv) Waterlooville and (v) Wembley were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(22) how many employees at Marconi Radar Systems at (i) Chelmsford, (ii) Gateshead, (iii) Leicester and (iv) Norwich were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(23) how many employees at Marconi Instruments at (i) Dunfermline, (ii) Luton, (iii) St. Albans and (iv) Stevenage were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(24) how many employees at Marconi Defence Systems at (i) Dunfermline, (ii) Kidsgrove, (iii) Portsmouth, (iv) Stanmore and (v) Watford were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(25) how many employees at Marconi Communication Systems at (i) Chelmsford, and (ii) Witham were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(26) how many employees at Marconi Command and Control Systems, Frimley were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(27) how many employees at Marconi Easams, at (i) Camberley and (ii) Fleet were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(28) how many employees at Dowty Rotol, Gloucester, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(29) how many employees at Dowty Fuel Systems at (i) Atworth, (ii) Cheltenham and (iii) Staverton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(30) how many employees at Dowty Boulton Paul, Wolverhampton, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(31) how many employees at Dowty and Smiths Industries Controls, Cheltenham, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(32) how many employees at Dowty Group, Gresham Lion, Basingstoke, and Feltham, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(33) how many employees at Ferranti Instrumentation (i) Bracknell, (ii) Manchester and (iii) Newport Pagnell were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(34) how many employees at Ferranti Defence Systems at (i) Bellshill, (ii) Dalkeith, (iii) Dundee and (iv) Edinburgh were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(35) how many employees at Ferranti Computer Systems (i) Bracknell, (ii) Cwmbran and (iii) Stockport were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(36) how many employees at General Electric Company Avionics at (i) Basildon, (ii) Borehamwood, (iii) Rochester and (iv) Stanmore were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(37) how many employees at General Electric Company Computers at (i) Borehamwood and (ii) Dunstable were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(38) how many employees at General Electric Company electrical projects at (i) London and (ii) Rugby were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(39) how many employees at General Electric Company telecommunications at (i) Coventry, (ii) Hartlepool, (iii) Glenrothes and (iv) Pontypridd were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(40) how many employees at Paxman Diesels, Colchester, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(41) how many employees at Yarrow Shipbuilders, Glasgow, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(42) how many employees at Vauxhall Motors at (i) Ellesmere Port, (ii) Luton and (iii) Toddington were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(43) how many employees at GKN Sankey at (i) Bilston, (ii) Telford and (iii) Wolverhampton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(44) how many employees at Hunting Engineering at (i) Bedford, (ii) Bristol, (iii) Farnborough and (iv) Hoddesdon were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

Ashford Training Centre

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men, regular and reserve, of the Special Air Service Regiment have taken part in training at Ashford training centre, Templar barracks, Kent; and upon which courses.

Mr. Stanley: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on any aspects of the operations or training of special forces.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians have trained at Her Majesty's training centre, Ashford over the past five years; and upon which courses.

Mr. Stanley: Some 200 civilians have attended a wide range of intelligence and security related courses at Templer barracks, Ashford in the past five years.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men and service women, respectively, have been trained specifically in interrogation methods annually at Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent, over the past five years; and which services and units.

Mr. Stanley: Seventy-nine service men and one woman have been trained in interrogation methods at the joint services interrogation wing, Templer barracks, during the last five years. They are drawn predominately from the intelligence staffs at a variety of units of all three services, but the great majority are from the Army.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men and service women have been trained annually at Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent; and on which courses and which services.

Mr. Stanley: Templer barracks, Ashford is the headquarters of the Intelligence Corps and therefore carries out a very wide range of training ranging from drill and basic training for new recruits to courses in various aspects of intelligence. On average each year there are about 125 courses of all types attended by some 3,000 service students. These students are drawn from all three services in the following broad proportions:

	Per cent.
Royal Navy*	13
Army	78
Royal Air Force	9

* Including Royal Marines

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence upon what criteria specialist groups are chosen to receive training at Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent.

Mr. Stanley: Those trained in resistance to interrogation are all volunteers from groups who would be most vulnerable to capture in time of war. The small number of personnel who are trained in interrogation techniques are drawn from those who would require these specialist skills in war.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many service men and service women, respectively, of the Ulster Defence Regiment, regular and reserve, have taken part in training at Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent; and which courses over the past 10 years;

(2) how many members, men and women, respectively, of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, regular and reserve, have taken part in training at Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent over the past five years.

Mr. Stanley: No UDR or RUC personnel have taken part in training at the joint service interrogation wing over the past 10 years. During that period 263 UDR officers and SNCOs have attended other courses at Templer barracks in various aspects of intelligence. No detailed breakdown is available of the split between full and part-time UDR members, but the great majority would have been permanent cadre officers or SNCOs. A small number of RUC officers have also attended some courses.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many policemen and policewomen and from which forces, over the past five years have trained at the military training centre at Ashford, Kent; and upon which courses.

Mr. Stanley: Six Ministry of Defence police have attended various security courses.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of foreign and Commonwealth armed forces have trained at the Ministry of Defence Ashford training centre, Kent, over the past five years; on which courses they trained; and from which countries they came.

Mr. Stanley: In the past five years some 500 members of foreign and Commonwealth armed forces have received training in various aspects of intelligence and security at Templer barracks, Ashford. In addition, about 50 such personnel each year receive training in resistance to interrogation. This training is only available to members

of the armed forces of NATO countries and other close allies. It is not our practice to list the specific countries to which we give particular types of training.

Interrogation Resistance (Training Centres)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what other training centres such as the one known as Ashford training centre, at Templer barracks, Kent, that specialise in interrogation methods and interrogation resistance techniques exist for training members of Her Majesty's armed forces.

Mr. Stanley: The joint services interrogation wing at Templer barracks, Ashford, is the only such specialist training centre. Some continuation training in resistance to interrogation is carried out in some units.

Service Police (Training)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) where service police are trained in interrogation techniques besides Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent;

(2) how many of the Army's, the Royal Air Force's and the Royal Navy's special investigation branch trained at Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent.

Mr. Stanley: Service police and special investigation branch personnel do not train at the joint services interrogation wing, Templer barracks. The interrogation training at Ashford is quite different from the training in interviewing given to service policemen which is conducted by each of the services at, respectively, the Naval Regulating School, Portsmouth, the Royal Military Police headquarters, Chichester or one of its subsidiary establishments, and the RAF Police school, RAF Newton.

Trident

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether tests on the United Kingdom warheads for the Trident missile system will be carried out at any test site other than Nevada.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For more than 20 years United Kingdom nuclear warheads have been tested at the Nevada test site. We have no plans to conduct nuclear tests at any other site.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the cost for designing, testing and fabrication of the British-built warheads for Trident.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler), on 24 May at column 600.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the proportion of the total cost of construction of the Trident submarine which is taken up by the cost of design.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Under 10 per cent. of the estimated cost of the Trident submarine, excluding the weapons systems, will represent the cost of design and design-related activities such as prototype testing.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the mega-wattage-thermal (MWCE) of the prototype reactor being built for the Trident submarine.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This information is classified.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are working on the design and testing of the British warhead for Trident.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For reasons of security it is not our policy to reveal details of staff engaged on the defence nuclear programme.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom is building its Trident submarines to a design furnished by a United States firm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Overall responsibility for the design of our Trident submarines rests with the United Kingdom, where the great majority of the design work is being undertaken. But, as I told the hon. Member in a recent letter, it makes sense for us to adopt the same basic design as the United States for the central section of the submarine which houses the Trident D5 strategic weapon system. A contract has therefore been let to the electric boat division of General Dynamics in the United States to provide the necessary design information in this area.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the proposed terms of technical transfer rights which will be available to United Kingdom companies within the outline agreement between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government on strategic defence initiative research.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No agreement has yet been concluded. The Government are still considering the question of formal participation in SDI research.

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been made of the impact on United Kingdom research resources of participation in the United States strategic defence initiative research programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The question of British participation in SDI research is still under consideration by the Government, including the aspects referred to.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Deputy Secretaries

Mr. Arnold asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Jopling: Information on the five grade 2 posts, which include deputy secretary appointments, in my Department and the number of staff reporting to them on 1 April 1985 is as follows:

Post	*Number of Staff*
Deputy Secretary (Agricultural Commodities)	259
Deputy Secretary (Land and Resources)	3,250½
Deputy Secretary (Fisheries and Food)	1,027½
Legal Advisor and Solicitor	53½
Director General (Agricultural Development & Advisory Service)	5,176

Details of their responsibilities are set out in the Civil Service Year Book 1985 which is available in the Library of the House.

There are about 200 grades in my Department and a breakdown of staff in each grade by grade 2 commands is not readily available. There are 25 grade 3 posts. For grades 4 in the open structure and below, the numbers by grade are given in Her Majesty's Treasury's publication "Staff in Post: Civil Service: Non-Industrial Staff: Departmental Tables by Sex: Grade by Department Analysis on 1 April 1985", a copy of which is also available in the Library of the House. Similar details are not available for industrial staff of which there were 668 on 1 April 1985, mainly in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Badger Control

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the current policy of the badger control section of his Department in connection with Clouts Wood nature reserve in Wiltshire;

(2) what has been the cost in each of the last 10 years of badger control.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle have been slaughtered in each of the last five years *(a)* with symptoms of bovine tuberculosis and *(b)* as bovine tuberculosis reactors.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Brucellosis

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle were slaughtered in each of the last five years because of their having brucellosis.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional revenue he expects to be yielded in a full year by the increased charges and new charges for analytical and diagnostic services provided by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service which will have effect from 1 December; and whether this is included in the £5 million which he expects to be yielded in 1987-88 by charging for the Agricultural Development Advisory Service advisory work.

Mr. Gummer: I expect these changes to yield some £446,000 additional revenue in a full financial year. To the extent that this additional income reduces the operating deficit on the agricultural services scheme, it will contribute to the overall earnings target for ADAS in 1987-88.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to provide additional funds for the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service to cover the cost of the free analysis of hay and silage that he announced in his statement in the House on 28 November.

Mrs. Fenner: No.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of the severe weather aid for farmers that he announced in the House on 28 November will be paid to farmers in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: It is estimated that the payment to be made to farmers under the weather relief measures, amounting in total to some £16·9 million, will be distributed as follows:

	£ million
Scotland	7·8
England	3·4
Wales	1·7
Northern Ireland	4·0

Waste Disposal

Mr. O'Brien asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what study he has made of the effect of the European Economic Community directive on the dumping of waste at sea on the Yorkshire water authority's sludge disposal and the costs of finding alternative means of disposal.

Mr. Gummer: The proposal for a directive would clearly have far-reaching implications for the disposal of waste at sea. Consequently my Department is closely consulting all those who might be affected by it so that full account can be taken of their concerns before discussions on the proposal start in the new year.

Suckler Cow Premium Scheme

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now announce the changes in the rules of the suckler cow premium scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Under the existing rules of the suckler cow premium scheme as laid down by the European Commission, if a producer fails to keep for a minimum of six months at least the number of animals on which premium has been granted, he normally forfeits the premium on all his cows. We have always considered this rule to be unduly harsh and have sought to get it changed, though hitherto without success. This year, however, its operation could clearly bear particularly harshly on those farmers who, because of the particular problems caused by the bad weather, find themselves unable to maintain their herd numbers. I therefore pressed commissioner Andriessen very strongly to make a change, and I am glad to say that some modification has now been agreed. This will enable producers to notify, before 31 December, a reduction in the number of cows they have previously undertaken to retain for six months, and to qualify for premium on the lower number. This concession, which applies to the 1985 scheme only, is restricted to farmers in areas notified to the European Commission by the

Government as being affected by a shortage of fodder supplies. In this connection, we propose to notify the European Commission that we are applying the rule change to the whole of the United Kingdom with the exception of specified counties in eastern and south-eastern England.

In addition, there is at present a rule that any losses that occur in a herd within the specified six months retention period must be made good within one month; and failure to comply with this rule can involve forfeiture of premium on all a farmer's animals. We have pointed out to the Commission that this rule, too, could cause particular difficulties in the circumstances of the coming winter, and I am glad to say that this has been recognised. It has accordingly been agreed that we may take the particular circumstances into account in considering a farmer's ability to replace lost animals.

I hope that these two changes will help farmers with suckler cow herds who may have difficulties in maintaining their herd numbers through the coming winter. The Agricultural Departments will be announcing the full details of these revised arrangements.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Greece (Economic Measures)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the European Economic Community Finance Council is to consider recent economic measures taken in Greece; if there was any prior consultation about them within the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Greek economic measures, announced on 11 October, were intended to deal with balance of payments and other problems. The package contained a number of protective measures, including the introduction of an import deposit scheme, which required derogations from Greece's obligations under the EC treaty. The Greek Government informed the Commission of these measures, as required by article 109 (paragraph 2). Following discussion at its meetings on 28 October and 18 November, the EC Finance Council agreed, on a recommendation from the Commission, to grant a Community loan to Greece of 1,750 million ecu, to be made under the Community loan mechanism for balance of payments assistance provided for in Council Regulations No. 682/81 of 16 March 1981 and No. 1131/85 of 30 April 1985. The loan will be made available in two equal instalments, the second instalment to be released in the light of developments in Greece's economic situation and of the results obtained in Greece's economic recovery programme. The Commission has authorised protective measures, including the import deposit scheme, in accordance with article 108 (paragraph 3).

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the financial years 1970-71 to 1988-89 the actual or planned figures for *(a)* the public sector borrowing requirement in cash on the present definition, together with a note indicating what significant definitional changes during this period have been, *(b)* the public sector borrowing requirement in constant price terms and *(c)* the public sector borrowing requirement as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures requested are in the following table:

	PSBR £ billion cash	*PSBR £ billion 1984-85 prices**	*PSBR as percentage of GDP†*
1970-71	0·8	3·8	1·5
1971-72	1·0	4·3	1·6
1972-73	2·4	10·0	3·6
1973-74	4·3	16·6	5·8
1974-75	8·0	25·6	9·0
1975-76	10·3	26·1	9·3
1976-77	8·3	18·7	6·4
1977-78	5·4	10·6	3·6
1978-79	9·2	16·5	5·3
1979-80	10·0	15·3	4·8
1980-81	12·7	16·3	5·4
1981-82	8·6	10·1	3·3
1982-83	8·9	9·7	3·1
1983-84	9·7	10·2	3·2
1984-85	10·2	10·2	3·1
1985-86	8	7½	2¼
1986-87	7½	7	2
1987-88	7	6	1¾
1988-89	7½	6½	1¾

* The cash figures are adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices; the increases in the GDP deflator in 1985-86 onwards are as assumed in the 1985 autumn statement.

† GDP average measure at current market prices.

‡ Forecast

§ MTFS projections.

There has been only one change of definition of the PSBR since statistics for the PSBR were first published; that was to exclude public sector deposits with banks and certain other short-term assets of a similar nature, as announced in the *Official Report*, 10 February 1984, at column 808. An article in the February 1984 issue of *Economic Trends* described the change and its effects, which are small (at most about 0·25 per cent. of GDP in any year and on average much smaller).

Asset Sales

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the financial years 1970-71 to 1988-89 the actual or planned figures for *(a)* the special sales of assets programme, *(b)* sales of public sector buildings and land outside the special sales of assets programme and *(c)* the proceeds of asset sales retained within nationalised businesses.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures for special sales of assets for the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 were provided in the answer my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 25 November 1985 at column *466*. The only material receipts arising in previous years which were treated similarly were proceeds from the sale of BP shares in 1977-78, which totalled £548 million.

For information on receipts from the sale of land and buildings from 1979-80 to 1988-89, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today in reply to his other question on the same subject. Figures for years before 1976-77 are not readily available. Figures for 1976-77 to 1978-79 are as follows:

Sales of land and buildings

	£ million
1976-77	183
1977-78	304
1978-79	590

Figures for sales of assets by nationalised industries for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 were contained in answers given to the hon. Member on 26 July 1985 and 14 November 1985 at columns *861* and *275*, respectively. Information for 1988-89 will not be available until after the 1986 public expenditure White Paper is published. Directly comparable figures for years before 1979-80 are not available.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 an analysis by programme of sales of public sector land and buildings outside the special sales of assets programme, distinguishing at programme level between receipts associated with the sale of public sector housing and other items.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 November 1985 and to my letter to him of 9 September 1985 which included material for 1979-80 to 1987-88. The figures given earlier include council house sales which account for some 90 per cent. of sales of land and buildings in the housing programme. Information for 1988-89 will not be available until after the 1986 public expenditure White Paper is published.

Esal Commodities Ltd.

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will institute an inquiry into the extent to which the operations in London of the Punjab National Bank, the Union Bank of India, the Central Bank of India and Johnson Matthey Bank, in supporting the now defunct Esal Commodities Ltd., complied with the Bank of England's banking supervision guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. The Punjab National Bank, the Union Bank of India and the Central Bank of India are banks incorporated in India which operate in London through branch offices. In line with usual international practice, primary supervisory responsibility for overseas branches lies with the "parent" bank's supervisory authority—in this case the Reserve Bank of India. The report on banking supervision which was published in June (Cmnd. 9550) took full account of the implications for supervisory procedures of the operations of Johnson Matthey Bankers.

THE ARTS

Advancement of Women

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken to implement paragraph 206 of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relating to the promotion of women's cultural projects.

Mr. Luce: The report is addressed to a wide range of interests and is being widely disseminated. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 29 November 1985 at columns *707-8*.

TRANSPORT

Speed Limits

8. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate a specific publicity campaign to urge stricter observance of road speed limitations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: We are currently issuing, with excise duty reminders, some 11·5 million leaflets advising drivers of national legal speed limits. I am considering how our rolling national publicity campaign will shortly be emphasising the need to drive at a safe speed for the conditions and at a safe distance from the vehicle in front.

Channel Link

15. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains the Government's position that no public funds or guarantees will be provided for a Channel fixed link.

Mr. Ridley: As far as the link itself is concerned, yes. If the selected scheme were to include a rail element there would be commercial investment by British Rail in inland infrastructure and rolling stock for through trains; and the future roads programme will need to take account of any new traffic generated by a link.

16. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the French Minister of Transport to discuss proposals for a fixed Channel link.

Mr. Ridley: I discussed proposals for a Channel fixed link with M. Auroux, the French Minister for Town Planning, Housing and Transport, on 18 November.

21. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a preliminary indication of the date for commencing construction operations on the English Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The earliest date construction of a Channel fixed link might commence is summer 1987. Allowing for the necessary legislative procedures in the United Kingdom and in France.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the consequences for regional employment of the proposed fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The consequences of the various Channel fixed link proposals for regional employment form part of the joint Anglo-French assessment of these proposals that is currently under way.

Buses and Lorries (Speed Limits)

17. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has considered using tachograph evidence to enforce speed restriction for buses and lorries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The evidence needed to support prosecutions for speeding is a matter for chief officers of

police, but I understand there may be some legal and technical difficulties in using tachograph charts as evidence. The proposed requirement to fit coaches with speed governors will help enforce compliance with motorway speed limits.

Dartford Crossing

18. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be in a position to invite tenders for the private sector financing and construction of a new Dartford crossing.

Mr. David Mitchell: An announcement about the submission of proposals for the construction and operation of a third crossing at Dartford will be made shortly.

Rail Electrification

19. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on rail electrification schemes currently under consideration.

Mr. David Mitchell: We are considering a proposal by British Rail to electrify the line from Bournemouth to Weymouth. In addition, Lancashire county council and Greater Manchester council have asked for a grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 to enable them to finance the electrification of the line between Manchester and Blackpool. We shall reach decisions on both proposals as soon as possible.

British Rail (Corporate Plan)

20. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects next to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss British Rail's corporate plan.

Mr. Ridley: The chairman and I often discuss the strategies on which BR's corporate plan is based.

Metropolitan Areas

22. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria are used in determining the level of grants for public transport in metropolitan areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) earlier today.

Air Transport

23. **Sir Kenneth Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he discussed progress on the Commission memorandum on air transport at the recent Council of Transport Ministers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. My right hon. Friends made it quite clear that the council must agree quickly on a package of truly liberal measures. Failing this, the full rigour of the competition rules would have to be applied in practice as well as in principle.

Cyclists

24. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he intends to take to seek to increase the safety of cyclists.

Mr. Ridley: We shall decide in the light of our consultation on a wide range of issues that emerged from our conference "Ways to Safer Cycling" held earlier this year. Copies of our consultation letter and report of the conference have been placed in the Library.

32. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made concerning better road facilities for cyclists.

Mr. Ridley: Most local highway authorities are now taking cyclists' needs into account in their proposals for the construction of new highways and improvements, or have proposals for specific cycle facilities.

42. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received from cycling organisations concerning road safety.

Mr. Ridley: Cycling organisations make representations to us on a variety of road safety matters and we are currently consulting them and other bodies on the wide-ranging issues arising from our "Ways to Safer Cycling" conference earlier this year.

Docklands Light Railway

25. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the London Docklands Development Corporation concerning modifications, or extensions of, the docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department is in regular touch with the Docklands Light Railway Joint Board, which comprises representatives of London Regional Transport and the London Docklands Development Corporation. One of the matters discussed recently has been the proposal to extend the railway to the Bank. My right hon. Friend announced on 27 November that London Regional Transport had reached an understanding with the Canary Wharf consortium on underwriting finance for this extension and that they had, with his consent, introduced a Bill to provide for the works. I welcome this development.

It has been decided, in the absence of proposals for private funding, that a Bill to provide for an eastern extension to the railway should not be deposited in this Session.

Metropolitan Areas

4. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria are used in determining the level of grants for public transport in metropolitan areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: Rate Support Grant for the metropolitan counties and for the passenger transport authorities that will succeed them will depend on their GREAs and on their actual expenditure. For the first three years, the new PTAs will be constrained by precept control under the Rates Act 1984 and I am currently considering the authorities' applications for redetermination of their expenditure levels. Other grants are available for public transport capital projects under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968.

Public Transport (Grants)

26. **Mr. Allan Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the level of central Government grant for public transport during 1986-87.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received various representations and comments about the level of central Government grant for public transport in future years including 1986-87. I have also received applications from the six new metropolitan passenger transport authorities for re-determination of their expenditure levels set in accordance with the procedure for precept control under the Rates Act 1984.

Midlands Links Motorway

27. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he anticipates being able to make a decision on the selected line for the northern relief route to the Midlands links motorway.

Mr. Ridley: I hope to make an announcement on this scheme within the next few weeks.

Bus Lanes (London)

28. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the further development of bus lanes in London.

Mr. Ridley: Any new proposals for bus lanes in London should be looked at on their merits to see if they result in an overall benefit to all types of road user. I am having a study done into their assessment and I hope to issue further advice next year.

British Rail (Manning Levels)

29. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the subject of manning levels in British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. British Rail manning levels are the responsibility of the board.

Locomotive Maintenance and Construction

30. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the board's policy towards acceptance of foreign tenders or contracts for locomotive maintenance or construction.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The board's purchasing policy conforms to the Government's public purchasing initiative.

Rail Services (Standards)

31. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the subject of the standard of rail services, including inter-city services between London and Bradford.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have at present no plans to do so. I am sure that the chairman will have seen the points made by the hon. Member in the Adjournment debate on 26 November on rail services to Bradford.

Motor Cycles

33. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any representations about the efficacy of noise regulations relating to motor cycles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Department receives a large amount of correspondence about motor cycle noise and the level of enforcement of the regulations. The police can and do enforce the regulations. In 1983, the last year for which detailed statistics are currently available, there were more than 2,800 successful prosecutions for motor cycle noise offences in England and Wales.

36. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make it an offence for motor cycles to pass between moving vehicles which are less than 25 ft apart.

Mr. Ridley: Although I have a good deal of sympathy for the thinking behind my right hon. Friend's suggestion, I suspect that a measure of the kind he proposes would be difficult to draft and impossible to enforce. I believe that the key to improved rider behaviour lies primarily in ensuring that all motor cyclists receive thorough training in the use of their machines an that is why I am currently reviewing the training and testing arrangements. Apart from this, motor cycle safety continues to be a major theme within the Department's rolling publicity campaign.

EC Shipping Policy

34. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress was made at the last European Council of Ministers' meeting towards agreeing a common shipping policy.

41. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any progress was made at the recent European Economic Community Council of Transport Ministers' towards meeting the liberalisation of shipping cabotage.

Mr. Ridley: Ministers discussed four of the draft regulations proposed by the Commission, including the regulation which would extend the freedom to provide services to shipping, and instructed officials to continue their work on these draft instruments.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

35. **Mr. Watson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the conclusions from the Transport Users Consultative Committee which will be holding inquiries into the proposed closure of the Settle to Carlisle railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand the transport users' consultative committees for north western and north eastern England are planning to hold their public hearings into British Rail's proposal to close the Settle-Carlisle line in March and April 1986. I would not expect to receive their reports until the late summer at the earliest.

London Regional Transport

37. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to modify the salary of the chairman of London Regional Transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The salaries of the chairman and members of the board of London Regional Transport are under review.

Air Fares (Europe)

38. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the National Consumer Council to discuss the level of air fares in Europe.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I met representatives of the National Consumer Council on 24 April 1985 to discuss their study of European air services, and officials have had subsequent meetings. I look forward to seeing the NCC report.

St. Pancras-Sheffield Line

39. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the matter of cuts in the numbers and regularity of trains on the St. Pancras to Sheffield line.

Mr. David Mitchell: Service planning on this and other lines is for British Rail.

Local Transport (Grants)

40. **Mr. Welsh** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy with regard to the contribution of central Government grants to local public transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) earlier today. There is no difference between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in this respect.

Coaches (Safety)

43. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the safety record of coaches in the United Kingdom; and on the recent trend revealed by the relevant accident figures.

Mr. Ridley: The most recent accident involvement rates are shown below:

Bus and coach vehicle involvement rate per 100 million vehicle kilometres: 1982-84 Great Britain

	Rate per 100 million vehicle kilometres
1982	430
1983	412
1984	400

The accident report form does not differentiate between buses and coaches.

Infrastructure (Private Finance)

44. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to promote further opportunities for private sector financing and management of parts of the national infrastructure network.

Mr. Ridley: I seek always to encourage private sector initiatives for the financing and management of transport infrastructure where appropriate in the interests of efficient use of resources and improving services to consumers. For example, I suggested in evidence to the Select Committee on Transport last July that the private sector might contemplate financing the construction of a third crossing of the Thames at Dartford, and a good deal of interest has already been shown in that idea. London Regional Transport has reached an understanding, which I have endorsed, to promote private sector financing and management of the Docklands light railway. In addition, I have made it clear that the Government are prepared to facilitate a private sector cross-Channel Link, which would be the largest infrastructure project in our history.

British Airways

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much public dividend capital has been allocated to British Airways for each year since its formation; and what dividends have been paid in each year by British Airways to Her Majesty's Government in respect of public dividend capital.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information is as follows:

	Average public dividend capital during year £ million	*Gross dividend £ million*
1972-73	83·6	6·25
1973-74	132·8	8·7
1974-75	159·8	—
1975-76	240·2	—
1976-77	281·0	16·7
1977-78	290·4	—
1978-79	309·1	24·2 + *21·4
1979-80	155·4	10·0
1980-81	166·7	—
1981-82	179·7	—
1982-83	180·0	—
1983-84†	180·0	—

* In 1979, Concorde assets were written down by £135·8 million and a special dividend of £24·2 million (including advance corporation tax) was paid to the Government to take account of reductions in the dividend payment in earlier years. The corresponding amount of public dividend capital amounting to £160 million was cancelled.

† The rights, liabilities and obligations of the British Airways Board were vested in British Airways plc on 1 April 1984. The public dividend capital of £180 million held by the board was replaced by share capital of £180 million in British Airways plc held by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Tyre Tread Depths

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, during the review by his Department of tyre regulations, consideration will be given to the stricter minimum standard of tyre tread depth recommended by the Transport Committee.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. Our review of the tyre tread depth regulations has begun. When all the evidence has been received and discussions have been held with the relevant interested bodies, we will consider whether the regulations should be further amended taking into account also the recommendations of the Transport Committee.

Dartford Tunnels

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to invite the private sector to submit proposals for the provision of additional capacity at the Dartford tunnels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I shall make an announcement shortly about the terms and conditions upon which we will invite offers to construct this additional capacity.

Road Spray

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what action he intends to take to seek to obviate spray from high-speed heavy vehicles;

(2) by what date he intends all heavy vehicles to be fitted with anti-spray devices.

Mr. Ridley: In November last year we made regulations which require new lorries and existing heavy trailers to be fitted with anti-spray devices conforming to British standard BS AU 200 by various dates starting in May this year. All those falling within the scope of the regulations will have to be fitted by October 1987.

Motorway Fatalities

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents causing fatalities on motorways have resulted in the last year to date at places where the lanes have been restricted due to repair work; what was the nature of the vehicles involved; and what police patrols were on duty prior to the accidents.

Mr. Ridley: During 1984 in Great Britain, there were 19 fatal accidents on motorways (including A(M) Roads) where road works were present. The type and number of vehicles involved in these accidents were:

	Number
Two wheeled motor vehicles	3
Cars	34
Light goods vehicles	2
Heavy goods vehicles	7
Other motor vehicles	2
Coaches	0

Information concerning the presence of police patrols can only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

Derby Road, Bootle

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the proposed dualling of Derby road, Bootle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Sefton metropolitan borough council and Merseyside county council, whilst expressing support for the scheme in principle, have made representations about its impact on houses fronting Derby road. Following discussions with officers the Department is considering what additional environmental measures can be taken. No other representations have been received.

Kingsway Roundabout Flyover

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost to public funds of his visit to open the Kingsway roundabout flyover and the ensuing opening ceremony on Monday 25 November.

Mr. Ridley: The cost to public funds of my visit to open the Darlington eastern bypass and the Kingsway flyover was less than £200.

Motorway Hazards

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with measures presently in force to signpost lane restrictions and hazards on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have recently reviewed the arrangements for the signing and management of roadworks on both motorways and all-purpose trunk roads. New guidance was issued to the Department's agent authorities on 14 November. A copy of the relevant trunk road management and maintenance notice (TRMM/9/85) is in the Library. We shall continue to monitor the arrangements.

Drink-Driving Campaign

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to announce the starting date for the campaign against drink and driving for Christmas 1985, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I shall be launching on 9 December a publicity campaign on the lines set out in the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 14 November.

Highway Expenditure

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will show for each English county *(a)* the estimated highway capital expenditure in 1985-86, *(b)* the planned highway capital expenditure in 1986-87, *(c)* the proportion of planned expenditure in 1986-87 that is eligible for transport supplementary grant, *(d)* the highway structural maintenance expenditure in 1984-85, *(e)* the highway routine maintenance expenditure in 1984-85, *(f)* the estimated highway structural maintenance expenditure in 1985-86 and *(g)* the estimated highway routine maintenance expenditure in 1985-86.

Mr. Ridley: This information, taken from local authorities' transport policies and programmes, is given in the following tables.

Estimated Highway Capital Expenditure

(£ million, Cash)

	(a) *Total* *1985-86*	*(b)* *1986-87*	*(c)* *TSG Eligible* *1986-87*
Greater Manchester	26·613	27·725	27·725
Merseyside	10·886	15·042	14·227
South Yorkshire	16·219	27·791	26·598
Tyne/Wear	11·318	14·030	14·030
West Midlands	36·160	41·187	40·626
West Yorkshire	14·626	17·847	17·847
Total Metropolitans	115·822	143·622	141·053
Avon	4·025	5·974	5·764
Bedford	4·312	7·145	7·034
Berkshire	13·412	15·015	11·490
Buckingham	5·274	11·417	10·811
Cambridge	8·576	7·283	6·292
Cheshire	7·896	9·360	8·265
Cleveland	10·293	11·651	11·651
Cornwall	6·767	7·713	5·920
Cumbria	3·757	5·106	5·106
Derbyshire	5·336	12·683	12·202
Devon	12·955	13·836	11·578
Dorset	13·408	18·500	18·100
Durham	6·801	7·251	6·672
East Sussex	8·511	8·938	6·603
Essex	16·188	20·653	18·279
Gloucester	6·208	5·181	3·968
Hampshire	17·558	18·999	17·219
Herford/Worcester	6·170	10·103	8·158
Hertford	10·569	12·492	11·642

	(a) Total 1985-86	(b) 1986-87	(c) TSG Eligible 1986-87
Humberside	9·100	11·716	11·410
Isle of Wight	3·116	2·866	2·668
Kent	16·891	27·666	25·906
Lancashire	18·593	26·364	24·341
Leicester	14·309	18·130	16·990
Lincoln	4·689	5·833	4·831
Norfolk	5·914	6·477	5·655
Northampton	16·940	21·383	21·004
Northumberland	2·996	4·515	3·978
North Yorkshire	9·989	10·034	8·514
Nottingham	10·470	11·584	9·814
Oxford	5·669	8·457	6·003
Shropshire	3·704	5·507	5·077
Somerset	5·126	6·157	5·138
Stafford	12·213	15·000	14·100
Suffolk	7·646	10·059	8·559
Surrey	14·645	12·862	10·592
Warwick	3·174	5·497	5·270
West Sussex	8·683	10·361	9·838
Wiltshire	4·576	11·707	6·829
Total Shires	346·459	441·475	393·271

Notes

Columns *(a)* and *(b)* Show counties estimates of all their expenditure on highways, traffic regulation, the provision of parking places, and on depots, vehicles plant and machinery associated with their highway responsibilities. Information is from 1986-87 TPPs.

Column *(c)* Shows counties' estimates of all their expenditure on highways and the regulation of traffic, all of which is eligible for TSG. The amount of this estimated expenditure which I accept for TSG will be shown in the TSG settlement for 1986-87 which is expected to be announced before Christmas.

Estimated Highway Maintenance Expenditure (£ million cash)

	(d) 1984-85 Structural	(e) 1984-85 Routine	(d+e) Total	(f) 1985-86 Structural	(g) 1985-86 Routine	(f+g) Total
Greater Manchester	12·562	30·675	43·237	14·015	32·912	46·927
Merseyside	n.a	n.a	25·972	n.a	n.a	33·450
South Yorkshire	8·142	22·287	30·429	9·782	26·192	35·974
Tyne and Wear	5·756	19·052	24·808	7·500	18·300	25·800
West Midlands	21·156	28·703	49·859	n/a	n/a	56·353
West Yorkshire	3·048	31·490	34·538	3·037	42·758	45·795
Total Metropolitans			208·843			244·299
Avon	3·520	11·780	15·300	4·760	14·190	18·950
Bedfordshire	4·864	4·689	9·553	6·700	5·039	11·739
Berkshire	·184	9·298	9·482	·198	10·004	10·202
Buckinghamshire	2·987	7·804	10·791	3·288	8·592	11·880
Cambridgeshire	2·563	7·226	9·789	2·491	7·296	9·787
Cheshire	7·500	8·875	16·375	10·665	9·435	20·100
Cleveland	9·492	2·227	11·719	13·438	3·152	16·590
Cornwall	4·387	7·471	11·858	4·718	8·032	12·750
Cumbria	1·783	10·097	11·880	2·889	10·616	13·505
Derbyshire	1·100	13·120	14·220	1·125	13·996	15·121
Devon	4·301	20·860	25·161	4·690	22·109	26·799
Dorset	6·013	6·621	12·634	6·797	7·103	13·900
Durham	4·498	8·353	12·851	4·753	8·828	13·581
East Sussex	2·762	7·032	9·794	3·727	8·211	11·938
Essex	9·416	15·673	25·089	11·081	18·445	29·526
Gloucester	·383	9·918	10·301	·400	9·943	10·343
Hampshire	9·249	13·200	22·449	9·773	13·950	23·723
Herefordshire/Worcestershire	4·010	7·980	11·990	6·908	8·436	15·344
Hertfordshire	4·891	10·929	15·820	5·788	12·934	18·722
Humberside	7·206	11·757	18·963	7·666	12·507	20·173
Isle of Wight	·879	1·970	2·849	1·101	2·464	3·565
Kent	10·895	16·279	27·174	12·473	18·140	30·613
Lancashire	11·865	16·170	28·035	21·459	17·140	38·599
Leicestershire	3·000	13·309	16·309	4·250	14·475	18·725
Lincolnshire	8·282	7·640	15·922	8·629	7·962	16·591
Norfolk	4·072	9·500	13·572	4·303	10·039	14·342
Northamptonshire	2·665	6·715	9·380	3·200	7·850	11·050
Northumberland	2·325	6·371	8·696	2·464	6·663	9·127
North Yorkshire	6·523	12·987	19·510	7·608	15·145	22·753
Nottinghamshire	4·139	12·503	16·642	4·217	12·747	16·964
Oxfordshire	3·341	4·868	8·209	3·403	5·009	8·412
Shropshire	4·343	4·500	8·843	6·165	4·600	10·765
Somerset	5·608	6·128	11·736	5·899	6·448	12·347
Staffordshire	7·225	9·200	16·425	8·169	9·585	17·754
Suffolk	2·955	9·378	12·333	3·221	10·225	13·446
Surrey	5·725	11·760	17·485	6·050	12·428	18·478
Warwickshire	3·900	5·569	9·469	4·230	5·829	10·059
West Sussex	4·190	8·471	12·661	4·555	9·180	13·735
Wiltshire	3·497	7·360	10·857	3·694	7·771	11·465
Total Shires	186·538	365·588	552·126	226·945	396·518	623·463

Note to table: "Estimated Highway Maintenance Expenditure".
Notes:
Columns *(d)* to *(g)* Maintenance information is from 1985-86 transport policies and programmes. It was not collected in this form for 1986-87. There is no breakdown available for Merseyside's budget and bid or for most West Midlands' bid. Totals only can be shown.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his full response to the National Economic Development Organisation civil engineering report entitled, "A Fairer and Faster Route to Major Road Construction."

Mr. Ridley: I hope to be in a position to publish my response early next year.

Advancement of Women

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that national decisions concerning transportation policies should consider women's needs and should be based on consideration of the possible impact on the employment, income and health of women, as called for in paragraph 213 of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her written questions on 29 November at column *717*.

Fuel Consumption

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what he estimates, at current fuel prices, would be the savings produced by a 2 per cent. reduction in fuel consumption on roads in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ridley: A reduction of two per cent. in annual petrol consumption assuming a pre-tax price of £·95 per gallon would save around £115 million.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current average weekday traffic flow at the peak time on the A50 where it passes through the Meir in Stoke on Trent; and if he will give the figures for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to the reply*, 28 November 1985 c. *670*]: Not all the data requested by the right hon. Member is available. The figures below represent actual peak hour flows on A50 east of Meir for all vehicles taken from counts on a day in the years indicated, but the figures are not necessarily typical.

		Average flow
June 1979	8 am - 9 am	1,469
	5 pm - 6 pm	1,339
September 1984	8 am - 9 am	1,695
	5 pm - 6 pm	1,017
September 1985	8 am - 9 am	1,587
	5 pm - 6 pm	1,853

SOCIAL SERVICES

Prescription Charges

Mr. Adams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will initiate an investigation into whether any hardship is being suffered as a result of the liability of unemployed people to pay National Health Service prescription charges.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Smoking

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the Health Education Council's budget is currently being spent on anti-smoking campaigns; whether further public money will be spent for the purpose in the next financial year; and what criteria he will be taking into account in reaching a decision on this matter.

Mr. Whitney: About one-fifth of the Health Education Council's (HEC) current budget of £10·1 million is allocated to smoking education and smoking is included in other programmes, particularly that concerned with preventing coronary heart diseases. The HEC has provisionally allocated £1·8 million for its smoking education budget in 1986-87, reflecting the importance it continues to attach to this subject. In addition, the Government are providing £1 million to test the effectiveness of an advertising campaign to discourage teenage smoking. This reflects our particular concern, which I know the HEC shares, to dissuade young people from starting to smoke.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to increase the level of grant paid by his Department to Action on Smoking and Health.

Mr. Whitney: Consideration will be given to next year's level of funding of ASH when we receive their grant application for 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the amount of Government funding used by the Health Education Council to finance anti-smoking campaigns in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information is as follows:

Year	*£ Million*
1984-85	2·1
1983-84	2·6
1982-83	2·4

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funds have been made available by his Department to Action on Smoking and Health in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information is as follows:

Grant to Action on Smoking and Health

	£
1985-86	150,840
1984-85	136,000
1983-84	118,000

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to increase that

element of the grant paid by his Department to the Health Education Council for campaigning on the issue of smoking.

Mr. Whitney: The Health Education Council (HEC) determines the allocation of its overall budget in discussion with the Department. The council is expecting to spend about £1·8 million on its smoking education programme in 1985-86 and has provisionally allocated a similar amount for this purpose next year. In addition, we are making available to the HEC extra funds as part of a £1 million pilot media campaign against teenage smoking.

Regional Secure Units

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the breakdown by regional health authority of the number of beds available in interim and permanent regional secure units; and how many of these are currently staffed and available.

Mr. Whitney: Ten out of the 14 regions now have permanent regional secure units in operation, as follows:

Region and location	*Bed complement*	*Number of beds staffed and available*
Northern		
St. Luke's hospital, Middlesbrough	30	25
Yorkshire		
Fieldhead hospital, Wakefield	48	32
Trent		
Tower hospital, Leicester	60	20
East Anglian		
St. Andrew's hospital, Norwich	36	24
North East Thames		
Runwell hospital, near Southend	10	10
South East Thames		
Bethlem Royal hospital + linked units at Bexley, Croydon, Maidstone and Eastbourne*	90	65
Wessex		
Knowle hospital, Fareham	31	22
South Western		
Langdon hospital, Dawlish	30	30
Mersey		
Rainhill hospital, Prescot	50	50
North Western		
Prestwich hospital, Manchester (Adolescent)	20	20
Total	405	298

* Eastbourne Unit (15 beds) not yet open.

The latest information held centrally on interim secure units gives the position at 31 October 1984:

Region and location	*Bed complement*
Yorkshire	
Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield	18
North West Thames	
Leavesden hospital, near Watford*	62
St. Bernard's hospital, Ealing	14
South East Thames	
Bethlem Royal hospital, Denmark Hill	15
Cane Hill hospital, Croydon	5
South West Thames	
St. Ebbas hospital, Epsom*	20
Warlingham Park hospital, Surrey	5
Wessex	
Knowle hospital, Fareham	14
Oxford	
St. Crispin hospital, Northampton	10
West Midlands	
Lea Castle hospital, Kidderminster*	18
Coleshill Hall hospital, Birmingham*	8
Barnsley Hall hospital, Bromsgrove	12
Central hospital, Hatton	15
North Western	
Whittingham hospital, Preston	24
Prestwich hospital, Manchester	44
Total	284

* Denotes mental handicap hospital.

Some of these interim units may have ceased to operate since October 1984 because of the opening of a permanent Regional Secure Unit.

NHS (Overseas Visitors)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is *(a)* the income received and *(b)* the administrative cost resulting from charges on overseas visitors using National Health Service facilities for each district health authority, regional health authority, and in total, for each year since the charges were introduced.

Mr. Hayhoe: The income from National Health Service hospital treatment for each year since the NHS (Overseas Visitors) Regulations came into operation on 1 October 1982 is set out in the following table.

The administrative costs associated with the collection of income are not separately identifiable.

Income from overseas visitors under section 121 of the NHS Act: 1977

District Health Authorities	*1982-83** £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £
Northern Region			
Hartlepool	—	—	364
North Tees	—	1,819	461
South Tees	25	2,381	5,826
East Cumbria	2,256	12,126	6,880
South Cumbria	206	1,578	6,685
West Cumbria	—	3,230	(492)
Darlington	876	1,175	2,486
Durham	52	336	2,610
North West Durham	33	9	306
South West Durham	460	3,955	97
Northumberland	—	2,897	3,458
Gateshead	—	618	281
Newcastle upon Tyne	4,315	22,200	40,756
North Tyneside	—	1,076	4,933
South Tyneside	72	1,947	3,825
Sunderland	28	2,542	903

District Health Authorities		1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £
	Total	8,323	57,887	79,377
Yorkshire Region				
Hull		2,851	3,854	4,598
East Yorks		619	—	5,455
Grimsby		—	2,151	1,988
Scunthorpe		789	4,048	2,295
Northallerton		95	561	364
York		975	6,029	18,047
Scarborough		1,403	3,085	2,701
Harrogate		276	6,477	3,840
Bradford		11,261	8,193	(683)
Airedale		1,106	277	439
Calderdale		98	399	48
Huddersfield		1,228	1,873	95
Dewsbury		1,457	(847)	624
Leeds Western		854	10,095	2,218
Leeds Eastern		1,161	6,694	7,086
Wakefield		—	1,175	728
Pontefract		—	—	—
	Total	24,172	54,065	49,842
Trent Region				
North Derbyshire		—	—	—
South Derbyshire		1,811	3,000	9,806
Leicestershire		2,540	10,167	10,049
North Lincolnshire		345	166	348
South Lincolnshire		2,410	1,853	3,416
Bassetlaw		1,135	34	279
Central Nottinghamshire		—	566	1,526
Nottingham		1,054	8,356	13,261
Barnsley		56	—	—
Doncaster		43	47	1,620
Rotherham		156	1,035	5,421
Sheffield		4,521	2,800	8,731
	Total	14,072	28,024	54,457
East Anglian Region				
Cambridge		30,285	100,652	56,176
Peterborough		—	3,058	266
West Suffolk		13	1,822	4,603
East Suffolk		1,226	7,111	8,546
Norwich		2,198	5,571	10,291
Great Yarmouth		—	281	1,390
West Norfolk and Wisbech		—	—	1,082
Huntingdon		712	2,026	470
	Total	34,434	120,521	82,822
North West Thames Region				
North Bedfordshire		22	164	4,085
South Bedfordshire		1,093	11,613	4,107
North Hertfordshire		—	92	721
East Hertfordshire		—	406	594
North West Hertfordshire		766	354	1,829
South West Hertfordshire		809	206	2,464
Barnet		3,979	9,564	14,170
Harrow		2,228	6,639	4,923
Hillingdon		390	25,741	29,159
Hounslow and Spelthorne		5,476	35,005	32,243
Ealing		1,127	2,871	3,436
Brent		—	9,310	1,342
Paddington		36,664	124,286	208,497
Hammersmith and Fulham		9,502	58,412	56,865
Victoria		28,989	138,128	130,896
	Total	91,045	422,791	495,330

District Health Authorities		1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £
North East Thames Region				
Basildon and Thurrock		1,394	5,830	12,511
Mid Essex		4	164	104
North East Essex		10,782	2,892	3,364
West Essex		30	7,719	5,313
Southend		861	880	1,636
Barking, Havering and Brentwood		—	2,160	11,971
Hampstead		952	30,624	31,457
Bloomsbury		4,601	90,936	109,637
Islington		2,285	8,448	14,887
City and Hackney		15,985	13,938	27,712
Newham		3,675	1,855	635
Tower Hamlets		1,708	3,646	2,056
Enfield		378	2,348	2,574
Haringey		2,688	9,277	9,354
Redbridge		—	2,243	3,281
Waltham Forest		—	4,945	6,703
	Total	45,344	187,904	243,195
South East Thames Region				
Brighton		2,211	9,998	12,321
Eastbourne		205	6,231	5,737
Hastings		519	164	1,551
South East Kent		467	2,285	15,971
Canterbury and Thanet		761	3,492	8,311
Dartford and Gravesham		582	2,996	437
Maidstone		18	112	481
Medway		—	5,651	2,878
Tunbridge Wells		1,081	8,346	6,837
Bexley		729	1,476	1,692
Greenwich		108	32,372	5,392
Bromley		—	11,209	8,929
West Lambeth		14,589	17,549	6,359
Camberwell		154	15,122	55,476
Lewisham and North Southwark		54	21,011	18,572
	Total	21,480	138,012	150,944
South West Thames Region				
North West Surrey		—	5,722	3,612
West Surrey and North East Hampshire		—	2,050	2,655
South West Surrey		—	6,244	9,645
Mid Surrey		782	(510)	117
East Surrey		—	16,520	14,112
Chichester		—	—	1,738
Mid Downs		621	8,589	9,578
Worthing		2,256	2,309	5,651
Croydon		299	1,683	2,362
Kingston and Esher		—	1,581	3,833
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton		—	8,765	8,298
Wandsworth		12,894	36,348	42,354
Merton and Sutton		10,315	4,188	11,655
	Total	27,257	93,488	115,610
Wessex Region				
East Dorset		1,187	8,678	5,076
West Dorset		—	—	—
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire		3,935	13,772	7,208
Southampton and South West Hampshire		2,033	12,561	18,008
Winchester		85	6,539	1,222
Basingstoke and North Hampshire		378	1,469	322
Salisbury		—	5,366	23,410
Swindon		—	1,777	—
Bath		294	18,856	10,695
Isle of Wight		—	492	—
	Total	7,912	69,511	65,941
Oxford Region				

District Health Authorities		*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £
East Berkshire		—	19,210	8,365
West Berkshire		—	390	3,221
Aylesbury		—	4,954	—
Wycombe		327	7,456	5,781
Milton Keynes		—	5,248	(5,248)
Kettering		—	2,525	2,878
Northampton		—	187	6,761
Oxford		6,556	21,185	45,187
	Total	6,884	61,155	66,946
South Western Region				
Bristol and Weston		68	16,729	13,826
Frenchay		—	4,618	2,164
Southmead		—	2,084	3,312
Cornwall		—	—	—
Exeter		—	4,281	7,477
North Devon		—	3,164	2,231
Plymouth		—	5,054	8,325
Torbay		—	11,536	13,668
Cheltenham		15	6,603	4,185
Gloucester		7,029	5,442	4,307
Somerset		1,561	6,816	3,844
	Total	8,673	66,326	63,338
West Midlands Region				
Bromsgrove and Redditch		—	282	(239)
Hereford		156	3,700	3,240
Kidderminster		355	232	317
Worcester		1,322	3,598	1,978
Shropshire		—	3,783	3,453
Mid Staffordshire		—	—	2,219
North Staffordshire		—	3,700	1,727
South East Staffordshire		—	—	29
Rugby		1,424	819	5
North Warwickshire		859	—	—
South Warwickshire		356	8,083	18,946
Central Birmingham		2,667	6,612	12,425
East Birmingham		363	15,435	4,909
North Birmingham		—	6,927	53
South Birmingham		—	516	6,305
West Birmingham		4,523	12,000	11,730
Coventry		623	526	2,359
Dudley		—	624	1,949
Sandwell		3,290	589	6,775
Solihull		4,154	—	1,681
Walsall		1,110	3,179	1,760
Wolverhampton		1,857	3,611	14,176
	Total	23,060	74,216	95,796
Mersey Region				
Chester		403	12,365	6,265
Crewe		796	1,676	16
Halton		—	—	—
Macclesfield		—	—	—
Warrington		859	1,017	1,782
Liverpool		2,773	7,701	9,739
St. Helens and Knowsley		376	313	813
Southport and Formby		4	24,890	29,896
South Sefton		16,083	11,860	9,649
Wirral		2,908	5,738	848
	Total	24,203	65,560	59,009
North Western Region				
Lancaster		319	7,877	887
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde		3,379	1,018	855
Preston		—	6,605	12,614
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley		1,869	605	2,347
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale		1,153	4,114	6

District Health Authorities	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £
West Lancashire	—	—	2,291
Chorley and South Ribble	69	9	5
Bolton	1,595	—	—
Bury	1,142	1,977	2,963
North Manchester	—	7,658	3,334
Central Manchester	825	3,140	26,058
South Manchester	3,360	13,345	24,710
Oldham	—	1,506	2,755
Rochdale	—	—	264
Salford	—	7,259	9,118
Stockport	—	4,471	1,162
Tameside and Glossop	378	3,560	(201)
Trafford	—	1,222	169
Wigan	—	1,475	315
Total	14,089	65,840	89,649
SPECIAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES	30,069	83,289	98,115
GRAND TOTAL	381,015	1,588,588	1,810,372

Figures in brackets are negative amounts resulting from accounting adjustments.
Because of rounding, there are minor differences in some regions between the sum of district health authority totals and regional totals.

Blood and Blood Products

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what volumes of blood and blood products have been imported for *(a)* the National Health Service and *(b)* the private health sector for each year since 1975; what were the origins of these imports; and when he expects the United Kingdom to achieve self-sufficiency in blood and blood products.

Mr. Whitney: This country is already self-sufficient in its needs for blood. It is believed that blood itself has not been imported for use in either the National Health Service or the private sector for many years.

As regards blood products, the information is not available in the form requested. Records are not kept centrally of the volumes of blood products imported their origins or destinations.

Scotland and Northern Ireland are already self-sufficient through the manufacturing capability of the protein fractionation centre, Liberton. The redevelopment of the blood products laboratory at Elstree is intended to meet the full needs of England and Wales. This redevelopment is expected to achieve full production by the end of 1986.

HTLV III Virus

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation to seek to avoid discrimination against known carriers of the HTLV III virus.

Mr. Hayhoe: Problems concerned with discrimination against carriers of the HTLV III virus are under consideration but I have no plans to introduce legislation in this area at this time.

TBWA

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department has spent on employing the advertising agency TBWA; and what has resulted from this employment.

Mr. Hayhoe: Advertising agencies are paid on a commission basis by the media operators, not by their clients. TBWA has not, therefore, received any money directly from the Department for its services, apart from production costs.

Media spending channelled through TBWA plus production costs has been as follows:

	£
1981-82	Nil
1982-83	390,209
1983-84	1,425,663
1984-85	941,129
1985-86	*940,262

* Estimate, not including AIDS campaign.

TBWA is currently handling the nursing careers, blood donation and AIDS campaigns.

Nurses (Recruitment)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce a policy of recruiting only non-smokers in the nursing profession.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional funds have been made available by his Department for research into acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and on what they have been spent.

Mr. Hayhoe: Research in the United Kingdom is proceeding through six projects funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) which recieves grant-in-aid from the science vote of the Department of Education and Science. The total cost is about £431,000, of which my Department is contributing £59,000 to two of these projects.

Exceptional Needs Payments

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now estimate the percentage of

manpower spent on administering exceptional needs payments (single payments) in his Department's supplementary benefit local offices.

Mr. Major: About 5·5 per cent., just over 2,000 posts, of the supplementary benefit complement is estimated to be allocated to administering single payments.

One-parent Families

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of women who are single, widowed, separated, with dependent children under 16 years of age for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Whitney: Estimates, based on information from the 1981 census and the general household survey, are available as follows for 1979 and 1982.

Lone mother one-parent families, Great Britain

Lone mother	*1979 000s*	*1982 000s*
single	130	180
widowed	130	120
divorced	280	350
separated	200	180
Total	740	830

Notes:
1. A one-parent family comprises a lone parent with one or more dependent children, aged under 16 or 16-18 and in full-time education.
2. Estimates are derived from the general household survey by averaging the results for three years, centred on the year indicated.

Furniture Grants

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the basis on which furniture grants are paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" announced proposals to replace the present system of help by way of single payments (including those for furniture) with a social fund. We are considering the comments made in the consultation period on the Green Paper and our conclusions will be set out in the White Paper.

Sick Leave

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many security officials employed by offices of the Department of Health and Social Security have taken sick leave during the past six years; if he will list the average periods of time that this has lasted during the same period; what level of damage has been done to Department of Health and Social Security property during the same period; and what costs have been incurred resulting from repair work.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Hypercholesterolaemia

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what investigations have been carried out by his Department into the incidence of hypercholesterolaemia in the population; and what publicity material has been issued to health authorities and other bodies about the dangers inherent in high levels of raised blood fats.

Mr. Whitney: I am not aware of any such investigations. In 1984 the report on diet and cardiovascular disease from the Chief Medical Officer's committee on medical aspects of food policy (COMA), which contains advice to doctors about hypercholesterolaemia, was published by the Department and circulated widely.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of closures of hospitals for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped which have been decided since 1979; and in which regions these have taken place.

Mr. Whitney: For mental illness and mental handicap hospitals approved for complete closure between May 1979 and 31 March 1985 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Minister of Health on 24 May at columns *591-94*.

The total number of mental illness and mental handicap hospitals approved for complete closure between 1 April and 30 June, the latest period for which we have information, is three.

Details of the individual hospitals are as follows:

Mental illness and mental handicap hospitals approved for complete closure 1 April 1985-30 June 1985

Region	*District*	*Hospital*	*Type of hospital mental illness (MI) or mental handicap (MH)*	*Date approved*
Yorkshire	Leeds Western	Grassington hospital	MI	May 1985
	York	Naburn hospital	MI	May 1985
Wessex	Isle of Wight	Longford hospital	MH	April 1985

National Health Service (Industrial Relations)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the document, supported by the North West regional health authority, entitled "Industrial Relations — Response to the Threat or Actuality of Industrial Action", a copy of which has been sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe; what is his policy towards the document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: All health authorities are required to have contingency plans for maintaining services to patients in the face of threats of industrial action. I

understand that this document was prepared for consideration by general managers in the North Western region and the right hon. Member may therefore wish to address his questions to the chairman of the North Western regional health authority.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest available figure for the number of ordinary board and lodging claimants who, as a result of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985, were paid at the non-householder rate or who would have been paid as non-householders but received unemployment benefit or had excess income: how many of these claimants have returned his Department's letter BL1 following the High Court decision in R *v* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Cotton; what is the latest available figure for the total amount of arrears paid to these claimants; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, for England, Scotland, Wales;

(2) what are the latest figures for the number of ordinary board and lodging claimants who, as a result of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985, were due to be restricted to the non-householder rate but continued to be paid as boarders as a result of the judgment in R *v* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Cotton; and if he will give this information for England, Scotland, Wales and Great Britain;

(3) what is the latest available figure for the number of ordinary board and lodging claimants who, as a result of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 received four-week or eight-week transitional protection from restriction; what is the latest available figures for the total amount of arrears paid to these claimants following the High Court decision in R *v* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Cotton; and if he will give this information for England, Wales, Scotland and Great Britain as a whole;

(4) what are the latest figures for the number of ordinary board and lodging claimants who, as a result of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985, changed status following restriction to *(i)* householders and *(ii)* no fixed abode; and if he will give this information for England, Scotland, Wales and Great Britain.

Mr. Newton: We do not collect national statistics on the numbers and details of all claimants who changed benefit status as a result of the 29 April board and lodging changes. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 29 October at columns *439-442* for information on the proportion of claimants exempt from the application of the time limits and for the findings of special surveys.

Following the decision in the High Court in R *v* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Cotton, local offices were asked to keep statistical records relating to the number of claimants affected by the suspension of time limits, and the arrears of benefit paid. The analysis of these statistical returns is not yet complete. Separate information was not collected on the number of forms BL1 that were returned.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest available figure for the number of ordinary board and lodging claimants with dependent children under 18 years.

Mr. Newton: The sample size precludes the provision of reliable estimates. However, it is probably less than 5,000.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the following information is collected: *(a)* the total annual number of ordinary board and lodgings claimants, *(b)* the annual average payment to ordinary board and lodging claimants and *(c)* the total annual cost of payments to ordinary board and lodging claimants.

Mr. Newton: Estimates of such caseloads, average payments and total expenditure are derived from the Department's regular statistical inquiries covering all social security offices.

Infant Mortality (Leeds)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births for children *(a)* under one year, *(b)* under four weeks, *(c)* under one week and *(d)* under 24 hours for the Leeds eastern district health authority for 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Whitney: The information is shown in the table. The rates are based on small numbers and are therefore liable to chance variation from year to year.

Numbers and rates for (a) infant, (b) neonatal, (c) early neonatal and (d) deaths under 24 hours for children in Leeds eastern health authority 1983 and 1984*

	1983		1984	
Period of death	*Numbers*	*Rates*	*Numbers*	*Rates*
(a) Infant	37	8·09	55	12·20
(b) Neonatal	20	4·37	30	6·32
(c) Early neonatal	13	2·84	24	5·31
(d) Under 24 hours	8	1·75	16	3·54

*Rates per 1,000 live births.

Definitions

(a) Infant—deaths of children aged under 1 year.
(b) Neonatal—deaths of children aged under 4 weeks.
(c) Early Neonatal—deaths of children aged under 1 week.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the changes in social security law since May 1979 which have affected the entitlement of *(a)* 16 to 17-year-olds, *(b)* 18 to 20-year-olds and *(c)* 21 to 25-year-olds to supplementary benefit or any other benefit or which have affected the entitlement to any benefit of their parents.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

School Leavers (Benefits)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each year since its introduction, what has been the gross and net saving from the change in supplementary benefit rules which delayed the entitlement of school leavers until one of three terminal dates, showing separately the savings from 16, 17, 18 and 19-year-olds; and what would be the cost of reversing this change in a full year at 1985-86 benefit rates.

Mr. Newton: No separate records are kept of claims to benefit by school leavers and the information requested is not therefore available.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in each year since its introduction, what has been the saving fom the removal of a parent's right to child benefit where a school or college leaver obtains a job or a place on a Manpower Services Commission scheme before the relevant terminal date; and what would be the cost of reversing this change in a full year at 1985-86 benefit rates.

Mr. Newton: The change, from 31 May 1982, produced savings of about £9 million in the first year. It is estimated that the cost of reversing this change during 1985-86 would be of the order of £11 million.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in each year since its introduction, what has been the saving from counting as a resource of their parents *(a)* the earnings and *(b)* the training allowances of school leavers before their terminal date; and what would be the cost of reversing these changes in a full year at 1985-86 benefit rates.

Mr. Newton: For supplementary benefit purposes income, including training allowances but excluding earnings, received by a dependent child has for many years been taken into account in determining his parents' entitlement to benefit but only up to the level of the child's own requirements; any excess is completely disregarded. Until 1984, all earnings received by a dependent child were completely disregarded but, by virtue of Regulation 3(6) of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment Regulations 1984, from 26 November 1984 the full-time earnings of a school leaver have been taken into account up to the level of his own requirements, any balance being ignored.

Information about the actual amount of benefit saved as the result of these provisions is not available but it is estimated that if no account was taken of either the earnings or training allowances received by school leavers the additional cost at 1985-86 benefit rates would be about £1·5 million and £0·4 million respectively.

Supplementary Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each year since its introduction, what has been the gross and net saving from the removal from *(a)* 16 and 17-year-olds, *(b)* 18 to 20-year-olds supplementary benefit non-householders' rent addition; and what would be the cost of reversing these changes in a full year at 1985-86 benefit rates.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each year since its introduction, what has been the saving from the introduction and increase in non-dependants' deductions from housing benefit for young people, showing separately the savings from the changes for 16 and 17-year-olds and from 18 to 20-year-olds; and what would be the cost of reversing these changes in a full year at 1985-86 benefit rates.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Health Service (Vacant Posts)

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines his Department has issued on advertising of posts in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: Following a Rayner scrutiny on recruitment advertising in the National Health Service the Department issued guidelines in health circular (85)12 to health authorities in England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales issued similar guidelines to Welsh health authorities in WHC(85)11. A copy of the guidelines is in the Library.

Benefits (Dietary Guidelines)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what dietary guidelines he uses in determining levels of supplementary benefit and family income supplement levels;

(2) if he will give details of the amount of supplementary benefit and family income supplement available for food purchase by different claimant groups.

Mr. Newton: There is no specific amount for food, or any other item, in the supplementary benefit scale rates. The rates are based on the national assistance rates set in 1948, which were based upon an assessment of requirements for food and other essential items. The real value of the rates has more than doubled since 1948, but upratings have not been based on the revaluation of particular items. The family income supplement prescribed amounts were originally set in 1971 having regard to, amongst other things, the supplementary benefit rates. The amounts have been increased since then well ahead of prices.

Dental Fillings (Amalgam)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning poisoning or other health risks by the use of amalgam for dental fillings.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) on 22 October at columns *131-132*.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received recently on the subject of amalgam dental fillings.

Mr. Hayhoe: A few letters.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to establish a standard for substitutes for amalgam for dental fillings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: An international standard already exists for dental gold (ISO 1562; 1984). The United Kingdom is participating in the work of the International Standards Organisation to develop standards for resin based tooth coloured filling materials.

Departmental Grants

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to the

criteria used in deciding whether to provide grants for more than one organisation campaigning on similar issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We do not normally provide support specifically for campaigning although this may form part of the activities of a grant-aided body. We always seek to avoid duplicating grants for the same purpose, but there is often room for a number of bodies to work in the same field and in such cases we co-ordinate the purposes for which any grants are given to them.

National Health Service Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each district health authority, the total number of National Health Service hospitals;

(2) if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each district health authority, the total number of beds in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit (Camden)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the number of persons claiming supplementary benefit and *(b)* the number of children estimated to be dependent on those claimants in each of the local offices of his Department that serve the London borough of Camden in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Major: The following table shows the estimated number of people claiming supplementary benefit in the London borough of Camden in December 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, and the estimated number of children dependant upon them. Comparable figures for 1979, 1980 and 1985 are not available.

London borough of Camden

	Estimated number of supplementary benefit claimants	*Estimated number of children dependant on these claimants*
1981	16,000	3,000
1982	20,000	6,000
1983	19,000	6,000
1984	23,000	7,000

Road Accidents (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* injuries and *(b)* deaths from road accidents have been dealt with in each of the last five years in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available centrally on the numbers of persons treated in Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority following injury in road accidents. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the district health authority who may be able to provide the information requested. I shall let the hon. Member have the available information on deaths from road accidents as soon as possible.

Hypothermia

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute a publicity campaign this winter about the dangers of hypothermia and means of combating it.

Mr. Whitney: The Health Education Council leaflet "Warmth in Winter", which offers practical advice on keeping warm, is available again this winter through local health education units and Age Concern branches. Further information and training materials for those in contact with elderly people are being developed under the Health Education Council's project, "Your Right to be Warm". These will be available in time for next winter.

Kidney Transplants (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many kidney transplants have been carried out in each of the last five years in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district.

Mr. Whitney: According to information supplied by the United Kingdom transplant service, the numbers of cadaveric kidney transplant operations performed in each of the last five years at the renal transplant unit at St. Mary's hospital in Portsmouth have been as follows:

	Number
1980	45
1981	44
1982	60
1983	73
1984	50

Pharmaceutical Services

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has carried out any assessment of the implications for patients and pharmacists of the proposed new agreement between his Department and the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the advice received from the adjudication officer about the administration of exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the Chief Adjudication Officer expects to issue his guidance to adjudication officers very shortly and I shall arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Tuberculosis (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children died of tuberculosis in the Portsmouth health district area in the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The information is shown in the table.

Deaths from Tuberculosis (excluding late effects) Males and Females aged 0 to 14 Portsmouth and South East Hampshire District Health Authority 1980 to 1984

Year	Number
*1980**	
Male	—
Female	—
*1981**	
Male	—
Female	1
1982	
Male	—
Female	—
1983	
Male	—
Female	—
1984	
Male	—
Female	—

* 1980 and 1981 figures are for Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many adults in the Portsmouth health district area died of tuberculosis in the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The figures are given in the table.

Deaths from Tuberculosis (excluding late effects), Males and Females Aged 15 and Over, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire District Health Authority, 1980 to 1984

Year	Number
*1980**	
Male	1
Female	—
*1981**	
Male	4
Female	2
1982	
Male	1
Female	1
1983	
Male	3
Female	2
1984	
Male	3
Female	1

* 1980 and 1981 figures are for Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the rate of notifications of tuberculosis among the population in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district area for the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: Notifications of tuberculosis are made to the local medical officer of environmental health (proper officer) for each local government district, and are therefore generally not available for health districts.

The table shows the corrected notification rates for the county districts of Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport and Havant, all of which fall wholly within the boundary of the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority.

Notifications of Tuberculosis: Number and Rate per million population, Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport and Havant County Districts 1980-1984

Years	Numbers	Rates
1980	23	48·8
1981	25	53·4
1982	31	65·9
1983	37	77·7
1984	29	60·9

Speech Therapists

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many speech therapists are currently being trained; how many are in post; and where they are employed.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the numbers currently being trained is not collected by the Department as oversight of training is delegateded to the College of Speech Therapy under the authority of the NHS (Speech Therapists) Amendment Regulations 1985 (SI 1985/47). The numbers in post and their location by Regional Health Authority are shown in the table.

NHS speech therapists: as at 30 September 1984 (latest date for which figures are available)*

	Number in post
Northern regional health authority	120
Yorkshire regional health authority	130
Trent regional health authority	200
East Anglian regional health authority	100
North West Thames regional health authority	180
North East Thames regional health authority	200
South East Thames regional health authority	180
South West Thames regional health authority	150
Wessex regional health authority	100
Oxford regional health authority	110
South Western regional health authority	150
West Midlands regional health authority	210
Mersey regional health authority	90
North Western regional health authority	210
Special health authorities	20
Total England	2,150

* Whole time equivalent, rounded to nearest 10.

Family Practitioners

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the provision of information about doctor services for patients; and what was his response.

Mr. Hayhoe: Representations from the British Medical Association proposing additions to the information about general medical practitioners made available by family practitioner committees are under consideration.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the extension of the availability of family practitioner committee lists; and what was his response.

Mr. Hayhoe: No such representations have been received.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if, in so far as they affect the current payment of pensions, he will list the relevant statutory instruments

and orders which governed the exceptions to the general requirements for employees or others to pay contributions into the statutory pension insurance scheme between 1936 and 1948, and all the employers who obtained exception under these provisions, indicating the period during which the exception was current and, where possible, whether it was for all employees or not.

Mr. Major: Since persons in excepted employments between 1936 and 1948 did not pay contributions which were credited into the state pension scheme in 1948, legislation governing exceptions does not in general affect the current payment of pensions. However, the main provisions for excepting persons from insurance during the relevant period are contained in schedule 1 to the National Health Insurance Act 1936, as amended. In addition, a large number of regulations and orders were made under this act, such as, for example:

Regulations

National Health Insurance, Statutory Undertakers Total Exception Regulations 1939.
National Health Insurance Exception Regulations 1942
National Health Insurance Exception Regulations (No. 2) 1942
National Health Insurance Exception Regulations 1943
National Health Insurance, Statutory Undertakers Total Exception (Amendment) Regulations 1946

Orders

Subsidiary Employments Order 1937
Subsidiary Emmployments Order (No. 2) 1937
Contractors for Manual Labour Exclusions Order 1937
Employment under Local and Public Authorities Order 1937
Employment under Local and Public Authorities (Northern Ireland) Order 1937
Outworkers Order 1937
Sharefishermen Order 1937
Employments (Exclusion and Inclusion) Order (Scotland) 1937
Subsidiary Employment Order (Northern Ireland) 1938

The full information requested is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

It would not be appropriate to list all the employers who from time to time obtained exception under these provisions, even if the information were available. However, in September 1946, there were some 440 employers with excepted employments in Great Britain and 135 in Northern Ireland. No information is available on the proportion of those employers whose employment was excepted.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of National Health Service patients awaiting treatment by occupational therapists for 1 January 1985 and 1 January 1984.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of occupational therapists employed by each health authority for 1 January 1985 and 1 January 1984.

Mr. Whitney: Information is collected centrally only at 30 September. The table gives the number of occupational therapists employed by each regional health authority in England at 30 September 1983 and 1984, the most recent information available.

National Health Service staff—at 30 September*
Occupational therapists
Fourteen English regions and London post-graduate hospitals SHA's
Whole time equivalent

Region	*1983*	*1984*
Northern RHA	130	130
Yorkshire RHA	220	240
Trent RHA	350	370
East Anglian RHA	180	200
North West Thames RHA	260	290
North East Thames RHA	310	300
South East Thames RHA	240	260
South West Thames RHA	250	250
Wessex RHA	220	240
Oxford RHA	240	240
South Western RHA	280	300
West Midlands RHA	270	290
Mersey RHA	160	180
North Western RHA	260	270
London post-graduate hospital SHA's	10	50
Total†	3,380	3,610

* Figures are whole time equivalent rounded to nearest 10. Because of rounding the sum of the component parts may not agree with the total.
† Total is for 14 English regions and London post-graduate hospital SHA's.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of occupational therapists employed by each local authority social services department on 1 January 1985 and 1 January 1984.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The available data on qualified occupational therapists are given in the table.

Number of occupational therapists
(expressed in whole-time equivalents) employed by social services departments
ENGLAND

	As at 30 September	
	1983	*1984*
Cleveland	—	—
Cumbria	—	—
Durham	10·3	8·5
Northumberland	3·0	3·8
Gateshead	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	7·0	7·0
North Tyneside	5·0	5·0
South Tyneside	2·0	1·0
Sunderland	7·0	6·0
Humberside	3·0	1·0
North Yorkshire	9·0	8·0
Barnsley	—	—
Doncaster	—	—
Rotherham	—	—
Sheffield	7·0	6·2
Bradford	8·5	9·5
Calderdale	4·0	3·0
Kirklees	—	—
Leeds	1·0	1·0
Wakefield	—	—
Cheshire	23·4	26·7
Lancashire	—	—
Bolton	—	—
Bury	—	—
Manchester	4·0	4·0
Oldham	—	—
Rochdale	8·5	9·7
Salford	2·0	2·0
Stockport	3·7	*3·7

	As at 30 September 1983	1984
Tameside	—	3·8
Trafford	0·2	0·2
Wigan	3·5	3·5
Knowsley	3·0	4·0
Liverpool	23·5	17·0
Sefton	4·5	6·0
St. Helens	3·0	3·7
Wirral	2·4	3·0
Hereford and Worcester	—	—
Salop	5·0	5·0
Staffordshire	—	—
Warwickshire	14·0	12·5
Birmingham	19·5	19·7
Coventry	7·0	5·5
Dudley	6·0	6·0
Sandwell	1·5	1·5
Solihull	2·0	3·0
Walsall	2·0	3·0
Wolverhampton†	—	2·0
Derbyshire	22·5	39·5
Leicestershire	12·3	12·3
Lincolnshire	4·5	7·5
Northamptonshire	—	—
Nottinghamshire	26·6	25·6
Bedfordshire	—	—
Berkshire	31·9	30·8
Buckinghamshire	—	—
Cambridgeshire	10·0	9·7
Essex‡	11·5	11·5
Hertfordshire	46·6	41·6
Norfolk	15·6	12·8
Oxfordshire	3·2	3·2
Suffolk	9·5	12·0
Camden	13·0	12·5
Greenwich	6·0	9·0
Hackney	4·0	3·0
Hammersmith	9·2	12·0
Islington	6·0	6·0
Kensington	5·5	7·0
Lambeth	10·0	*10·0
Lewisham	11·0	11·4
Southwark	9·0	—
Tower Hamlets	4·0	5·0
Wandsworth	6·5	8·6
Westminster	15·0	14·0
City of London	1·0	1·0
Barking	1·0	1·0
Barnet	12·6	13·3
Bexley	1·0	1·0
Brent	15·5	21·0
Bromley	9·5	6·0
Croydon	—	—
Ealing	9·0	9·0
Enfield	3·0	4·0
Haringey	10·5	11·5
Harrow	8·1	11·1
Havering	1·0	1·0
Hillingdon	15·6	14·7
Hounslow	7·0	—
Kingston-upon-Thames¶	7·0	7·0
Merton	11·0	11·0
Newham	3·0	6·0
Redbridge	3·9	—
Richmond-upon-Thames	4·5	4·5
Sutton	3·0	4·5
Waltham Forest	7·5	8·9
Dorset	11·1	12·9
Hampshire	34·0	26·7
Isle of Wight	2·0	3·0
Kent	15·5	25·2
Surrey†	12·7	12·7
East Sussex	12·5	17·8
West Sussex	—	—
Wiltshire	12·6	14·4
Avon	17·1	25·9
Cornwall	14·0	15·0
Devon	55·4	64·0
Gloucestershire	20·2	18·4
Isles of Scilly	—	—
Somerset	10·0	10·0
ENGLAND	850·7	893·0

* 1983 figures.
† 1982 figures.
‡ 1981 figures.
‖ 1980 figures.
¶ 1978 figures.

Tuberculosis

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the incidence of cases of respiratory and non-respiratory tuberculosis, as taken together, per 100,000 population, reported in each standard region of the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; and what was the comparable figure for England and Wales.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table. The systems of notification of tuberculosis differ slightly in the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, and the figures are not exactly comparable year by year.

Numbers and notification rates of all tuberculosis by Standard Region 1980 to 1984 England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*

Standard Region	1980 No.	1980 Rate	1981 No.	1981 Rate	1982 No.	1982 Rate	1983 No.	1983 Rate	1984 No.	1984 Rate
North	486	15·80	428	13·70	336	10·80	342	11·00	300	9·70
Yorks and Humberside	884	18·10	745	15·20	758	15·40	669	13·60	580	11·80
East Midlands	625	16·50	587	15·30	522	13·60	478	12·40	472	12·20
East Anglia	146	7·76	114	6·02	96	5·01	106	5·51	95	4·90
South East	3,767	22·30	3,365	19·80	2,952	17·40	2,746	16·10	2,483	14·50
South West	355	8·17	394	9·03	308	7·01	251	5·67	261	5·85
West Midland	1,164	22·60	1,022	19·70	1,045	20·20	900	17·40	848	16·40
North Western	1,325	20·50	1,148	17·80	1,066	16·60	1,009	15·70	794	12·40
Wales	390	14·00	325	11·60	323	11·50	299	10·60	308	11·00
Scotland	1,138	22·10	972	18·80	902	17·50	829	16·10	741	14·40
Northern Ireland	205	13·20	190	12·10	140	8·93	163	10·40	161	10·20
England and Wales	9,142	18·40	8,128	16·40	7,406	14·90	6,800	13·70	6,141	12·30

*Rates per 100,000 population.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of *(a)* respiratory and *(b)* non-respiratory tuberculosis have been reported in England and Wales in each of the last five years; and what are the figures for South Tyneside.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of notifications of respiratory and of other forms of tuberculosis for England and Wales, and for South Tyneside are given in the table. Figures from 1982 exclude notifications associated with chemoprophylaxis. Other changes mean that the figures are not exactly comparable year by year, but the effect is thought to be minimal.

Respiratory and Non-Respiratory Tuberculosis: Notifications in England and Wales, and in South Tyneside 1980–1984

	Respiratory	*Non-Respiratory*
England & Wales		
1980	6,670	2,472
1981	5,859	2,269
1982	5,822	1,584
1983	5,317	1,483
1984	4,871	1,270
South Tyneside		
1980	29	7
1981	22	5
1982	14	6
1983	19	4
1984	15	9

Overseas Visitors (Social Security Payments)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances social security payments are made to visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: Most social security benefits have residence and contribution tests and other individual specific tests of eligibility which could not be fulfilled by a visitor to the United Kingdom. Entitlement to supplementary benefit, which does not have residence or contribution tests, may be dependent on immigration status and most visitors from abroad are admitted on the understanding that they will support themselves: their conditions of entry effectively exclude them from benefit entitlement. However, in some circumstances, where a person has been given limited leave to enter and the Home Office has his status under consideration, payments may be made on an urgent needs basis.

Hospital Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what directives he has given since 1983 to regional and district health authorities regarding the privatisation of hospital services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No directives to health authorities on competitive tendering for hospital support services have been given but I expect the policies set out in circular HC(83)18 to be implemented by all health authorities.

Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospital development schemes costing over £5 million *(a)* completed since May 1979 and *(b)* started since May 1979, giving for each the district, the number of beds involved, the completion date and the cost.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Health Service (Revenue and Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each health district the revenue and capital expenditure in each year since 1974, expressing the figures *(a)* in money terms, *(b)* adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted by the movement of National Health Service pay and prices.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Private Homes (Fees)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each of his Department's areas which includes any part of Barnet health authority within their boundaries the number of residents *(a)* aged 65 years and over and *(b)* aged under 65 years of private and voluntary nursing and residential homes whose fees are paid by social security;

(2) if he will place in the Library the returns from each of his Department's areas, giving the numbers of residents of private and voluntary nursing homes and residential homes whose fees are paid by social security.

Mr. Newton: The analysis of statistical returns on boarders from local social security offices — which would also need to be used to provide information relevant to the Barnet health authority area—is not yet complete. Full information on the results of the monitoring will be made available as soon as possible.

National Health Service (Annual Report)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of the document, "The Health Service in England—Annual Report 1985", have been produced; and how many have been supplied free and to whom.

Mr. Whitney: 4,000 copies of the report were printed. 2,500 have been supplied for official use. The distribution includes regional, district and special health authorities, family practitioner committees, community health councils and professional bodies. Copies were made available in the Vote Office and to members of the press.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total cost of the preparation, printing, publication, promotion and distribution of "The Health Service in England—Annual Report 1985"; and how many copies have been distributed.

Mr. Whitney: The full printing costs, and distribution costs of sale copies, were borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office with recovery in the usual way from the proceeds of sales. It would not be possible to calculate the Departmental costs of preparation, promotion and distribution without disproportionate cost. Over 2,000 copies of the Report have been distributed by the Department.

National Health Service (Surplus Property)

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy regarding the retention by district health authorities of funds released by the sale of surplus National Health Service property; and what steps he has taken to monitor the implementation of this policy.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities have been advised that, in general, they will retain the proceeds of their disposals for funding future service developments. They have been asked to submit action plans by 31 December 1985 for consideration by the Department. The Department will monitor the implementation of the plans over the next two years.

Mentally-ill Persons

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of annual National Health Service revenue and capital budgets was spent on services for mentally-ill people during the most recent year for which figures are available;

(2) if he wil provide a percentage figure indicating the proportion of the National Health Service budget on mental health services which was spent on services, facilities, staffing and upkeep of psychiatric hospitals at the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: 11·1 per cent. of health authority spending in 1983-84 was devoted to services for mentally-ill people. The remaining information sought is not readily available in the form requested but in recent years details of the breakdown of health authority and personal social services gross current expenditure on different groups, including mentally-ill people, have been published in the Department's evidence to the Social Services Committee for the Committee's annual inquiry into public expenditure on the social services — most recently in the Committee's Sixth Report (HC 339) which was published in June this year (pages 11-29 inclusive).

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authority day centre places are available for mentally ill people in England.

Mr. Whitney: At 31 March 1984, the latest date for which complete information is available, the number of places in local authority day centres for mentally-ill people in England was 5,361. A further 1,225 day centre places were made available to local authorities by voluntary and other bodies. The above figures do not include places available in mixed day centres, an unspecified number of which are for mentally-ill people, or day care places available in local authority residential homes.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many community mental health centres are operating; how many are planned; and where they are situated and planned to be situated.

Mr. Whitney: Centres described as community mental health centres vary in their objectives and in the resources they offer, and we have not so far sought either to define what minimum requirements would justify the term, nor therefore to obtain statistics of the number of centres within such a definition which are operating. Generally we would see their essential function as to provide a local base for a multi-disciplinary team to provide psychiatric services to a part of a district; we are aware, however, that in some districts advantages have been seen in such a team not using a "community mental health centre" but instead using the accommodation of a health centre or group practice, so that there can be close links with primary health care, and no unnecessary labelling of minor disabilities as psychiatric. There are also places where such a multi-disciplinary team has found a suitable base in say a day hospital or day centre, but has not sought to identify it as a "community mental health centre".

We are however aware that a number of health authorities have plans for such centres, which may include domiciliary, day and in-patient care as well as a resource centre for professionals, the voluntary sector and the public. We are anxious to secure more evaluative research into the different patterns of community-oriented psychiatric care responding to the needs of neighbourhood areas.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the evaluation studies concerned with the effects of hospital rundown on patients and staff and with the buildup of alternative community services undertaken by his Department's mental illness research liaison group.

Mr. Whitney: A number of evaluation studies have been undertaken as part of the Department's research programme on the effects of hospital run-down and the provision of alternative community services in the field of mental illness. These have included studies based on the psychiatric case registers at Worcester, Salford, Nottingham, Southampton and Camberwell, by the universities of Birmingham, Liverpool, London and Manchester. Detailed numerical descriptions of the development of these activities are due to be published soon. These will detail results obtained from the registers including the monitoring of change and collaboration between services.

Other studies have covered the more general provision of community services, joint planning and collaboration. A number of research applications in these fields are at present being considered by the Department.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which health advisory service reports have been published on mental illness services since 1 January.

Mr. Whitney: Reports have been published on Health Advisory Service visits to the following health authorities concerning mental illness services: West Surrey and North East Hampshire, South West Surrey, South Manchester, Central Manchester, North Manchester, Great Yarmouth and Waveney, North West Surrey, Worcester, Ealing, Harrow, Brent, Wigan and Herefordshire and District health authorities. Reports on all visits made since 1 January 1985 are being published.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list all those psychiatric hospitals for which a firm date has been set for closure indicating in each case what that date is;

(2) if he will list all those psychiatric hospitals which are planned for closure but for which no firm date has at present been set.

Mr. Whitney: We collect information centrally about the dates on which closures are approved, but not the planned or actual dates of those closures taking place.

Hospitals for the mentally-ill and mentally-handicapped which have been approved for closure since May 1979 are listed in the reply from my right hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Health to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 24 May at columns *591-4* and in my reply to her today.

The hon. Member may wish to approach the relevant health authorities direct about closure dates.

Personal Social Services Research Unit, Kent

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all publications produced to date by the personal social services research unit in Kent.

Mr. Whitney: The personal social services research unit, which is funded by this Department, produces its own series of discussion papers. Some of these papers are intended mainly for internal use, some are circulated more widely and some are published as priced documents. Some of the discussion papers or extracts from them are published elsewhere as articles, monographs or books. Since its inception in 1974 the unit has produced more than 400 papers in this series. The Department does not keep a complete list of these publications. The list which is immediately available is as follows. I will let the hon. Member have a further reply as soon as I receive a complete list from the unit.

Kent University—Personal Social Services Research Unit

Bebbington, A. C. and Davies, B. Territorial need indicators: a reply (comment). Journal of Social Policy, Vol. 12(2), pp. 246-50, 1983.

Bebbington, A. C. and Davies, B. Equity and Efficiency in the Allocation of the Personal Social Services. Journal of Social Policy, Vol. 12(3), pp. 309-50, 1983.

Challis, D. J. and Shepherd, R. D. An assessment of the potential of mentally handicapped patients for community living. British Journal of Social Work, September 1983.

Judge, K. and Smith, J. Purchase of service in England. The Social Services Review, Vol. 57(2), pp. 209-233, 1983.

Knapp, M. and Missiakoulis, S. Predicting turnover rates among the staff of English and Welsh old people's homes. Social Science and Medicine, Vol. 17, pp. 29-36, 1983.

Knox, B. Questat Users Guide Part I Reference Manual. DP 270. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Missiakoulis, S. Questat Users Guide Part II. Guide to the Models and their Statistics. DP271, PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Bebbington, A. The general household survey: a research resource for the elderly. DP313. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1984.

Bebbington, A. C. and Tong, M. Trends and changes in old people's homes. In:Department of Health and Social Security, Seminar on Residential Care for Elderly People: Background Papers, pp. 14-29, 1983.

Bryson, D., Challis, D., Davis, B., Dimond, E. and Grant, G. Anglesey community care project (GOFAL): an interim report. DP318. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Challis, D. and Davies, B. Community care schemes: A development in the home care of the frail elderly. In: Evans, J., Grimley and Caird F. I. (eds) Advance Geriatric Medicine 4, Pitman, London. 1984.

Challis, D., Knapp, M. and Davies, B. Cost effectiveness evaluation in social care. In: Research Highlights, Vol. 8, pp. 123-139, March 1984.

Darton, R. Relative unit costs of local authority old people's homes inside and outside London. DP285, PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Darton, R. and Knapp, M. Factors associated with variations in the costs of local authority old people's homes. In: Department of Health and Social Security, Seminar on Residential Care for Elderly People: Background Papers, pp. 38-51, 1983.

Davies, B. Micro-predictability and the micro policy process: observations from a field experiment. DP286/1, PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Davies, B. and Bebbington, A. PSSRU needs indicators. DP312. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1984.

Ferlie, E., Challis, D. and Davies, B. Models of innovation in the care of the elderly. DP281/2, PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Ferlie, E., Pahl, J. and Quine, L. Professional collaboration in services for mentally handicapped people. DP305. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1984.

Judge, K. From the tyranny of the case to the myth of the community: reflections on the Barclay Report. In: The Barclay Report: Papers from a Consultation Day: National Institute for Social Work Paper no. 15, pp. 68-77, 1983.

Judge, K. Residential Care for the Elderly: Purposes and resources. DP298. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Judge, K. Private Insurance or Social Security? The Case for for a Beveridge Death Grant. In: Jones C and Stevenson J. (Eds.) The Yearbook of Social Policy 1983 pp. 166-180. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984.

Judge, K, Hampson, R and Renshaw, J. Monitoring 'Care in the community': a modular research framework. DP303. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1984.

Judge, K, Knapp, M and Smith, J. The comparative costs of public residential homes for the elderly. In: Department of Health and Social Security, Seminar on Residential Care for Elderly People: Background Papers, pp. 61-77, 1983.

Judge, K, Knapp, M, Williams, A and Wright, K. Resource Implications of Community Care Options. In: Elderly People in the Community: Their Service Needs, pp. 169-191. HMSO. 1983.

Judge, K, Smith, J and Taylor-Gooby, P. Public Opinion and the Privatisation of Welfare: Some Theoretical Implications, Journal of Social Policy, vol. 12(4), pp. 469-90, October 1983.

Knapp, M. The Resource Consequences of Changes in Child Care Policy: Foster Care and Intermediate Treatment. In: Lishman J. (ed.) Research Highlights No. 6: Working with Children, pp 29-52. Department of Social Work, University of Aberdeen, 1983

Knapp, M. The Outputs of Old People's Homes in the Post War Period. The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, vol. 3(3), pp. 55-85, 1983.

Knapp, M. The direct and hidden costs of residential child care: the mid-Glamorgan non-residential services study. DP321. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1984.

Knapp, M and Bryson, D. Survey of Residential accommodation for children: feedback report no. 1. DP300. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Knapp, M, Bryson, D and Lewis, J. The Suffolk cohort study of children entering care. DP294. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983

Knapp, M and Missiakoulis, S. Predicting turnover Rates Among the Staff of English and Welsh Old People's Homes. Social Science and Medicine, vol. 17, pp 29-36, 1983.

Knapp, M and Smith, J. The PSSRU National Survey of Children's Homes, report no. 2. DP322. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1984.

Missiakoulis, S. Sargan Densities-Which One? Journal of Econometrics, vol 23, pp. 223-33, 1983.

Missiakoulis, S. The current state of data envelopment analysis. DP323 PSSUR, University of Kent, 1984

Missiakoulis, S and Tong, M. Probit versus logit: A three way comparison. DP275, PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Bebbington, A C and Davies, B. Territorial need indicators: a reply (comment). Journal of Social Policy, Vol 12(2) pp. 246-50.

Bebbington, A C and Davies, B. Equity and Efficiency in the Allocation of the Personal Social Services. Journal of Social Policy, Vol. 12(2), 1983.

Bebbington, A C with Tong, M S. The Residential Survey: a preliminary needs indicator report DP 265. Circulated within the DHSS.

Bebbington, A C and Darton R A with Tong, M S. Needs Indicators for the Elderly: a report of the PSSRU survey of Old People's Homes DP 273. Circulated within the DHSS.

Challis, D J and Shepherd, R D. An assessment of the potential of mentally handicapped patients for community living. British Journal of Social Work, September 1983.

Challis, D J, Luckett, R and Chessum, R. A new life for the elderly at home. Community Care, 24 March 1983, pp. 22-24.

Ferlie, E B. A sourcebook of initiatives in the community care of the elderly. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1982.

Joliffe, I, Jones, B, Knapp, M and Morgan, B. Classifications of the elderly population. Ageing and Society, Vol. 2, No. 3 pp. 331-355, November 1982.

Judge, K. The public purchase of social care — British confirmation of the American experience. Policy and Politics, Vol. 10, No. 4 pp. 397-416, 1982.

Judge, K. and Smith, J. Purchase of service in England. Social Service Review, Vol. 57, No. 2, 1983.

Knapp, M. Economies of scale in local public services: the case of British crematoria. Applied Economics, Vol. 14, pp. 447-453, October 1982.

Knapp, M. The Comparative Costs of Intermediate Treatment and Custodial Sentences: The Medway Close Support Unit Study. PSSRU, Report to the Home Office, December 1982.

Knapp, M. and Bryson, D. Income, Expenditure and Activity Variations Between Marriage Guidance Councils. PSSRU, Report to the National Marriage Guidance Council, November 1982.

Knapp, M. Bryson, D and Matthews, J. Child care costs and policies. Social Work Service, No. 32, pp. 33-37, Winter 1982.

Knapp, M. Gerrard, B. and Warr, B. Cheap and cheerful? Foster Care, No. 33, pp. 20-21, March 1983.

Knapp, M. Goda, D. and Missiakoulis, S. Cost variations in Scottish adult training centres. Local Government Studies, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1983.

Knapp, M. and Missiakoulis, S. Predicting turnover rates among the staff of English and Welsh old people's homes, Social Science and Medicine, Vol. 17, pp. 29-36, 1983.

Knox, B. Questat Users Guide Part I Reference Manual. DP 270. PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Missiakoulis, S. Questat Users Guide Part II. Guide to the Models and their Statistics. DP271, PSSRU, University of Kent, 1983.

Qureshi, H. Challis, D and Davies, B. Motivations and rewards of helpers in the Kent Community Care Scheme. In Hatch, S (ed). Volunteers: Patterns, Meanings and Motives, pp. 144-168. The Volunteer Centre, London, 1982.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to implement paragraph 149 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies on the advancement of women relating to the increased participation of women in higher professional and managerial positions in health institutions.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department is using the appropriate gender-specific indicators for monitoring women's health developed by the World Health Organisation and referred to in paragraph 161 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking strategies on the advancement of women.

Mr. Whitney: Yes. We use the World Health Organisation's gender-specific indicators, along with many other similar systems, to monitor women's health in this country in the context of the health status of the population as a whole.

Geriatric Beds (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many acute geriatric beds there are in each Hampshire hospital presently; and what are the comparative figures for each year from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *83-4*]: Information is not held centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information is given in the table.

The average daily number of available beds in departments of geriatric medicine in NHS hospitals classified as acute, mainly acute and partly acute in Hampshire

Hospital	*Average daily number of available beds*					
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
St. Mary's General Hospital	123·9	131·0	155·2	171·0	160·9	151·4
Queen Alexandra Hospital	113·1	119·0	117·3	117·0	120·3	122·3
Gosport War Memorial Hospital	23·0	23·0	23·0	23·0	23·0	23·1
Royal South Hampshire Hospital	15·0	21·7	15·5	15·3	15·0	15·1
Southampton General Hospital	45·7	44·9	48·0	48·0	78·5	112·3
Southampton Western Hospital*	36·4	37·6	38·0	38·0	13·2	—
Royal Hampshire County Hospital	16·3	16·2	18·1	20·3	26·8	28·7
Alton General Hospital	52·0	52·0	52·0	62·1	64·0	52·1
Basingstoke District Hospital, General Division	78·0	81·9	80·9	88·5	105·6	106·2

* Southampton Western Hospital was closed for in-patients from 4 June 1983.

Hospital Pharmacy Service

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of hospital pharmacists currently employed in each health district; and what is the ratio of hospital pharmacists to hospital patients treated annually in each of those districts.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 November 1985, c. *284*]: The latest available figures for hospital pharmacists employed, and inpatients and day patients treated in each health district are shown in the table. Available statistics do not differentiate between types of activity in hospitals. Crude ratios of staff to total patients are not therefore meaningful.

District Health Authority	*In-patient cases plus day cases during 1984*	*Hospital pharmacists*† at 30 September 1984 whole time equivalent*
Northern		
Hartlepool	19,561	5
North Tees	26,641	11
South Tees	58,436	28
East Cumbria	24,594	10
South Cumbria	21,727	10

District Health Authority	In-patient cases plus day cases during 1984	Hospital pharmacists*† at 30 September 1984 whole time equivalent
West Cumbria	17,518	5
Darlington	19,772	5
Durham	19,327	7
North West Durham	15,605	3
South West Durham	17,872	4
Northumberland	29,873	12
Gateshead	27,498	6
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	95,782	41
North Tyneside	20,137	6
South Tyneside	18,842	6
Sunderland	55,553	20
Yorkshire		
Hull	55,436	10
East Yorks	26,198	10
Grimsby	26,510	7
Scunthorpe	25,721	5
Northallerton	9,183	4
York	34,489	18
Scarborough	22,371	7
Harrogate	20,680	15
Bradford	65,574	24
Airedale	23,103	8
Calderdale	28,259	12
Huddersfield	27,514	25
Dewsbury	21,748	8
Leeds Western	65,962	34
Leeds Eastern	63,431	33
Wakefield	30,187	14
Pontefract	26,247	7
Trent		
North Derbyshire	31,647	14
South Derbyshire	56,820	30
Leicestershire	113,137	59
North Lincolnshire	33,665	12
South Lincolnshire	34,029	9
Bassetlaw	13,179	6
Central Nottinghamshire	38,924	21
Nottingham	101,868	61
Barnsley	28,759	10
Doncaster	43,624	8
Rotherham	36,053	12
Sheffield	106,384	44
East Anglian		
Cambridge	46,690	21
Peterborough	34,101	7
West Suffolk	27,348	18
East Suffolk	38,971	5
Norwich	64,038	20
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	24,978	6
West Norfolk and Wisbech	23,623	7
Huntingdon	14,401	7
North West Thames		
North Bedfordshire	26,076	9
South Bedfordshire	30,948	17
North Hertfordshire	22,198	11
East Hertfordshire	19,107	8
North West Hertfordshire	26,330	19
South West Hertfordshire	21,228	12
Barnet	42,775	26
Harrow	32,530	23
Hillingdon	45,474	19
Hounslow and Spelthorne	45,252	21
Ealing	23,446	14
Brent	26,155	17
Paddington	43,274	19
Hammersmith and Fulham	33,771	22
Victoria	35,533	44
North East Thames		
Basildon and Thurrock	38,158	17
Mid Essex	28,854	Nil
North East Essex	40,779	28
West Essex	30,344	12
Southend	37,672	10
Barking/Havering/Brentwood	51,191	21
Hampstead	29,204	27
Bloomsbury	72,595	51
Islington	30,227	17
City and Hackney	48,118	30
Newham	25,275	10
Tower Hamlets	39,838	30
Enfield	24,243	9
Haringey	31,764	19
Redbridge	23,044	8
Waltham Forest	41,304	20
South East Thames		
Brighton	41,400	23
Eastbourne	26,580	14
Hastings	22,328	6
South East Kent	32,108	11
Canterbury and Thanet	44,154	15
Dartford and Gravesham	33,162	12
Maidstone	23,649	11
Medway	40,262	5
Tunbridge Wells	36,344	11
Bexley	23,206	8
Greenwich	44,794	19
Bromley	33,906	17
West Lambeth	54,871	39
Camberwell	40,145	27
Lewisham and North Southwark	65,565	47
South West Thames		
North West Surrey	31,064	13
West Surrey and North East Hants	26,363	10
South West Surrey	28,744	10
Mid Surrey	20,243	10
East Surrey	21,699	14
Chichester	20,284	8
Mid Downs	30,488	8
Worthing	29,011	12
Croydon	33,841	13
Kingston and Esher	27,009	12
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	19,782	12
Wandsworth	51,970	36
Merton and Sutton	37,702	14
Oxford		
East Berkshire	41,650	17
West Berkshire	52,758	15
Aylesbury	29,331	8
Wycombe	27,146	7
Milton Keynes	11,184	6
Kettering	29,691	3
Northampton	39,700	14
Oxfordshire	83,054	27
Wessex		
East Dorset	61,801	20
West Dorset	21,414	8
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	66,673	30
Southampton and South West Hampshire	77,491	29
Winchester	22,715	10
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	25,462	8
Salisbury	22,552	11
Swindon	30,590	11
Bath	54,330	16
Isle of Wight	16,800	4

District Health Authority	In-patient cases plus day cases during 1984	Hospital pharmacists*† at 30 September 1984 whole time equivalent
South Western		
Bristol and Weston	68,870	24
Frenchay	24,662	13
Southmead	36,531	13
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	44,229	14
Exeter	51,862	18
North Devon	19,775	6
Plymouth	57,931	15
Torbay	32,312	11
Cheltenham	27,396	10
Gloucester	37,519	18
Somerset	49,545	15
West Midlands		
Bromsgrove and Redditch	16,445	6
Herefordshire	22,189	7
Kidderminster and District	15,683	4
Worcester and District	29,437	12
Shropshire	51,376	18
Mid Staffordshire	26,345	10
North Staffordshire	64,229	23
South East Staffordshire	22,719	12
Rugby	10,071	2
North Warwickshire	19,704	8
South Warwickshire	27,393	10
Central Birmingham	60,405	35
East Birmingham	28,906	12
North Birmingham	28,937	12
South Birmingham	43,414	22
West Birmingham	40,917	21
Coventry	54,652	15
Dudley	41,807	18
Sandwell	26,073	7
Solihull	20,310	4
Walsall	27,988	8
Wolverhampton	45,299	11
Mersey		
Chester	34,317	16
Crewe	33,423	6
Halton	1,325	4
Macclesfield	14,968	9
Warrington	28,462	16
Liverpool (district services central southern sector, Eastern sector)	59,737	57
St. Helens and Knowsley	38,723	15
Southport and Formby	18,276	8
South Sefton	52,512	20
Wirral	55,187	20
North Western		
Lancaster	32,077	10
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	43,157	12
Preston	46,021	21
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	45,098	13
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	36,284	13
West Lancashire	18,326	7
Chorley and South Ribble	6,009	3
Bolton	39,273	9
Bury	23,681	7
North Manchester	47,172	19
Central Manchester	56,853	15
South Manchester	83,028	19
Oldham	30,350	9
Rochdale	26,227	5
Salford	47,569	28
Stockport	40,692	17
Tameside and Glossop	26,412	6
Trafford	22,780	8
Wigan	42,157	10

Notes:

These tables give figures for each District Health Authority within the fourteen English regions.

The definitions used to produce the tables are as follows:

* Figures are whole time equivalent, rounded to the nearest whole number.

† Excludes Regional Pharmacy officers, and District Pharmacy officers. Excludes Pharmacists employed in Regional Health Authority Headquarters and Headquarters Units.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 December 1985

WALES

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he will make known his plans for local authority expenditure for 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following the autumn review of public expenditure, I have decided that the total available for capital expenditure allocation for Wales will be £323 million. This is £60 million, or 23 per cent., more than the total available for 1985-86, and is consistent with delivery of the plans in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement to the House on 12 November.

Following my requests in July and December 1984 for expenditure restraint, councils have succeeded in reducing their capital expenditure in 1984-85 from an initial excess of around £90 million (33 per cent.) to £16 million (6 per cent.). In the light of this reduction I have decided to waive all outstanding offsets to capital allocations for both 1985-86 and 1986-87. District council spending power is therefore £10 million more than it otherwise would have been.

The total of councils' accumulated receipts increased substantially in 1984-85 but has remained broadly stable in the current year. I have therefore decided not to change for 1986-87 the prescribed proportion of captial receipts from the sale of assets which local authorities may use for additional capital expenditure. This will allow councils to make substantial additions to their capital spending using their new and accumulated receipts in 1986-87.

The increase in allocation which this package represents is further evidence that by keeping a tight rein on their expenditure in recent years local authorities in Wales have made it possible for me to make substantial additional sums available for much needed capital investment. I am sure that this will be welcomed by all concerned.

I shall shortly make announcements on the allocation of these resources to services and individual local authorities in the usual way.

Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to provide resources necessary to permit full and effective consultation if any health authority in Wales is required to take steps that materially affect the service it offers residents in its area in any aspect of its work, arising from financial constraints placed upon it by the Welsh Office.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The rationalisation of services and the consultation that is required are part of a health authority's normal management responsibility. There is no justification for special funding.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what local unemployment figures are available for a basis of comparison in the movement of unemployment figures over the past 10 years; and how far back comparisons can be made with those local figures of unemployment which will henceforth be used.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A consistent seasonally adjusted series of unemployment figures is available for Wales as a whole back to 1974. As a result of changes in methods of collection and analysis, there are, however, no figures for local unemployment which can be properly used as a basis of comparison over the whole of the past 10 years. Discontinuities in the figures have occurred as a result of three events: first, the change in the basis of the count in October 1982 from registered unemployed to a claimants system; secondly, the effects of the 1983 Budget provisions whereby some men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer need to sign on at the unemployment benefit offices to receive benefits; and, thirdly, the recent change to a ward-based system for allocating claimants to localities.

The recently introduced "ward-based" unemployment figures, which give a more accurate geographical representation of areas than any previous series, is to be made available from June 1983, although it was only fully introduced earlier this year.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the level of unemployment in each local area in Wales for which figures are available for September; and if he will indicate the corresponding figures drawn up on the same basis, for each such local area for January and August respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The smallest area for which unemployment rates are calculated is the travel-to-work area. The following information is therefore on that basis:

	January 1985	*Per cent.*	*August 1985*	*Per cent.*	*September 1985*	*Per cent.*
Aberdare	4,067	21·9	3,884	20·9	3,962	21·3
Aberystwyth	1,356	11·8	1,457	12·7	1,474	12·8
Bangor and Caernarfon	5,295	19·7	5,067	18·8	5,358	19·9
Brecon	864	11·3	791	10·4	886	11·6
Bridgend	9,081	16·9	9,063	16·8	9,651	17·9
Cardiff	29,881	15·1	29,390	14·8	30,762	15·5
Cardigan	1,586	25·2	1,494	23·8	1,604	25·5
Carmarthen	1,657	9·9	1,624	9·7	1,747	10·4
Conwy and Colwyn	4,964	16·2	4,147	13·6	4,398	14·4
Denbigh	1,253	14·5	1,234	14·3	1,260	14·6
Dolgellau and Barmouth	737	16·9	550	12·6	610	14·0
Ebbw Vale/Abergavenny	7,291	20·6	6,890	19·5	7,428	21·0

	January 1985	Per cent.	August 1985	Per cent.	September 1985	Per cent.
Fishguard	669	21·3	668	21·3	686	21·9
Haverfordwest	3,908	18·8	3,836	18·4	4,086	19·6
Holyhead	3,939	23·2	3,725	21·9	4,002	23·5
Lampeter and Aberaeron	1,115	24·4	1,006	22·0	1,161	25·4
Llandeilo	485	14·9	504	15·4	535	16·4
Llandrindod Wells	1,121	15·3	1,048	14·3	1,090	14·8
Llanelli	6,193	19·2	5,688	17·6	6,214	19·2
Machynlleth	598	20·0	483	16·2	502	16·8
Merthyr and Rhymney	10,886	20·7	10,705	20·3	11,344	21·6
Monmouth	645	13·3	639	13·2	655	13·5
Neath and Port Talbot	8,581	17·0	7,565	15·0	8,332	16·5
Newport	13,173	16·3	12,712	15·8	13,587	16·9
Newtown	1,151	13·9	1,035	12·5	1,058	12·7
Pontypool and Cwmbran	6,330	16·8	6,116	16·2	6,592	17·5
Pontypridd and Rhondda	11,712	18·3	11,003	17·2	11,733	18·3
Porthmadog/Ffestiniog	1,136	18·7	860	14·2	975	16·1
Pwllheli	1,230	23·0	849	15·9	964	18·0
Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	13,530	20·0	12,258	18·1	13,370	19·7
South Pembrokeshire	3,152	23·4	2,660	19·8	2,950	21·9
Swansea	18,997	17·0	17,981	16·1	19,081	17·1
Welshpool	960	14·6	870	13·2	918	13·9
Wrexham	8,309	18·3	7,919	17·5	8,593	18·9

Housing Corporation

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied that the Housing Corporation in Wales takes adequate steps to ensure that the needs of each area are properly understood by them, and that proper discussions take place with local housing departments before the Housing Corporation-implemented plans are formulated or updated.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange to discuss with Arfon borough council and the Housing Corporation what plans exist to meet the housing needs of elderly persons in the Caernarfon area.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am satisfied that the Housing Corporation and Arfon borough council are continuing to discuss all housing needs in the Caernarfon area, including those of the elderly.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for the most recent available year, an analysis by local planning committees area of the number of planning appeals under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 made to him, from each such area, together with the number of appeals upheld and rejected, respectively, for each such area.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information for 1984, the latest complete year, is as follows:

S36 Appeals—Wales 1984

	No. Appeals Received	No. Decisions Issued Allowed	Dismissed
Alyn & Deeside District Council	11	6	7
Colwyn Borough Council	26	9	6
Delyn Borough Council	8	7	10
Glyndwr Borough Council	10	5	4
Rhuddlan Borough Council	28	8	9
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council	18	9	6
Carmarthen District Council	12	3	5
Ceredigion District Council	26	2	15
Dinefwr Borough Council	13	2	6
Llanelli Borough Council	12	4	10
Preseli District Council	12	3	7
South Pembrokeshire District Council	20	3	8
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	4	2	3
Islwyn Borough Council	19	5	4
Monmouth District Council	60	9	36
Newport Borough Council	34	7	18
Torfaen Borough Council	21	6	10
Aberconwy Borough Council	27	10	11
Arfon Borough Council	17	5	7
Dwyfor District Council	20	7	7
Meirionnydd District Council	16	3	4
Ynys Môn Borough Council	37	13	18
Cynon Valley Borough Council	14	4	6
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council	9	2	5

	No. Appeals Received	No. Decisions Issued Allowed	Dismissed
Ogwr Borough Council	34	6	22
Rhondda Borough Council	13	1	12
Rhymney Valley District Council	21	5	8
Taff-Ely Borough Council	24	8	12
Brecknock Borough Council	15	5	6
Montgomery District Council	12	1	7
Radnor District Council	4	—	4
Cardiff City Council	49	20	28
Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council	50	22	27
Afan Borough Council	5	—	1
Lliw Valley Borough Council	26	10	20
Neath Borough Council	6	3	5
Swansea City Council	73	14	28
Total	806	229	402

Note: Appeals involving proposals falling within national parks are included among the figures recorded for the constituent district planning authorities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

87. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken to make higher education more relevant to the needs of industry.

Mr. Walden: Improving the effectiveness of higher education's contribution to the national economy is central to the Government's educational policies. This aim, and the specific measures designed to encourage the growing partnership between higher education and industry, were spelt out in our recent Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s".

These measures include financial support through the Science and Engineering Research Council for the teaching company and other schemes which link higher education and industry in collaborative projects; responding to the requests of industry and others for additional higher education student places in science, engineering and technology — most recently in the engineering and technology programme, which will provide about 5,000 such additional places by the end of the decade; appointing more industrialists to national planning bodies for higher education and to the governing bodies and councils of individual institutions; and the establishment of schemes which encourage retraining and containing education for employees, such as the PICKUP programme.

Trauma (Research)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research is being sponsored by the Medical Research Council into trauma; whether he has any plans to extend the existing trauma research facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Medical Research Council (MRC) is funding 38 projects on research into trauma; this includes two projects omitted in error in my reply of 25 November, at columns *397* and *398*, to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). It is for the MRC to decide how, within its charter purposes, to apportion the grant-in-aid it receives from the Department's science budget between the various areas of science which it supports. The council is always willing to consider soundly-based research proposals for support through its grants schemes in competition with other applications.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures to show the number of pupils educated by each education authority in London in 1978, 1982 and 1985; and if he will give the same information for Leicestershire.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers of full-time and part-time pupils in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in each local education authority in Greater London and in Leicestershire in 1978, 1982 and 1985 were as follows:—

January	*1978*	*1982*	*1985*
Barking	28,914	26,665	24,916
Barnet	47,344	43,372	41,532
Bexley	40,088	37,203	34,000
Brent	43,619	38,859	35,897
Bromley	48,666	43,102	39,023
Croydon	57,230	50,197	45,296
Ealing	47,816	41,886	39,363
Enfield	47,424	43,391	40,259
Haringey	38,033	31,535	27,999
Harrow	32,103	29,162	27,171
Havering	47,359	42,553	38,864
Hillingdon	42,056	38,296	35,220
Hounslow	36,819	33,811	32,589
Kingston-upon-Thames	21,476	19,754	18,468
Merton	27,636	25,174	23,342
Newham	43,799	39,854	37,764
Redbridge	36,365	33,282	30,994
Richmond-upon-Thames	19,829	17,194	16,706
Sutton	27,552	25,096	22,997
Waltham Forest	39,554	36,888	33,776
ILEA	383,752	323,129	294,207
Leicestershire	163,493	152,880	144,056

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each local education authority in England, at the latest available date, the number and proportion of children of compulsory school age in (i) mainstream, maintained schools and (ii) special schools whose education is governed by a statement under the provisions of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mandatory Grants

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the saving to his Department of the changes in the mandatory grant regulations between 1984-85 and 1985-86; and whether this saving is ongoing to future years.

Mr. Walden: The saving resulting from the abolition of the minimum maintenance award and increased parental contributions from those in the middle and upper reaches of the income scale is estimated at £19 million in 1985-86. In later years the effect in each full financial year is estimated at £28 million.

Students (Income)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report*, for the latest year available, the figures for income per student at the following universities *(a)* Birmingham, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Leeds, *(d)* Leicester, *(e)* Liverpool, *(f)* Manchester, *(g)* Newcastle, *(h)* Nottingham, *(i)* Oxford and *(j)* Sheffield under the headings (i) income from the University Grants Committee, (ii) direct income from local education authority in which the institution is located, (iii) endowments, (iv) investment income, (v) fees, (vi) research councils and (vii) other research and consultancy funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The recurrent income per full-time equivalent student load for the academic year 1983-84 is estimated to be as follows:

University	*(i) UGC recurrent*	*(ii) Endowments**	*(iii) Tuition fees†*	*(iv) Research councils grants and contracts‡*	*(v) Other research and consultancy funding‖*	*(vi) Total of i-v*	*(vii) Total recurrent income per student*
Birmingham	4,218	128	765	469	529	6,109	6,719
Bristol	4,369	27	658	633	850	6,536	6,990
Leeds	3,947	15	778	296	631	5,666	5,940
Leicester	3,740	14	709	436	552	5,451	5,755
Liverpool	4,801	30	811	354	505	6,501	6,719
Manchester	4,177	34	756	415	624	6,007	6,539
Newcastle	4,140	58	829	408	608	6,044	6,434
Nottingham	3,981	103	712	393	635	5,824	6,411
Oxford (University)	3,300	345	775	818	833	6,070	6,302
Oxford Colleges	—	n/a	¶1,600	n/a	n/a	—	—
Sheffield	4,138	84	727	394	453	5,796	5,940

n/a—not available.
*Includes endowments, donations and subscriptions.
†Includes fees for home, other and part-time courses (excludes fees for continuing education).
‡Excludes contributions from the research councils to special items of equipment.
‖Includes research grants and contracts other than those from the research councils, research training and other support grants, other services rendered for Government Departments, hospital authorities and others.
¶Estimate.
Information about direct income from local education authorities and investment income is not readily available.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report*, for the latest year available, the figures for the income per student at the following polytechnics: *(a)* Birmingham, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Leeds, *(d)* Leicester, *(e)* Liverpool, *(f)* Manchester, *(g)* Newcastle, *(h)* Nottingham (Trent), *(i)* Oxford and *(j)* Sheffield under the headings (i) income from the advanced further education pool, (ii) direct income from the local education authority in which the institution is located, (iii) endowments, (iv) investment income, (v) fees, (vi) research and (vii) other research and consultancy funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The table below gives figures for the latest available year, 1983-84. The differences between columns (v) and (vi) are largely accounted for by income from maintaining authorities, but may also include inter-authority payments and income from other sources.

Polytechnics' financial year 1983-84

Income per full-time equivalent student (£ cash)

	(i) From AFE pool	*(ii) Tuition fees*	*(iii) Research and consultancy fees*	*(iv) Other non-grant income*	*(v) Total (i)-(iv)*	*(vi) Total expenditure per FTE student*
Birmingham	2,179	542	—	55	2,776	3,195
Bristol	2,055	533	—	104	2,692	3,265
Leeds	2,067	525	35	53	2,680	3,087
Leicester	2,253	574	107	80	3,014	3,189
Liverpool	2,145	583	—	39	2,767	3,512
Manchester	1,909	531	—	41	2,481	3,242
Newcastle	2,122	572	—	12	2,706	3,092

	(i) From AFE pool	(ii) Tuition fees	(iii) Research and consultancy fees	(iv) Other non-grant income	(v) Total (i)-(iv)	(vi) Total expenditure per FTE student
Nottingham (Trent)	2,224	520	46	50	2,840	3,229
Oxford	2,186	570	—	5	2,761	3,301
Sheffield	2,220	545	48	97	2,910	3,214

Note: These figures are for those components of income that are separately indentified in returns made by local authorities, and their total, alongside the total recurrent expenditure per student of each polytechnic.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the percentage change in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1983-84, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant changes in the level of local authority rates, additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1983-84, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* exluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Young Persons (Special Educational Needs)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to offer advice to local education authorities on the role of further education colleges in providing for young people with special educational needs.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am considering what advice can usefully be offered on this subject to colleges and local education authorities.

School Reorganisation

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implications for school reorganisation of the judgment of Mr. Justice Taylor in respect of Avon county council's proposals for south Bristol and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975; and how many proposals for reorganisation are currently awaiting his decision to which the ruling is relevant.

Mr. Dunn: It would be premature for my right hon. Friend to reply to this question until it is clear that the judicial process has run its full course, or before he has been able to consider a full transcript of the judgment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Brixton Prison (Strip Searches)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners on remand at Brixton prison are strip searched; and whether he will publish a table showing the number of times per day they are strip searched, where the searching takes place and what is the sex of the prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: Rule 39 of the prison rules 1964 provides that every prisoner, male and female and including those on remand, shall be searched on reception into prison and thereafter as the governor thinks necessary. Standing instructions provide that the search on reception should be a strip search, and other times at which prisoners may be strip searched include before and after court appearances, before and after visits, at the time of cell changes and during wing and cell searches. The frequency of such searches in individual cases will depend upon a range of factors including the incidence of court appearances, visits etc., and the security category of the prisoner concerned. The location of a search will depend upon the circumstances in which it is carried out. Comprehensive information of the kind requested is not available because establishments are not required to maintain statistics of the number of strip searches carried out.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson are strip-searched in Brixton prison, and why.

Mr. Mellor: Strip searching is a routine security measure for the detection of small items of contraband, in particular weapons and drugs, which can be concealed easily about the person and cannot be detected by other methods of searching. Miss O'Dwyer and Miss Anderson have been strip searched in accordance with standard practice, before and after court appearances, after visits, at the time of cell changes and during wing and cell searches.

Rape Crisis Centres

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the names of the rape crisis centres which receive Government grants, specifying the grants allocated for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Mellor: The rape counselling and research project receives a grant from the Department of Health and Social Security. The amount of the grant for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 will be £22,000 each year. Local rape crisis centres are not provided with direct Government funding, but can apply in the same way as other voluntary organisations for financial assistance

under various general Government programmes, such as the urban programme. The Department has no information about the number of rape crisis centres which are funded in this way.

Prison Officers

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to refusals by insurance companies to consider applications from prison officers serving in certain establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Department has received no information that prison officers have been refused personal insurance.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prison officers of all ranks serving in penal establishments in Britain and Northern Ireland have, within the last five years, been recorded as suffering from heart attacks or other stress related conditions; and how many have died from such ailments whilst still serving;

(2) how many prison officers serving in a dispersal prison within the United Kingdom or who are recorded as having served in a dispersal prison have died from a heart attack or related ailment within the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Information about the circumstances of staff sickness or the death of serving officers is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present average prison sentence now being served by a person who has been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr. Mellor: The average time served under sentence in prison department establishments in England and Wales by those first released on licence from life sentences in 1984 was about ten and a half years. There are wide variations in the periods served in custody from which this average is calculated and it does not take into account any time that may have been served in other custodial care before entering a prison department establishment. This average excludes those persons who have died in custody or been discharged for other reasons. Also, it does not fully reflect the longest periods likely to be served by some of those given life sentences following the abolition of capital punishment in 1965 who have not yet been released.

Hampshire Constabulary

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the establishment of the Hampshire constabulary in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

Authorised Police Establishment
On 31 December

	Number
1965	*2,321
1970	2,750
1975	2,845
1980	3,034
1985	3,038

Note:
* The authorised establishment figure given for 31 December 1965 combines the establishments of the then separate forces of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. These police areas were amalgamated in 1967 to form the Hampshire police area.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilians have been employed by the Hampshire constabulary in each year since 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

Civilian staff

On 31 December	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1965	†324	—
1970	476	58
1975	621	124
1980	644	145
*1985	689	148

Notes:
* 31 October.
† The civilian staff number given for 31 December 1965 combines the staff numbers in the then separate forces of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. These police areas were amalgamated in 1967 to form the Hampshire police area.

Unmarked Police Vehicles

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for reports from chief constables about their guidelines regarding the use of unmarked police vehicles by constabularies in England and Wales;

(2) if he will call for reports from chief constables about how many police forces in England and Wales use unmarked police vehicles for motorway patrol duties; and if he will list the names of such constabularies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The use of unmarked police vehicles, whether for motorway patrol or other duties, is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police, in which it would not be appropriate for us to intervene.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consideration he has given to the use of compulsory quotas as a means of overcoming racial discrimination in the employment of young perons.

Mr. Waddington: None. Under the Race Relations Act 1976 any racial discrimination at the point of employment is unlawful. We have no plans to amend the law in this respect.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consideration Her Majesty's Government have given to imposing conditions regarding racial discrimination in the employment of young people when awarding Government contracts.

Mr. Waddington: The Government already require their contractors not to discriminate unlawfully within the

meaning of the provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976 relating to employment and to take all reasonable steps to ensure that their servants, employees, agents and sub-contractors do not do so.

Fire Services (New Guidelines)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new guidelines for fire services are to be published.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the hon. Member is concerned with the guidelines by which fire authorities assess the number of pumping appliances required in any locality. These are contained in the report of the joint committee on standards of fire cover of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Councils for England and Wales and Scotland, which was endorsed in Fire Service circular No. 4/1985 issued on 22 May.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Roskill Committee

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General when he expects to receive a report and recommendations from the Roskill Committee.

The Solicitor-General: The committee has reached the final stages of its deliberations and a report is expected in the near future.

Falklands War (Information Leaks)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General when he now expects the Director of Public Prosecutions to complete his investigations into alleged leaks to unauthorised persons of information relating to the deliberations of the War Cabinet during the Falklands conflict.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions hopes to complete his investigations shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Labour Statistics

25. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's estimate of unemployed people who are actively seeking work; and what assumptions are made in calculating that figure as to the number of people classified as unemployed who are not registered at job centres.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

According to the labour force survey, there were an estimated 2,905,000 people without jobs and actively seeking work in Great Britain in the spring of 1984. This figure is derived from household interviews and no assumption is made of the numbers of people claiming benefits or registered at jobcentres.

Falkland Islands

30. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will initiate discussions with President Alfonsin of Argentina about the future of the Falkland Islands; and if she will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

Our position on sovereignty over the Falkland Islands is clear; it follows that the answer is no. But we have consistently sought to improve our bilaterial relations with Argentina

President Reagan

41. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister what discussions she has held with President Reagan since his recent meeting with Mr. Gorbachev in Geneva.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 25 November at columns *391-392*. I have had no other meeting with President Reagan since the Geneva summit.

Engagements

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 December.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Luxembourg for a meeting of the European Council.

ENERGY

Advancement of Women

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what meetings he has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss those parts of the United Nations Nairobi conference document forward looking strategies for the advancement of women which are relevant to his Department; and what plans he has for further meetings on this topic.

Mr. Peter Walker: No meetings have been held between my Department and the Equal Opportunities Commission and none is planned.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, showing in each case the total number of appointees and the number who are women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information as at 2 December 1985 is as follows:

	Total members	*Women*
British Gas Corporation	11	Nil
National Coal Board	9	Nil
Electricity Council	5	Nil
Central Electricity Generating Board	8	Nil
Area electricity boards in England and Wales London Electricity Board	8	1
South Eastern Electricity Board	8	1
Southern Electricity Board	8	1
South Western Electricity Board	8	1
Eastern Electricity Board	8	Nil
East Midlands Electricity Board	8	2
Midlands Electricity Board	8	1
South Wales Electricity Board	8	Nil
Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board	8	1
Yorkshire Electricity Board	8	1
North Eastern Electricity Board	7	1
North Western Electricity Board	8	Nil
British National Oil Corporation	7	Nil
Oil and Pipelines Agency	4	Nil
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	13	Nil
Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power	17	Nil
Offshore Energy Technology Board	19	Nil

I am also consulted on appointments before they are made to the board of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., in respect of which I am sole shareholder, and with respect to certain of the appointments to the board of the National Nuclear Corporation Ltd. There are currently 12 and 10 respectively on these boards. There are no women appointees.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to evaluate the successful implementation of those parts of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women applicable to his Department; what resources have been allocated to this task; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: A copy of the United Nations Nairobi conference document on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women has been received by my Department. The document is being studied to determine necessary action to implement the recommendations relevant to this Department.

I have no plans to make a statement.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the United Nations Nairobi conference document on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women relating to the collection of statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following statistics are compiled by my Department and are submitted periodically to the Treasury:—(i) the numbers of men and women employed; (ii) the number of posts restricted to one sex; (iii) the number of complaints from staff on equal opportunities matters; and (iv) the numbers of men and women attending training courses.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set up a special section in his Department to monitor and accelerate the process of equitable representations of women, as called for by paragraph 88 of the Nairobi conference document on forward looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Peter Walker: In accordance with policy, formulated by the Cabinet Office, an equal opportunities officer has been designated within my Department to review progress on all equal opportunities issues including monitoring and positive action where needed to secure an equitable representation of women.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Miners' Dispute

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland (1) if he will list for each region of Scotland his most recent information on the number of arrests, cases where proceedings have been instituted, and convictions arising from the miners' strike; and if he will list the offences for which persons have been *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted;

(2) if he will list for the duration of the miners' dispute *(a)* the number of people arrested and charged with an offence, *(b)* the number of people convicted and *(c)* the number of people acquitted, stating in each case the nature of the offence.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The information requested is not readily available, and I shall publish the information in the *Official Report* later.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textile Industry

89. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what specific steps he has taken to stimulate increased employment in the British textile industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The provision of specific Government aids to the textile and clothing sectors is not permitted under present European community policy. Companies in these sectors can, however, apply for assistance under the Department's national schemes of support and also through its regional schemes aimed at projects safeguarding or creating new jobs.

Extraterritoriality

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ensure that the statement to be made by Mr. David Hall of his Department on Government policy towards United States extraterritoriality on 3 December will reflect the declaration made by the Attorney-General in his letter to the hon. Member for Yeovil in July.

Mr. Howard: My officials will naturally reflect the Government's views on United States extraterritoriality as set out in the letter of 3 July 1985 from my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the hon. Gentleman.

Company Investigations

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what guidelines his Department uses in

considering applications from minority shareholders for investigations by his Department into companies under part XIV of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Howard: The circumstances set out in section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985.

Railway Development (Indonesia)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department has had with British industry and the Indonesian Government over the provision of concessionary finance for railway developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department has continuing contacts with all British companies interested in railway developments in Indonesia, and we are in touch with the Indonesian Government to explore mutually satisfactory forms of financial support.

Soft Loan Finance

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria his Department uses to determine whether soft loan finance should be made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Soft loan facilities under the aid and trade provision will be negotiated where there is a clear preference over aid in the form of grants plus export credits. Individual projects will have to satisfy the criteria of the aid and trade provision and support under a facility agreed with the recipient country.

Manufacturing Industry (Exports)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all those manufacturing industries whose exports in the latest year for which figures are available exceeded £4 billion in value.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *17*]: Exports of principal products of the following sectors of manufacturing industry (defined as classes in divisions 2 to 4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (1980)) exceeded £4 billion in 1984:

Class 25 Chemical Industry
Class 32 Mechanical Engineering
Class 34 Electrical and electronic Engineering

Source: *Business Monitor* MQ10 (Overseas trade analysed in terms of industries)

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Appeals

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the longest time, shortest time and average time it takes for planning inspectors' reports to be determined after the appeal has been heard.

Mr. Tracey: The chief planning inspector's report for 1984 contains statistics for the handling of planning appeals made under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. The time taken to reach and issue a decision after an inquiry or site visit by an inspector varies according to the procedure used to determine the appeal. Appeals may be "transferred" for decision by one of the Department's inspectors following a public inquiry or an informal hearing, or on the basis of written representations and a site visit. Or appeals may be "recovered" for decision by the Secretary of State—that is, by Ministers or by officials under the authority of Ministers—following a public inquiry or on the basis of written representations and a site visit. The following were the median times for each type of procedure in 1984:

Transferred section 36 appeals

(i) Written representations (82·2 per cent. of all appeals decided)
—site visit to decision letter=four weeks.

(ii) Inquiry cases (11·1 per cent.)
—inquiry to decision letter=five weeks.

(iii) Informal hearings (2·6 per cent.)
—hearing to decision letter=four weeks.

Recovered section 36 appeals

(i) Written representations (1·9 per cent.)
—site visit to receipt of case in decision branch=four weeks.
—receipt in decision branch to decision letter=nine weeks.

(ii) inquiry cases (2·2 per cent.)
—inquiry to receipt of case in decision branch=nine weeks
—receipt in decision branch to decision letter=12 weeks.

Depending on the complexity of the individual case, the longest and shortest times taken at the various stages vary widely around the median time for each procedure. Data in the form requested by my hon. Friend are not readily available.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals were decided between 1 September 1981 and 1 September 1985; and in how many cases the applicants were successful.

Mr. Tracey: Information on planning appeal statistics is published quarterly.

The total number of appeals decided and the number of those allowed between 1 October 1981 and the end of September 1985 can be broken down as follows:

Section 36 appeals	*Number decided*	*Number allowed*
October 1981 to September 1982	13,283	4,013
October 1982 to September 1983	11,320	3,706
October 1983 to September 1984	11,429	3,714
October 1984 to September 1985	14,150	5,041

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he began his consideration of the inspector's report on the planning appeal at Birtenshaw farm, Bolton; and on what date he reached a decision.

Mr. Tracey: Consideration of the inspector's report began on 14 March and the decision was issued on 18 July 1985.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many planning appeal cases between 1 September 1981 and 1 September 1985 he did not accept the inspector's report.

Mr. Tracey: In the calendar years 1981-84, 83 appeals under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 were decided contrary to inspectors' recommendations. There were 14 such decisions in the first six months of 1985.

Nitrates in Water

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Thames water authority has applied to his Department for an easing of the nitrate levels in water set by a recent European Economic Community directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No application has been made by the Thames water authority for a derogation from the maximum nitrate concentration in drinking water set by the EC drinking water directive (80/778).

Housing Policy

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the objectives of his housing policy.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend gave him on 18 November at column 62.

Private Renting

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to facilitate the renting of private property.

Sir George Young: The Government hope to introduce legislation, building on the initiatives already taken in the Housing Act 1980, to encourage the supply of more homes for renting in the private rented sector, but probably not during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to reintroduce 90 per cent. improvement grants for domestic roofs during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No. Repair grants up to 90 per cent. are still available where such a rate is justified, namely for those in hardship.

Planning Applications

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prohibit variations to planning application approvals being determined and authorised by paid officials acting alone under delegated powers.

Mr. Tracey: We have no plans to introduce legislation for this purpose. It is entirely proper for local planning authorities to decide whether and to what extent they delegate to officers decisions about variations to planning permissions.

Webbers Yard, Dartington

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to accelerate a decision by the European Commission with regard to the Webbers Yard, Dartington application for a grant from the European regional development fund for a new road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Although the final decision on the application rests with the European Commission, my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry, is doing all that it can to ensure a speedy and satisfactory outcome.

Rented Accommodation (Bradford)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to increase accommodation to rent in Bradford; what resources have been allocated to the Housing Corporation for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend announced on 20 November a gross provision of £2,532 million for capital investment by local authorities in 1986-87, with a total of £1,465 million available for housing investment programme (HIP) allocations, and a gross total of £685 million for the Housing Corporation's approved development plan. Bradford city council will be notified before Christmas of its HIP allocation for 1986-87. Local authorities have discretion in deciding the content of their capital programmes but we expect them to give priority to renovation of the existing housing stock and, in the case of new build, to concentrate on meeting special needs which cannot be met by the private sector. The breakdown of the Housing Corporation's programme for 1986-87 will be announced after consultation with the corporation, which will then be responsible for making allocations to individual housing associations and projects. Fair rent projects which will provide 643 homes for a total estimated cost of £16.645 million are currently being funded by the Housing Corporation in Bradford.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid to each local authority area in England and Wales in each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have today placed in the Library tables showing rate support grant paid to individual English and Welsh local authorities from and including 1981-82 to 1985-86, at constant 1985-86 prices, based on the latest supplementary report for each year. Because of the change in the way rate support grant was paid to different tiers of local authority, figures for earlier years are not available on a comparable basis. Cash figures have been adjusted by the GDP deflator. For 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86, the grant payable may be adjusted in future supplementary reports.

South Africa (Rugby Tour)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will circulate to individual members of the home rugby unions' committees guidelines concerning the Government's policy towards the proposed British Lions' tour of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I met the president and secretary of the RFU and made clear the Government's firm opposition towards the scheduled British Lions tour of South Africa. The South African rugby board has now announced that it is withholding the invitation for the tour.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Sector Pay

88. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the success or failure of Her Majesty's Government's guidelines on pay in the public sector.

Mr. MacGregor: Our policy for public sector pay has been and remains that it should reflect the need to recruit, retain and motivate the staff of the calibre required, within what can be afforded.

Family Income

Mr. Squire asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* which sets out for a two-child family on *(a)* half average earnings, *(b)* three quarters average earnings, *(c)* average earnings, *(d)* one and a half average earnings, *(e)* twice average earnings, *(f)* five times average earnings and *(g)* 10 times average earnings the increase, in net income to be derived from (i) a 1p cut in the standard rate of income tax, (ii) an increase in personal allowance, over and above indexation, which incurred the same cost as a 1p cut in standard rate income tax and (iii) an increase in child benefit which incurred the same cost as a 1p cut in standard rate income tax in 1985-86.

Mr. Moore: A cut of one penny in the basic rate of income tax would cost about £1,200 million in a full year at 1986-87 income levels, assuming indexation of allowances and thresholds as in the autumn statement 1985. The table below illustrates the effects of this reduction on the net income of a married man with two children. It also gives the effects of an increase in all the main personal allowances and an increase in child benefit which would have the same full year cost.

£ per week

*Multiple of average earnings**	*Increase in net income for married man with two children*						
	½	*¾*	*1*	*1½*	*2*	*5*	*10*
1p off basic rate	0·37	0·90	1·44	2·50	3·29	3·29	3·29
Allowances increased by 5½ per cent.	1·10	1·10	1·10	1·10	1·46	2·19	2·19
Child benefit increased by £1·90 per child†	3·80	3·80	3·80	3·80	3·80	3·80	3·80

*Assuming for illustration an increase in average earnings of 7 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1986-87 (paragraph 3.02, autumn statement, 1985).
†Assuming similar increases in the supplementary benefit ordinary scale rates for dependent children.

Personal Allowances

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing the rates of child benefit, single person's tax allowance and married man's allowance, at current and at 1979 constant prices, in April of each year since 1979.

Mr. Moore: The information is in the table.

	Child benefit (£ per week per child)		*Single person's tax allowance (£ per annum)*		*Married man's tax allowance (£ per annum)*	
	Current prices	**1979 prices*	*Current prices*	**1979 prices*	*Current prices*	**1979 prices*
April:						
1979	4·00	4·00	1,165	1,165	1,815	1,815
1980	4·00	3·29	1,375	1,129	2,145	1,762
1981	4·75	3·48	1,375	1,008	2,145	1,572
1982	5·25	3·52	1,565	1,049	2,445	1,638
1983	5·85	3·77	1,785	1,150	2,795	1,801
1984	6·50	3·98	2,005	1,228	3,155	1,933
1985	6·85	3·92	2,205	1,263	3,455	1,979

* Figures converted to 1979 prices using the movements in the RPI between April of each year.

Family Credit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the treatment for national accounting purposes of the proposed family credit.

Mr. MacGregor: It is intended that family credit will be classified for national accounting purposes as voted central Government expenditure.

Income Tax Reliefs

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total cost of income tax reliefs specifically for lone parents, distinguishing between the additional personal allowance, maintenance payments, school fees and other reliefs; and what was the comparable figure in 1970.

Mr. Moore: In 1985-86, the cost of the additional personal allowance for lone parents is expected to be about £150 million. In 1975-76, the earliest year for which a comparable figure is readily available, the cost is estimated to have been about £30 million. There are no other income tax reliefs specifically for lone parents.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Skinner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total level of overseas investment in 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Figures for overseas investment can be found in the 1985 edition of the "United Kingdom Balance of Payments" (The Pink Book). Table 8.2 gives United Kingdom private investment overseas, and table 11.1 gives United Kingdom external assets.

South Africa

Mr. Skinner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of direct British investment in South Africa in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The book value of direct United Kingdom investment in South Africa was £2,826 million at the end of 1981, the most recent date for which figures are available.

Cable and Wireless

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the contribution of his plans for offering shares in Cable and Wireless to Her Majesty's Government's policy on seeking wider public share ownership.

Mr. Moore: 48,796,399 ordinary shares (worth some £286 million at the offer price) are being made available by the Government for sale to members of the public and to employees and pensioners of Cable and Wireless. In the event of heavy demand, a further 5 million shares will be made available as well as any shares not taken up by existing shareholders.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the Government are not taking up their preferential entitlement of 12·8 million new shares in Cable and Wireless and offering this instead to Japan and Canada.

Mr. Moore: The Government are not taking up their preferential entitlement in accordance with their decision to sell their remaining ordinary shares in Cable and Wireless and their general policy of not retaining ordinary shareholdings in privatised companies. The decision to dispose of the new shares in Japan and Canada was a matter for the company.

Mr. Leigh asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about the Government's privatisation programme.

Mr. Moore: The Government are offering for sale its remaining 102,500,005 ordinary shares in Cable and Wireless in a joint offer with the company which is issuing 43,610,814 new ordinary shares. The offer will close on 11 December 1985. The company is also offering separately 12,812,500 new ordinary shares in Japan and Canada.

All the offered shares have been underwritten. The price has been fixed at £5·87 per share, with £3 payable on application and the balance of £2·87 payable on 7 March 1986. Gross proceeds to the Government will therefore be £602 million.

Depending on the level of demand, up to two thirds of the shares in the joint offer will be made available for the public, Cable and Wireless employees and pensioners, and existing shareholders.

A copy of the prospectus for the offer has been placed in the Library.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Government Debt)

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the amount of outstanding Government debt to countries in sub-Saharan Africa; and if he will give a breakdown by country.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Adult Training

13. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the adult training strategy.

Mr. Trippier: I have frequent meetings with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission and matters relating to the adult training strategy are regularly on the agenda.

29. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on Government proposals for adult training or retraining.

Mr. Trippier: Our main objective is to implement the adult training strategy so as to secure and sustain the skills necessary to meet the changing requirements of employers. We have recently written to the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to ask for proposals for re-focussing the commission's own adult training programmes to give a sharper focus on the needs of small businesses, promoting enterprise and self-employment and further developing the potential of open learning.

Labour Statistics

14. **Mr. Welsh** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently out of work.

17. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

25. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Paymaster General what is the present level of unemployment.

31. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the latest figures for unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,277,000.

41. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the current trends in unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployment has levelled off since the spring; the seasonally adjusted level has remained broadly unchanged over the past six months.

54. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed now; and how many were unemployed in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, was 3,175,000. The corresponding figure for May 1979 was 1,184,100.

57. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of persons classified as unemployed who are actively seeking work.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the spring of 1984, the latest date for which complete returns are available, the labour force survey estimated that there were 2,905,000 people without jobs and actively seeking work in Great Britain.

61. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Paymaster General how many more people have come on to the labour market since May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between mid-1979 and mid-1984 the net increase in the civilian labour force in Great Britain is estimated at 390,000.

63. **Mr. Charles Wardle** asked the Paymaster General what is the proportion of *(a)* employees in employment and *(b)* self-employed persons directly and indirectly engaged in the tourist industry.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 29 October at columns *425-26*.

65. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the total numbers in employment; and how this figure compares with one year and two years before.

Mr. Alan Clark: In June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the size of the employed labour force in Great Britain was estimated to be 23,684,000. This compares with 23,432,000 in June 1984 and 23,038,000 in June 1983. The figures have been adjusted for seasonal variations.

67. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the change in the number of employees in employment in the north-west region between 1979 and 1985 for *(a)* all industries and *(b)* manufacturing industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between June 1979 and June 1985 the number of employees in employment in all industries in the north-west region decreased by 307,000; employees in employment in the manufacturing industries decreased by 295,000.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is the most recent figure for the number of people who have been unemployed for *(a)* over three years, *(b)* over two years and *(c)* over one year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who, on 10 October 1985, had been unemployed for the durations requested.

	Number
Over three years	532,573
Over two years	823,127
Over one year	1,351,857

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in each travel-to-work area in Lancashire in 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is from censuses of employment taken in 1978 and 1981 and is as follows.

As results of the 1978 census are not available for the new travel-to-work areas announced last year, figures are given for the travel-to-work areas as defined before last year's review.

Employees in employment

Thousands

Travel-to-work area	*June 1978*	*September 1981*
Accrington	27·6	25·5
Blackburn	67·2	54·4
Blackpool	104·5	101·3
Burnley	45·0	40·1
Lancaster	44·1	44·3
Nelson	25·8	22·1
Ormskirk	28·4	26·9
Preston	140·9	140·8
Rossendale	19·2	16·3
Clitheroe	10·8	14·0
Barnoldswick	7·0	6·3

More up-to-date employment figures for travel-to-work areas will become available following the publication of the 1984 census of employment in the spring of 1986.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what is the current number of vacancies at jobcentres in *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Liverpool, *(c)* Southwark and *(d)* Sheffield.

Mr. Alan Clark: The numbers of unfilled vacancies (excluding community programme) at jobcentres in the local authority districts requested as at 4 October 1985 are as follows:

	Number
Glasgow	3,155
Liverpool	649
Southwark	703
Sheffield	558

Manufacturing and Production

15. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in manufacturing and production in 1979; and how many people are employed now.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In September 1979 the number of employees employed in manufacturing and production in Great Britain was 7,843,000. In September 1985 the figure was 5,982,000.

Temporary Employment and Training Schemes

16. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of persons in the Normanton constituency on temporary employment or training schemes.

Mr. Alan Clark: Some 11,000 people are being supported, at the latest available date, on our employment and training measures, in the Wakefield travel-to-work area or the geographical areas closest to it. Figures for the Normanton constituency are not available.

Tourism

18. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Paymaster General what he is doing to seek to encourage the dispersal of visitors out of the capital and into other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: We are providing £150,000 towards the cost of a new British travel centre in London which the

British Tourist Authority with British Rail and other partners hope to open by the start of next season. The BTA will continue, in its many marketing and advertising schemes, to encourage our overseas tourists to visit places outside of London. As announced in the White Paper on airport policy, the Government are putting increased emphasis on regional airports in international negotiations on traffic rights.

37. **Sir Peter Blaker** asked the Paymaster General what action he intends to take to seek to achieve the objectives set out in "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs."

Mr. Trippier: Work is continuing on the points for action listed in the report with the aim of agreeing improvements in time for the 1986 tourist season. Good progress has already been achieved on some points. For example, the introduction of the new voluntary hotel classification scheme and the agreement between the British Tourist Authority, British Rail and other partners to set up a new British travel centre in London next year. Many other action points are the responsibility of colleagues in other Departments. My right hon. and noble Friend will chair periodic meetings of colleagues to progress further the objectives of the "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs" report and to discuss any new obstacles to tourism's development which may emerge. Steps have also been taken to improve co-ordination of Government policies at regional level.

42. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Paymaster General if he intends to increase the funding of the English Tourist Board.

Mr. Trippier: Yes, but I cannot give a precise amount at this stage. We are increasing the total funding for the British Tourist Authority and English Tourist Board, including section 4, next year by some 20 per cent. to £40 million. Discussions will be held with the boards to decide how the money should be spent.

45. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Paymaster General if he will increase the funding of the regional tourist boards.

Mr. Trippier: The English regional tourist boards, which are non-statutory, receive Government funds through the English Tourist Board. The boards' needs will be taken into account when we consider the future level of the ETB's grant-in-aid, an how the additional funding which we have announced for tourism will be apportioned between the ETB and the British Tourist Authority.

47. **Mr. Holt** asked the Paymaster General how many tourists it is estimated visited England in each of the past five years from Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Trippier: The figures are as follows:

Tourist visits to England† by Australian and New Zealand residents*

	Australia Thousands	*New Zealand Thousands*
1980	374	80
1981	298	59
1982	348	66
1983	323	75
1984	441	92

Notes:
* All visits for leisure or business reasons for a period of less than a year.
† Estimates covering tourists visiting the United Kingdom who spent all or part of their visit in England.

48. **Mr. Lewis Stevens** asked the Paymaster General how many businesses have been assisted by funding through section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act.

Mr. Trippier: Since the inception of the scheme, the English Tourist Board, which is responsible for administering the section 4 scheme in England, has approved assistance for 3,175 projects, of which nearly half have been approved since the scheme was extended beyond the assisted areas in August 1982. The ETB estimates that almost all of the projects assisted were for private sector businesses. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales are responsible for section 4 assistance for projects in their respective countries.

82. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Paymaster General if he intends to reduce bureaucratic burdens which constrain small firms connected with tourism.

Mr. Trippier: The White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) indicated our intention to reduce further the burdens of business, particularly on small firms including those involved in tourism. The report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs—the Business of Tourism" signalled our firm intention to remove unnecessary obstacles to the further development of tourism, with an emphasis on action to come into effect in the 1986 tourist season.

Wages Councils

19. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Paymaster General how many jobs he expects will be created as a result of the proposed reforms of the wages councils.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to give a precise figure for the increased employment which we believe will be encouraged by the reforms.

69. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Paymaster General how many workers are currently covered by wages councils; and what proportion of them are women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is estimated that 2·75 million people work in jobs covered by wages councils: about 80 per cent. are female.

Minimum Wage Rates

20. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the operation of the safeguards seeking to ensure that jobs advertised in jobcentres pay wages council minimum rates.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Revised checking procedures were introduced last year to minimise the chances of jobs which breach regulations being displayed in jobcentres.

30. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Paymaster General how many countries are signatory to the International Labour Organisation convention No. 26 on minimum rates of pay.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Ninety nine countries are signatory to International Labour Organisation convention No. 26.

Community Programme

21. **Dr. Godman** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: 159,000 jobs are currently provided and I am pleased with progress towards the target of 230,000 places by June 1986.

24. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received about the work of the community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members and the general public which have stressed the programme's value for long-term unemployed people and local communities, and suggested possible improvements.

46. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Paymaster General whether he will consider reverting to the former conditions for qualification for entry to the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have no present plans to do so.

85. **Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson** asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to attempts by political parties to use the community programme for party advantage; and if he is satisfied that safeguards exist to prevent this from happening in the future.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is an essential condition of funding under the community programme that projects must not involve political activity, have political objectives, or provide for or encourage any action in support of a political party. Any breach can lead to termination of contract, and checks on compliance are undertaken as a part of normal monitoring arrangements.

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received expressing concern over recent regulations requiring those applying for community programme posts to be in receipt of benefit payment; how many of these representations relate to women who wish to return to work after raising a family; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: There have been no changes in the priorities for entry to the community programme since October 1984.

Youth Training Scheme

22. **Mr. Burt** asked the Paymaster General how many youngsters have now been through the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

56. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Paymaster General by what date he expects 1 million young people to have taken part in the youth training scheme.

74. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the number of young people who have participated in the youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: More than 1 million young people have entered the youth training scheme since it started in April 1983.

The success of the scheme is due in large measure to the active involvement of all the parties who have contributed much in the past two and a half years—large and small companies, trade unions, local authorities, voluntary organisations, the education and careers services, the Manpower Services Commission and, most importantly, young people themselves. This co-operative effort provides a firm foundation for the expansion and development of YTS, to provide two years' training and the opportunity to obtain a vocational qualification, from next April.

32. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I frequently discuss the progress and development of the youth training scheme with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission.

33. **Mr. Wood** asked the Paymaster General how many youngsters will be able to participate in the youth training scheme each year after April 1986.

Mr. Trippier: We estimate that around 360,000 young people will enter the youth training scheme in 1986-87, and a similar number in 1987-88. It is too early to make forecasts for subsequent years.

35. **Mr. Strang** asked the Paymaster General how far the plans for a two-year youth training scheme are advanced; and if he will make a statement.

52. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the progress towards development of the two-year youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Details of the main funding and administration arrangements of the new two-year youth training scheme, which is to commence next April, have been agreed and announced, and Manpower Services Commission staff are currently discussing with potential training providers how they might be involved in the new scheme. I am satisfied with progress so far.

This is a major initiative, which will benefit employers and young people themselves. It is in everyone's interest that it succeeds.

43. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Paymaster General what advice he will give to local authorities which run Mode B youth training schemes with voluntary organisations on how they should cover the cash shortfall that will result from the proposed changes in the youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The financial arangements for the new youth training scheme provide a good basis for local authorities and voluntary organisations taking out new contracts. The cirumstances of individual providers can differ substantially. Providers in need of advice should discuss their calculations with the Manpower Services Commission's area office.

Small Firms

23. **Mr. Lord** asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to compel large firms to speed up the payment of small firms' bills.

59. **Mr. Cash** asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to penalise larger businesses which do not pay the accounts of small businesses within a reasonable time.

Mr. Trippier: We are not at present planning legislation on the problem of delayed payment of bills to small firms.

I am currently discussing with industry representative organisations the possibility of promoting good payment

practices through cooperation rather than coercion. We expect to produce practical guidance on the subject for both customers and suppliers.

55. **Mr. Chope** asked the Paymaster General what is the trend in venture capital investment in small businesses.

Mr. Trippier: There has been significant growth in venture capital investment in the United Kingdom during the last five years. A survey by the United Kingdom *Venture Capital Report* has shown that in 1984 the aggregate amount invested in United Kingdom companies by venture capital organisations was £228 million. This compares with £110 million and £166 million in 1982 and 1983 respectively. Industry sources indicate that some 26·6 per cent. of the amount invested in 1984 supported start-ups or other early stage financings. In addition, direct investment by individuals under the business expansion scheme is providing significant amounts of equity finance for small companies.

60. **Mr. Forth** asked the Paymaster General what progress he has made in reducing bureaucratic burdens on small firms.

Mr. Trippier: Considerable progress has been made by a number of Departments towards reducing the burden on business, particularly small firms, of complying with regulations. The White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) which was published in July recorded the Government's achievements in this area to date and proposed a wide range of further measures to this end which are being actively followed up. We intend to publish a second White Paper on deregulation in the spring.

84. **Mr. Norris** asked the Paymaster General how he intends to encourage local enterprise agencies to raise venture capital for small firms.

Mr. Trippier: Local enterprise agencies are well placed to identify sources of equity finance for small firms and to bring firms and potential investors together. My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry, recently issued guidance notes to those agencies considering activities of this kind. My Department has also now issued a leaflet publicising the potential benefits of the business expansion scheme to small firms and investors, which refers to local enterprise agencies as possible contacts. In my discussions with enterprise agencies I shall encourage them to take an active role in this area.

Shipbuilding Industry (Redundancies)

26. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Paymaster General what information he has regarding the average length of time members of the work force made redundant from the shipbuilding industry on Tyneside take to find alternative employment; and what proportion have yet to find alternative work.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the length of time people made redundant take to find alternative employment is not collected.

Job Vacancies

27. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Paymaster General what travel-to-work areas have more vacancies than unemployed according to the latest available figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: The only available data on vacancies relate to vacancies notified to MSC jobcentres. The analysis requested is therefore not available.

Job Start Assistance Scheme

28. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Paymaster General if he has yet commenced the briefing of officials in jobcentres to enable them to explain the new job start assistance scheme to members of the public.

Mr. Alan Clark: Briefing of the jobcentre staff in the pilot areas has already begun. The pilot schemes will begin to operate on 6 January 1986.

Skill Shortages

34. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to remedy the shortage of skilled labour in parts of the job market.

Mr. Trippier: There is recent evidence that some skills are in short supply in a limited number of sectors and geographical areas. Whilst it is mainly for employers to take action to meet their labour requirements, the Manpower Services Commission continues to monitor vacancies and is taking a number of steps to help the labour market operate more effectively. It is encouraging better mobility of labour through a national bank of vacancies accessible in jobcentres and providing help for unemployed people to travel to interviews and move home to take up work. Employers and individuals are benefiting through the adult training strategy, which is focusing support on skills in most demand in local and national economies.

Basildon

36. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of people in Basildon employed in each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Employment statistics for local areas are obtained from censuses of employment taken triennially since 1978. The latest available figures from the 1981 census of employment show that just over 52,000 people were employed in Basildon at that time, compared with a total of nearly 46,000 in 1978.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

38. **Mr. Galley** asked the Paymaster General how many businesses have been established as a result of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Up to 31 October 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, 112,191 people have joined the enterprise allowance scheme. The number of individual businesses assisted is lower than this because some of the businesses are partnerships, co-operatives or limited companies involving more than one enterprise allowance recipient.

73. **Mr. Carttiss** asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to improve the access to training for those on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Both private and public sector training, including the full range of provision under the Manpower Services Commission's training for enterprise programme

is available. We have, however, asked the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to take particular account of the needs of EAS participants in developing proposals for focusing adult training still more sharply on the needs of small firms and on promoting enterprise and self-employment.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

39. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Paymaster General how many local education authorities are now participating in the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Trippier: There are 73 authorities running technical and vocational education initiative programmes in Great Britain at present. A further 25 authorities have put in proposals which are currently under discussion.

Open Tech Programme

40. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the development of the Open Tech programme.

Mr. Trippier: I regularly discuss training matters with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission. I expect to receive and discuss the commission's proposals for future support for open learning, including Open Tech, following the conclusion of the current consultation exercise.

44. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the outcome of the Open Tech programme and of its benefits to small firms.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission's Open Tech programme has funded over 140 projects which have already helped more than 20,000 people to improve their skills through open learning. Material is being produced to assist the owner-managers of small businesses in a variety of management topics and specialist material already available in the tourism and transport sectors, both of which contain a high proportion of small firms, has been well-received. The commission is reviewing how the future needs of small businesses for open learning material might be best met, but the final outcomes of the Open Tech programme will not be known for some time yet.

Trade Unions (Ballots)

49. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General how many trades unions have so far accepted moneys from the Government to pay for political levy ballots.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am informed by the certification officer that no payments have yet been made to unions in respect of political fund review ballots, although several unions have held ballots for which they could seek reimbursement under the ballot funding scheme.

50. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Paymaster General how many pre-strike ballots have taken place under the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are aware of over 80 pre-strike ballots believed to comply with the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984, but there will have been other ballots which the Department does not know about. One union in particular has been reported as having held over 130 pre-strike ballots since the provisions came into force.

66. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the level of turnout in the political fund ballots held under the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are encouraged by the generally high degree of participation in the recent round of political fund review ballots. This demonstrates how much trade union members appreciate the opportunity—in many cases the first they have had in 70 years—to express an opinion on the matter. I am only sorry that many unions have obscured the choice by playing down their links with a political party, by not revealing how much of their members political contributions goes straight in party affiliation fees and by exaggerating the circumstances in which a fund is needed.

Job Start Allowance

51. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Paymaster General, in the five English pilot areas for the job start allowance, how many persons have been registered unemployed for 12 months or more.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The numbers of claimants who had been unemployed for over 12 months on 10 October 1985 in job start allowance pilot areas are as follows. Figures are given for local authority districts, except for Billingham and Huddersfield, where they relate to those groups of electoral wards which closely correspond to the pilot areas:

	Number
Billingham	1,565
Crawley and Horsham	1,119
Huddersfield	4,228
London Borough of Ealing	4,822
Plymouth	5,836
Preston	4,071
Stoke-on-Trent	6,817

Job Losses (Liverpool)

53. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of jobs lost in the Liverpool travel-to-work area in manufacturing, service industries, food and drink, transport, public service, local authority, docks, ship building and repair, and distributive trades for the years 1979 to November 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job losses is not available from the Department's statistics. Net changes in employment can be given, but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The available information for the Liverpool travel-to-work area is for the period from June 1979 to September 1981 and is as follows.

The Department's employment statistics are analysed according to the standard industrial classification, which does not separately distinguish public services or local authorities or separately distinguish docks from port and inland water transport. Comprehensive manpower figures for all employees in local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland are published quarterly in table 1.7 of the labour market data section of *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are available in the Library. This information is not available for travel-to-work areas.

Standard Industrial Classification 1968 Order or Minimum List Heading (MLH)	*Net changes in the numbers of employees in employment June 1978 to September 1981 (thousands)*
Manufacturing industries (Orders III to XIX)	−32·8
Service industries (Orders XXII to XXVII)	−20·1
Food and drink (Order III excluding MLH 240, Tobacco)	−4·4
Transport (Order XXII excluding MLH 708, Postal services and telecommunications)	−9·0
Port and inland water transport (MLH 706)	−3·5
Shipbuilding and marine engineering (Order X)	−1·0
Distributive trades (Order XXII)	−6·1

As results of the 1978 census of employment are not available for the new travel-to-work areas announced last year, information is given for the travel-to-work area as defined before last year's review.

Local Enterprise Agencies

58. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies have organised courses for management training.

Mr. Trippier: My Department maintains no records on this. However, the latest directory of enterprise agencies, produced by Business in the Community, indicates that at least 122 local enterprise agencies provide, or give access to, training for business men.

62. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies are in existence.

Mr. Trippier: There are currently 308 enterprise agencies in the United Kingdom, of which 222 meet the requirements of the Finance Act 1982, which allows private sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Earnings

Mr. Hayes asked the Paymaster General what has been the underlying increase in average earnings over the last year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest estimates for the year to September 1985 are given in table 5.1 of the November 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what percentage of *(a)* males and *(b)* females under 18 years of age earns less than £100 per week at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information relates to full-time employees working a full week in April 1985. The percentages earning less than £100 per week are published, for males in table 10, and for females in table 11 of "New Earnings Survey 1985", part A. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what percentage of female workers employed as *(a)* retail checkout operators, *(b)* textile sewing machinists and *(c)* receptionists earn less than £100 per week at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information relates to full-time females on adult rates working a full week in April 1985 and is published in table 9 of "New Earnings Survey 1985", part A, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what percentage of male workers employed as *(a)* shop assistants and *(b)* general farm workers earn less than £100 per week.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information relates to full-time males on adult rates working a full week in April 1985 and is published in table 8 of "New Earnings Survey 1985", part A, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sunday Trading

68. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Paymaster General if he has made any assessment of the effect the Government proposals on Sunday trading will have on wages and conditions throughout industry.

Mr. Trippier: I doubt whether the Government's proposals to deregulate Sunday trading will significantly affect wages and conditions of employment throughout industry. Clearly a greater proportion of retail workers would be working on a Sunday and, therefore, average earnings in the retail industry would be likely to rise.

Wages Inspections

70. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Paymaster General how many wages inspections have taken place so far in the current year; and how many prosecutions there have been as a result of such inspections.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Up to 31 October 1985 the pay of workers at 37,884 establishments had been checked by the wages inspectorate. Two prosecutions resulted.

New Businesses

71. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Paymaster General what initiatives his Department is taking to encourage people to set up new businesses.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 27 November, at column 594, to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

75. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Paymaster General what has been the net increase in the number of new businesses since 1980.

Mr. Trippier: The net increase in the number of businesses between 1980 and 1984 is estimated to have been of the order of 140,000. Detailed figures were published in an article in the 23 August 1985 edition of *British Business*, a copy of which is in the Library. As the article explains, the estimate is subject to revision as more information is received.

Falkland Islands

72. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to bring within the remit of industrial appeal tribunals appeals against unfair dismissal arising from employment on Government contracts in the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. It would not be appropriate to extend British legislation on unfair dismissal in this way. Any such legislation would be for the Falkland Islands Government.

Manufacturing Industry

76. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in manufacturing in 1979; and how many are employed now.

Mr. Alan Clark: In September 1979 there were an estimated 7,102,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Great Britain. In September 1985, the latest available date for which estimates are available, the figure was 5,369,000. The estimates have been adjusted for seasonal variation.

Work-related Further Education

77. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Paymaster General what extra resources have been made available to improve the quality of work-related non-advanced further education.

Mr. Trippier: It is for local authorities to decide what resources are directed to work-related NAFE within the overall resources available to them. However, the Government's expenditure plans for 1986-87 should enable authorities generally to respond to the growing demand for NAFE provision of all kinds. Provided authorities contain costs and take advantage of the scope for efficiency savings they should be able to redeploy resources to improve the quality of the service. The transfer of a proportion of funds to MSC for work-related NAFE (£110 million in 1986-87) is designed to help ensure that work-related provision is provided cost effectively and in response to labour market needs.

West Midlands

78. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate those job sectors in the west midlands where the greatest numbers of vacancies have been taken up.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following tables show, for the latest available months, those occupations and industries in the west midlands where the greatest number of vacancies notified to jobcentres have been filled.

Vacancies filled by Occupation: West Midlands, September 1985

Occupation	*Total Vacancies Filled*
Catering, cleaning, hairdressing, etc.	7,891
Clerical and related	5,375
Processing, etc., (metal and electrical)	3,769
Selling	3,350
Miscellaneous*	2,998
Transport operating, materials moving, etc.	2,348
Painting, repetitive assembling, etc.	2,123
Making/repairing (excluding metal electrical)	1,608
Farming, fishing and related	1,011
Construction, mining and related, not elsewhere specified	697

Source: Department of Employment.

* This occupational grouping includes machinery plant and equipment operating occupations not elsewhere specified and miscellaneous labouring occupations not elsewhere specified.

Vacancies filled by Industry: West Midlands, August 1985

Industry	*Total Vacancies Filled*
Retail distribution	5,760
Hotels and catering	3,603
Public administration and defence	3,373
Construction	2,215
Other services—not elsewhere specified	2,125
Manufacture of other transport equipment	2,086
Insurance, banking, etc., business services	1,946
Wholesale and distribution	1,538
Manufacture of metal goods	1,555
Medical and other Health services	1,138

Source: Department of Employment.

Overtime

79. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the level of overtime currently being worked.

Mr. Alan Clark: Overtime working by operatives in manufacturing industries in Great Britain was 12·35 million hours a week in September (Seasonally Adjusted). Overtime has remained around 12 million hours a week since Februay 1985 (discounting the April figure which was affected by Easter); this represents the highest level since mid-1980.

Registered Unemployed Persons

80. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Paymaster General how many of those counted as unemployed are registered at jobcentres.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the numbers of unemployed claimants registered at jobcentres is not available. Statistics of those registered at jobcentres do not distinguish unemployed claimants from people seeking a change of employment and others who are not claimants at unemployment benefit offices. Also, many jobseekers make use of the self-service facilities at jobcentres but do not register.

Computers and Microprocessors

81. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Paymaster General how many jobs computing and microprocessor related activities account for in South Yorkshire; and how this compares with the national average, expressed as a percentage.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available figures from the 1981 census of employment showed that just over 700 people were employed in South Yorkshire in industries associated with computing and microprocessor related activities which have, for the purposes of this question, been taken as office machinery (activity heading 3301), electronic data processing equipment (3302), telegraph and telephone apparatus and equipment (3441), electrical instruments and control systems (3442), radio and electronic capital goods (3443), gramaphome records and pre-recorded tapes (3452), active components and electronic sub-assemblies (3453), and electronic consumer goods and other electrical equipment (3454). This represents 0·2 per cent. of the 1981 figure of just over 376,000 employed in industries to this type in Great Britain.

Strikes (Lost Working Days)

83. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Paymaster General how many working days have been lost through strike action so far this year; and how this compares with previous years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes during the 10 months to October 1985 is provisionally estimated as 6 million. This compares with 22 million during the corresponding period last year and a 10-year average of 9·7 million days lost for the period January to October 1975 to 1984.

Hairdressing

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is the average minimum wage for adult hairdressers; and what percentage of this wage is earned by 16 to 20-year-olds working in the hairdressing trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: Details of the minimum weekly wage rates of adult operative hairdressers established in the Hairdressing Undertakings Wages Council (Great Britain) Wages Order for 8 April 1985 are given on page 189 of the Department's publication, "Time Rates of Wages and Hours of Work", a copy of which is in the Library. The publication also gives similar details relating to young workers.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what was the total of *(a)* male and *(b)* female part-time workers in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and to the nearest available date in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: Male part-time workers are not separately identified in the Department's statistics, but for the period June 1979 to June 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) the estimated numbers of female part-time employees in employment are as follows:

June of each year	*Number of part-time female employees in employment*
1979	3,869,800
1980	3,940,600
1981	3,816,800
1982	3,861,200
1983	3,956,400
1984	4,161,200
1985	4,344,300

Motor Industry

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many persons were employed in the motor vehicle industry in 1980 and to the nearest available date in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number of employees in Great Britain employed in the motor vehicles and parts industry in September 1980 was 412,000. In September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) the number was 279,000.

Textile and Clothing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently employed in each region in the textile and clothing industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: Regional estimates of employees in employment in the textile and clothing industries are available for census of employment dates only. The numbers in September 1981 are as follows:

Employees employed in the textile and clothing industries in September 1981*

	Number
South East	72,000
Greater London (included in South East)	43,900
East Anglia	6,900
South West	16,400
West Midlands	26,800
East Midlands	108,700
Yorkshire and Humberside	87,900
North West	100,600
North	26,600
Wales	14,100
Scotland	66,300

*Class 43 and Groups 453, 455 and 456 of the Standard Industrial Classification.

Performing Arts (New Jobs)

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the Arts Council's estimate that 600 new jobs, in the performing arts sector, could be created with an extra investment of some £5 million, and the Arts Council figure that the new costs to the public sector borrowing requirement would be £2,070 per annum per job.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is most unlikely that the public sector borrowing requirement cost per person removed from the unemployment count by investment in arts would be as low as £2,070 per annum.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many guarantees under the small firms loan guarantee scheme have been called in since 1980.

Mr. Trippier: At 30 November 1985, 4,950 guarantees had been called under the loan guarantee scheme since its inception in 1981.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what investigations are carried out when a guarantee under the small firms loan guarantee scheme is called in.

Mr. Trippier: A claim under a guarantee is paid when the lender formally notifies my Department that the borrower has defaulted on the terms of the loan. My Department does not investigate the circumstances of an individual default.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

ADAS

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many persons were employed by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service at each of its centres in Wales, respectively, at the latest time for which these figures are available; and how these figures compare with similar ones five years earlier.

Mrs. Fenner: The distribution and number of ADAS staff in post in Wales on 1 November 1980 and 1985, is set out below:

	1 November 1980	1 November 1985
I. ADAS HQ Wales		
Aberystwyth/Trawscoed	79	87½
*II. Administrative divisions**		
Caernarfon	42	28
Cardiff	45	38
Carmarthen	84	67
Llandrindod Wells	48	35
Ruthin	36	27
III. Sub centres		
Bangor	25	22½
Cardiff	24	28½
IV. Veterinary investigation centres		
Aberystwyth	11½	13½
Bangor	10	12
Cardiff	8½	4½
Carmarthen	11	13
V. Experimental husbandry farms		
Pwllpeiran	14	14
Trawscoed	29	29
TOTAL ADAS WALES	467	419½

* Includes all staff in offices within each administrative division not under I, III, IV and V.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide figures for the present year and estimates for the next two years to show levels of funding, in constant terms, and staffing of the Government's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Mr. Jopling: The total cost of ADAS, including direct costs and an attributed share of general Ministry overheads and net of receipts, is expected to be about £142 million in 1985-86 and in constant terms, to be reduced by about £4 million in 1986-87 and by a further £20 million in 1987-88. The total staff of ADAS at 1 April 1985 was 4,786, and is expected to fall by about 500 by the spring of 1987 as a result of the measures which I announced on 11 October and 7 November.

SCOTLAND

Children in Care

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many children were received into care annually over the most recent three-year period for which statistics are available in each regional and island area.

(2) how many children were received into care under section 15 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 annually over the most recent three-year period for which statistics are available in each regional and island area;

Mr. John MacKay: The table shows the information for all regions and island areas except Strathclyde, for which no information is available, for the three years ending 31 March 1984.

	All admissions			*Admissions under section 15*		
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984**
Borders	86	147	101	38	85	47
Central	348	294	304	104	106	133
Dumfries and Galloway	83	95	99	43	49	54
Fife	414	409	399	206	250	193
Grampian	483	491	466	220	268	227
Highland	174	152	175	89	64	71
Lothian	992	773	685	499	379	346
Tayside	403	376	298	170	171	127
Orkney	6	6	7	2	—	1
Shetland	7	6	1	3	2	1
Western Isles	20	9	21	13	1	9

* Provisional.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children were dealt with by children's hearings annually over the most recent three-year period for which statistics are available giving a breakdown by age, under or over 12 years and the outcome of hearing in terms of the following categories: *(a)* referral discharge, *(b)* section 44(1)*(a)* supervision order, with parents or close relatives, *(c)* section 44(1)*(a)* supervision order, with foster parents, *(d)* section 44(1)*(b)* supervision order, including type of residential establishment and *(e)* supervision order terminated, in each regional and island area.

Mr. John MacKay: The figures given relate to the number of referrals to children's hearings in each calendar year. A child may be referred more than once in any one year.

Table 1: Referrals to a hearing in calendar year 1982 by outcome, and relating to children aged 11 years or under

	Borders	*Central*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Highland*	*Lothian*	*Strathclyde*	*Tayside*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Western Isles*	*Scotland*
Grounds discharged, not established or referral discharged	7	57	5	27	24	16	68	576	22	1	1	3	807
SR made or varied													
Section 44(1)(a)													
with parent/guardian/relative/friends	23	86	14	51	108	63	204	952	110	3	6	3	1,623
with foster parents	3	37	5	10	35	42	116	250	25	—	—	—	523
other	1	—	—	—	1	—	9	21	5	—	—	—	37
Section 44(1)(b)													

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Local Authority Home	2	6	19	4	13	25	28	206	16	6	1	—	326
Voluntary Home	—	3	—	—	—	1	3	14	5	—	—	—	26
List D School	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	64	12	—	—	—	80
Hostel	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2
Residential Assessment Centre	—	1	—	3	—	2	3	26	5	—	—	—	40
Other	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	2	2	—	1	—	9
SR Continued without variation	18	98	13	30	97	103	186	1,006	149	4	1	2	1,707
SR terminated	19	55	3	35	48	18	128	424	71	2	—	—	803
Other decisions including advice to Sheriff following a Criminal Court Reference, and excluding transfers	—	26	—	3	16	5	7	30	11	1	1	—	100
Total (all referrals to a hearing)	73	307	59	165	344	275	754	3,575	433	17	11	6	6,020

Note: SR=Supervision Requirement or Supervision Order

Table 2: Referrals to a hearing in calendar year 1982 by outcome, and relating to children aged 12 years or over

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Grounds discharged, not established or referral discharged	14	281	25	174	47	51	327	3,913	151	1	3	1	4,988
SR made or varied													
Section 44(1)(a)													
with parent/guardian/relative/friends	64	212	65	188	200	109	474	3,096	246	9	6	2	4,671
with foster parents	1	3	2	5	13	18	52	48	7	—	—	—	129
other	—	—	2	—	13	—	28	34	1	—	—	—	78
Section 44(1)(b)													
Local Authority Home	11	24	14	41	82	26	139	299	41	1	3	—	681
Voluntary Home	1	2	3	—	—	—	10	44	11	—	1	—	72
List D School	11	27	10	100	29	27	205	703	114	—	—	—	1,226
Hostel	2	—	2	—	—	1	5	73	25	—	—	—	108
Residential Assessment Centre	5	9	18	11	9	28	131	189	50	—	—	—	450
Other	4	10	1	59	21	—	19	36	2	—	—	—	152
SR Continued without variation	95	145	48	89	205	86	484	1,704	200	—	3	—	3,065
SR terminated	39	205	53	247	200	111	558	2,492	259	4	5	—	4,172
Other decisions including advice to Sheriff following a Criminal Court Reference, and excluding transfers	9	74	29	82	50	38	98	398	57	2	2	—	795
Total (all referrals to a hearing)	215	992	272	996	869	491	2,488	13,029	1,232	17	23	3	20,607

Note: SR=Supervision Requirement or Supervision Order.

Table 3: Referrals to a hearing in calendar year 1983 by outcome, and relating to children aged 11 years or under

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Grounds discharged, not established or referral discharged	2	49	1	12	20	19	33	528	35	0	2	0	701
SR made or varied													
Section 44(1)(a)													
with parent/guardian/relative/friends	37	69	11	48	81	99	150	928	101	4	4	15	1,547
with foster parents	12	17	4	20	45	38	99	263	21	0	0	3	530
other	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	12	0	0	0	2	20
Section 44(1)(b)													
Local Authority Home	2	18	0	10	7	10	11	141	13	0	7	0	227
Voluntary Home	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	22	9	0	0	0	32
List D School	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	68	0	0	0	0	72
Hostel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Residential Assessment Centre	0	14	0	0	1	4	5	8	4	0	0	0	36
Other	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	10
SR Continued without variation	10	81	22	23	104	90	183	945	149	6	9	7	1,637
SR terminated	11	51	5	21	51	40	126	523	41	0	0	1	870
Other decisions including advice to Sheriff following a Criminal Court Reference, and excluding transfers	4	12	0	1	14	4	6	18	12	0	1	0	72
Total (all referrals to a hearing)	80	311	51	151	325	305	622	3,457	387	10	23	28	5,759

Note: SR=Supervision Requirement or Supervision Order.

Table 4: Referrals to a hearing in calendar year 1983 by outcome, and relating to children aged 12 years or over

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Grounds discharged, not established or referral discharged	15	307	30	195	70	60	298	3,797	160	2	8	0	4,950
SR made or varied													
Section 44(1)(a)													
with parent/guardian/relative/friends	57	246	59	193	209	137	445	3,096	286	5	7	3	4,664
with foster parents	1	2	1	13	11	19	26	28	6	1	0	0	108
other	2	23	1	14	10	6	23	38	4	0	0	0	121
Section 44(1)(b)													
Local Authority Home	14	35	5	20	66	12	123	268	20	1	2	0	566
Voluntary Home	0	4	4	0	0	1	13	79	15	0	0	0	116
List D School	7	37	9	88	29	5	166	800	76	0	0	2	1,219
Hostel	5	0	0	0	0	0	6	78	13	2	0	0	104
Residential Assessment Centre	1	7	16	24	8	17	77	166	73	0	0	0	389
Other	1	1	1	60	8	1	7	12	8	0	0	0	99
SR Continued without variation	36	127	44	70	186	95	389	1,574	257	2	7	3	2,770
SR terminated	70	156	30	179	217	107	462	2,282	280	4	9	0	3,796

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Other decisions including advice to Sheriff following a Criminal Court Reference, and including transfers	12	60	16	79	53	21	68	348	73	0	0	0	745
Total (all referrals to a hearing)	221	1,025	236	935	897	481	2,079	12,526	1,247	17	33	8	19,695

Note: SR=Supervision Requirement or Supervision Order.

Table 5: Referrals to a hearing in calendar year 1984 by outcome and relating to children aged 11 years or under

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Grounds discharged, not established or referral discharged	1	63	1	21	14	28	37	501	24	—	2	—	692
SR made or varied													
Section 44(1)(a):													
with parent/guardian/relative/friends	32	116	21	57	82	102	100	1,104	101	—	2	3	1,788
with foster parents	6	57	6	14	30	60	119	266	29	—	—	—	573
other	—	—	—	—	5	3	7	13	2	—	—	—	30
Section 44(1)(b):													
Local Authority Home	3	8	9	7	10	6	9	133	18	—	2	—	207
Voluntary Home	—	4	—	—	—	—	2	7	8	—	—	—	21
List D School	1	1	—	1	—	—	1	26	3	—	—	—	33
Hostel	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Residential Assessment Centre	—	9	—	1	1	1	1	19	7	—	—	—	39
Other	—	1	—	7	—	—	—	8	1	—	—	—	17
SR Continued without variation	18	71	20	45	105	94	137	883	109	5	8	6	1,501
SR terminated	9	36	3	29	49	28	83	481	42	2	1	5	768
Other decisions including advice to Sheriff following a Criminal Court Reference, and including transfers	2	9	—	6	7	5	6	19	3	—	—	4	61
Total (all referrals to a hearing)	72	355	60	188	303	335	570	3,460	347	7	15	18	5,730

Note: SR=Supervision Requirement or Supervision Order.

Table 6: Referrals to a hearing in calendar year 1984 by outcome and relating to children aged 12 years or over

	Borders	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Strathclyde	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Scotland
Grounds discharged, not established or referral discharged	9	394	33	165	77	92	290	4,163	139	—	4	3	5,367
SR made or varied													
Section 44(1)(a):													
with parent/guardian/relative/friends	30	264	83	170	225	144	577	3,275	224	1	2	8	4,809
with foster parents	—	1	2	5	15	13	73	54	3	—	—	—	166
other	4	1	1	7	3	7	25	34	18	—	1	—	101
Section 44(1)(b):													
Local Authority Home	9	82	3	32	112	16	102	317	40	1	2	4	720
Voluntary Home	—	9	2	—	1	2	9	41	15	—	—	—	79
List D School	9	82	4	102	51	12	125	764	68	—	—	1	1,218
Hostel	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	73	4	—	—	—	79
Residential Assessment Centre	3	10	19	13	19	16	66	192	48	—	—	2	414
Other	7	7	4	63	14	—	10	9	5	—	—	—	119
SR continued without variation	42	117	45	95	173	99	326	1,451	242	10	7	4	2,606
SR terminated	48	100	50	191	181	115	301	2,207	223	7	4	10	3,583
Other decisions including advice to Sheriff following a Criminal Court Reference, and including transfers	16	56	11	41	52	10	52	350	84	—	—	1	681
Total (all referrals to a hearing)	184	1,197	257	880	934	533	1,852	12,930	1,113	19	20	33	19,942

Note: SR=Supervision Requirement or Supervision Order.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children were removed into care annually under place of safety orders over the most recent three-year period for which statistics are available, in each regional and island area.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of place of safety orders issued in the calendar years are given in the following table. A few children may be subject to more than one order.

Number of place of safety orders issued

Region	1982	1983	*1984
Borders	8	16	3
Central	57	45	59
Dumfries and Galloway	17	7	5
Fife	12	20	32
Grampian	39	40	29
Highland	60	65	47
Lothian	182	174	141
Strathclyde	561	627	721
Tayside	37	53	48
Orkney	2	—	1
Shetland	4	8	5
Western Isles	—	—	1
Scotland Total	979	1,055	1,092

*The 1984 figures are provisional.

Library Service Book Fund

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to *(a)* the average expenditure by all Scottish local authorities on their library service book funds and *(b)* the expenditure by Glasgow

district council on its library service book fund in (i) 1978-79 and (ii) the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will express these sums at constant prices.

Mr. Ancram: Information on library service book funds is not available centrally.

Orovite

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why the drug Orovite has been withdrawn from National Health Service prescriptions in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Orovite vitamin products are no longer available at NHS expense because the expert medical panel which drew up the selected list considered that it was clinically unnecessary to include them on the list. A wide range of vitamin preparations is still available on NHS prescription.

Certificate of Education

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the proportion of B passes in the awards made in 1985, 1984, 1983 and 1982 in the Scottish certificate of education higher grade examination.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

	Higher grade presentations (all candidates, all subjects)	*Band B awards (post appeals)*	*Per cent. achieving Band B*
1985	168,309	36,791	21·9
*1984	172,220	38,221	22·2
*1983	177,711	39,572	22·3
*1982	173,509	37,259	21·5

* *Source:* Scottish Examination Board annual reports for 1982, 1983 and 1984 (1985 figures also from the board but are not yet published).

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make a statement regarding the possibility of candidates having a direct right to appeal to the Scottish Examination Board against failure in Scottish certificate of education examinations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Examination Board will decide the appeals arrangements to operate in 1986 in the new year, in the light of the implications of the boycott by the Educational Institute of Scotland of examination procedures. The question of allowing candidates or their parents to apply directly to the board for a remarking of scripts will be one of the points for decision at that time.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many candidates were presented for *(a)* higher and *(b)* ordinary grade Scottish certificate of education examinations in 1985; and what was the pass rate for the following subjects *(a)* music, *(b)* history, *(c)* mathematics, *(d)* English, *(e)* French, *(f)* biology and *(g)* secretarial studies.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is in the following tables:

TABLE 1
1985 Total candidates and presentations

	1985
Candidates presented for one or more ordinary grade but no highers	81,645
Candidates presented for one or more higher grade	61,002
Number of ordinary grade presentations (all candidates—all subjects)	446,008
Number of higher grade presentations (all candidates—all subjects)	168,309

TABLE 2
1985 Results by subject

Subject	*Number of candidates presented*	*A-C awards*	*Percentage achieving A-C awards*
Music ordinary traditional	378	234	61·9
Music ordinary alternative	2,250	1,629	72·4
Music higher (10 permutations of options)	1,083	721	66·6
History ordinary traditional	2,675	1,694	63·3
History ordinary alternative	16,950	10,935	64·5
History higher traditional	3,324	2,495	75·1
History higher alternative	6,167	4,412	71·5
Mathematics—ordinary	43,554	27,322	62·7
Mathematics—higher	23,554	14,624	62·1
English—ordinary	72,952	41,966	57·5
English—higher	38,698	24,988	64·6
French ordinary traditional	18,740	13,140	70·1
French ordinary alternative	5,834	4,007	68·7
French higher	8,351	5,940	71·1
Biology ordinary	24,069	13,087	54·4
Biology higher	12,148	7,285	60·0
Secretarial studies ordinary	17,800	11,647	65·4
Secretarial studies higher	4,987	3,378	67·7

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many A, B and C passes were awarded in the higher grade of the 1985 Scottish certificate of education examinations; and how these figures compare with 1984 and 1983.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Higher grade—all candidates—all subjects

Year	*Presentations*	*Awards*					
		A	*A per cent.*	*B*	*B per cent.*	*C*	*C per cent.*
1985	168,309	18,872	11·2	36,791	21·9	35,657	33·1
1984*	172,220	19,598	11·4	38,221	22·2	57,779	33·6
1983*	177,711	20,344	11·5	39,572	22·3	59,781	33·6

* *Source:* Scottish Examination Board annual reports for 1983 and 1984.

Scottish Examination Board

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present membership of the Scottish Examination Board; what are their terms of office; how many members of the board he directly appoints; and what is the professional background of those members.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The present membership of the board is listed in the board's annual report for 1984 a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. The list indicates the professional backgrounds of the chairman and the 37 members who are all appointed by the Secretary of State, 32 of them on the nomination of bodies regarded as representing certain educational interests, as specified in the Scottish Examination Board regulations 1981 (SI 1981/1562). The chairman and board members are appointed for a four-year term of office and they are unpaid.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff are employed by the Scottish Examination Board; what are the comparable figures for the last six years; and how many part-time examiners have been employed over that period.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Table 1 gives the number of members of central examining teams and the number of visiting examiners employed by the board in the years from 1980 — the earliest year for which figures are readily available—to 1985:

TABLE 1

Year	*Total number of presentations*	*Members of SEB central examining teams*	*Visiting examiners*
1985	614,317	432	*673
1984	631,734	447	832
1983	652,195	428	833
1982	657,412	422	769
1981	637,493	425	719
1980	613,822	415	621

* The drop from 1984 is explained by the withdrawal of a number of visiting examiners particularly in CSYS biology and chemistry and ordinary grade home economics (food and nutrition). In home economics the remaining examiners covered all presenting centres by undertaking more visits each. In CSYS biology and chemistry, the face-to-face interviews with the candidates on their projects were made optional.

Table 2 gives the Board's staffing figures for 1985 in numbers of employees and full-time equivalents (ie employee years). Comparable information for 1983 and 1984 appears on page 37 if the board's annual report for 1984 and for 1981 and 1982 on page 32 of the board's annual report for 1982. Copies of both reports are in the House of Commons Library. Figures for earlier years are not available.

TABLE 2

	1985	
	Number employed	*Full-time equivalent*
Permanent Staff:		
Full-time	109	109
Part-time	2	1
Part-time cleaning	22	7
Seasonal staff:		
Full-time	255	94
Part-time	298	19
TOTAL	686	230

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the last 12 months he has met the chairman and director of Scottish Examination Board.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has not himself met the chairman and director of the Scottish Examination Board over the last 12 months but I have done so on two occasions, once on 7 February 1985 and once on 20 September.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid to each local authority area in Scotland in each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Ancram: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the offer made by six neutral states to monitor the verification of a moratorium on underground nuclear tests.

Mr. Renton: The offer was not directed to the United Kingdom as it was contained in the letter from the six nations to the United States and the Soviet Union before the Geneva summit. We doubt that, even with the assistance offered, a testing moratorium would be adequately verifiable; but third parties could have a role to play in establishing adequate verification arrangements for a comprehensive test ban and we hope that those of the six nations represented at the Geneva conference on disarmament will pursue their ideas there.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to secure a resumption of negotiations on a complete test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 25 November at column *418*.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government plan to make use of the information service on nuclear testing sponsored by the Swedish Foreign Office.

Mr. Renton: We are not aware of such a service.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals have been made by the Soviet Union in respect of verification of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: Verification issues had not been resolved when the trilateral negotiations between the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom on a CTB were suspended in 1980. Since then, the Soviet Union has proposed, in a United Nations general assembly resolution of 1982, basic provisions for a CTB treaty, including verification by national technical means and other, unspecified, international measures.

European Economic and Social Committee

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the appointed United Kingdom representatives in groups I, II and III for the European economic and social committee; which body has nominated each representative; and when their term of office expires.

Mr. Rifkind: The British members of the economic and social committee are as follows:

Group I Members

Mr. M. T. Fuller, OBE, DSC—Engineering Employers Federation.
Mr. K. M. Tamlin—Mail Order Traders' Association.
Mr. F. S. Law, CBE—National Freight Co. plc.
Mr. M. C. Swift—British Bankers Association.
Mr. I. Campbell, CVO—British Railways Board.
Mr. J. A. De Normann—ICI Building Group.
Mr. W. G. Poeton—Union of Independent Companies.
Mr. M. Zinkin, OBE — CBI Europe and Overseas Committees.

Group II Members

Mr. J. R. Boddy, MBE—National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers.
Mr. E. A. B. Hammond, OBE — Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union.
Mr. F. F. Jarvis—National Union of Teachers.
Mr. T. Jenkins—TUC International Department.
Mr. J. F. Milne—Scottish Trades Union Congress.
Mrs. A. Maddocks, OBE — National and Local Government Officers Association.
Mr. A. R. Smith—National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.
Mr. L. J. Smith, OBE—Transport and General Workers Union.

Group III Members

Professor W. Elkan—Brunel University.
Mrs. M. Quigley—Northern Ireland.
Mr. E. B. Roycroft — Social Services, Newcastle upon Tyne.
Mr. D. P. Schwarz, OBE — Chairman MSC, Special Programmes Board, North Wales.
Sir George Sharp, OBE — Glenrothes Development Corporation Scotland.
Dr. P. D. Storrie-Pugh, CBE — Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.
Mr. M. P. Strauss—National Farmers' Union.
Mrs. A. Williams, MBE — National Confederation of Consumer Groups.

The current term of office of the Committee's members expires in mid-1986.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the attendance record of each of the United Kingdom representatives to the European economic and social committee during the past 12 months.

Mr. Rifkind: Details of members' attendance records are not made public by the committee.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total expenses claimed by each United Kingdom representative to the European economic and social committee during the past year.

Mr. Rifkind: Members of the economic and social committee are eligible for travel costs—up to club class for air fares—for travel to meetings of the committee. In addition, they are eligible for a flat rate allowance of 3,600 Belgian francs — about £45 — for each day of attendance at meetings, and an allowance for travel time, which may not overlap with meeting time, calculated according to the length of journey. Details of expenses claimed by individual members are not made available by the ESC secretariat.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests (Cancer)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence, in the light of the statement in his Department's publication D/DSC3/5/810 of 20 March 1984 that the normal cancer rate in men is about 25 per cent., what percentage of military personnel are at present in this category.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The study currently being undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board will compare mortality statistics and cancer registrations for all known participants with those for a matched control group of non-participants. I would refer the hon. Gentleman to my answers to his questions on 22 November 1985, at column 575.

Privatisation

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those aspects or features of the work of his Department's research establishments which have been subjected to privatisation.

Mr. Lee: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the provision of certain intramural services at MOD research establishments by contractors rather than civil servants. Contracting-out in this sense has taken place for various establishment support services, including since 1 January 1980

—accommodation and workshop cleaning
—equipment maintenance
—air traffic control
—operation and maintenance of range facilities

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what financial savings have been made by privatisation in his Department's research establishments;

(2) what evidence there is that privatisation in his Department's research establishments has resulted in greater cost-effectiveness in appropriate budgets.

Mr. Lee: Taking 1 January 1980 as the baseline, and assuming that the financial savings estimated to accrue at the time of going to contract have remained constant, we estimate that contracting-out of support services at the research establishments has resulted in cumulative savings totalling some £3 million over the six-year period.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions have taken place in Ministry of Defence employment in his Department's research establishments as a result of privatisation.

Mr. Lee: Since 1 January 1980 the equivalent of some 600 posts at the research establishments have been removed as the result of contracting-out of support services.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there has been a net job loss or gain as a result of privatisation in his Department's research establishments.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to answer this question with any precision. Contracting-out covers the provision of a

service and it is for individual contractors to decide how many posts are necessary to achieve this. In general, however, we find that contractors employ rather fewer staff to perform a given task than the numbers of civil servants previously employed.

Global Warming

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much money the Government have spent in the last 12 months on research into global warming caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; and how much they expect to spend in the next 12 months on research into global warming.

Mr. Lee: The costs attributed to research on the global warming within the Meteorological Office research programme for 1984-85 are approximately £90,000. It is expected that expenditure on this item will continue at about the present level.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking in co-operation with other Governments in investigating the global warming phenomenon.

Mr. Lee: The Meteorological Office is playing a full part in international efforts to investigate climatic changes that might be caused by increased "greenhouse gas" concentrations, In addition to providing independent estimates of the effects, its scientists have been closely involved in the United States Department of Energy's "state-of-art" assessment of the carbon dioxide issue, due to be published soon, and it participated last month in an international conference at Villach, Austria, which prepared a statement for the guidance of Governments on the global warming. I have placed a copy of this statement in the Library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what contingency plans the Government have made in anticipation of the majority scientific opinion that world temperatures will rise by at least 2° by 2050.

Mr. Lee: Despite general agreement on the possibility of a warming, there is considerable scientific uncertainty as to its magnitude. Until the present disparities between independent estimates have been reduced substantially, or there are observations which demonstrate that the predicted warming is beginning to take place, contingency planning would be premature.

Seismological Research

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the budget of his Department on seismological research; and how this compares with 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It would not be in the national interest to reveal details of the defence budget devoted to seismological research.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the estimated value of the capital assets of Rosyth royal naval dockyard;

(2) what is the estimated value of the capital assets of Devonport dockyard;

(3) what is the estimated value of the land in his Department's ownership at Devonport dockyard;

(4) what is the estimated value of the land in Rosyth royal naval dockyard.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 25 November 1985, at columns *513-14*.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to protect the pension rights of royal naval dockyard employees following privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The consultative document "The Future of the Royal Dockyards" set out proposals for the pensions arrangements for dockyard employees who transfer out of the Civil Service into the operating companies. These employees cannot remain in the principal Civil Service pension scheme and a new scheme is therefore being devised which will provide comparable benefits, including index-linking. We shall ensure that this "transferred" scheme, governed by a trust deed and managed by independent trustees, will be secure. It will be funded by an initial transfer payment in respect of employees' previous Crown service, and by future employer-employee contributions. Staff will be able to choose whether to preserve their accrued pension rights in the PCSPS, or to transfer them to the "transferred" scheme, or to a new entrants scheme which would be established for those recruited into the dockyards after vesting day.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent Royal Navy personnel are involved in refitting ships in Rosyth and Devonport; and at what cost.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The extent to which Royal Navy personnel are involved in a refit varies considerably with the type and complexity of refit and the class of ship. The pay and allowances of these personnel are not recorded separately.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the last five ships that had major refits completed at Rosyth and Devonport; and what was the cost and time of refit for each of the ships.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested on the last five ships for which costs are available is as follows:

Her Majesty's ships	*Dockyard*	*Production costs £ million*	*Duration of refit*
Hubberston	Rosyth	6·9	58 weeks
Scylla	Devonport	72·1	214 weeks
Resolution	Rosyth	113·9	106 weeks
Sovereign	Devonport	19·2	137 weeks
Iveston	Rosyth	6·1	67 weeks

Chief Executive, Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table for the years 1979 to 1985 showing separately by location and distinguishing civilians from naval staff the number of employees falling within the control of the chief executive, royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 November 1985, c. *704*]: The figures are as follows:

Location	1979 Civilian	1979 Naval	1980 Civilian	1980 Naval	1981 Civilian	1981 Naval	1982 Civilian	1982 Naval	1983* Civilian	1983* Naval	1984 Civilian	1984 Naval	1985 Civilian	1985 Naval
Portsmouth	7,838	13	7,396	12	7,112	9	6,013	10	4,950	8	3,603	7	177	—
Plymouth	12,796	18	12,484	18	12,094	21	12,190	18	13,015	12	13,637	15	13,355	16
Chatham	6,154	13	5,960	14	5,889	13	5,020	10	3,114	7	165	—	31	—
Rosyth	5,986	9	5,848	10	5,715	7	5,639	8	6,190	8	6,462	10	6,425	8
Bath	312	14	311	14	270	15	250	13	250	13	226	11	216	8
London	58	—	58	—	57	—	81	—	118	—	119	—	128	—
Harrogate	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	3	—	3	—
Portland	170	—	165	—	160	—	158	—	153	—	146	—	143	—
Faslane	1,003	—	1,016	—	1,065	—	1,019	—	994	—	973	17	970	20
Liverpool	11	—	11	—	10	—	10	—	11	—	11	—	10	—
Risley	32	—	32	—	33	—	32	—	34	—	40	—	43	—
Pembroke Dock	18	—	18	—	25	—	23	—	23	—	21	—	22	—
Yeovilton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	4	—
Milford Haven	6	—	6	—	6	—	6	—	6	—	6	—	6	—
Trecwn	9	—	9	—	8	—	9	—	9	—	9	—	9	—
Aberporth	4	—	4	—	4	—	3	—	3	—	3	—	1	—
Llangennech	8	—	8	—	9	—	9	—	8	—	10	—	11	—
Inskip	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
Greenock	28	—	29	—	29	—	29	—	30	—	27	—	25	—
Clyde	77	—	76	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gibraltar	179	3	174	3	162	1	155	3	147	2	104	2	13	—
Totals	34,689	70	33,605	71	32,648	66	30,646	62	29,057	50	25,574	62	21,594	52

* Civilian strengths from 1 April 1983 include MOD Police.

NATO (Ammunition)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, before the placing of orders for ammunition from companies in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries, any inquiries are made about the use of military conscripts in factories competing against United Kingdom suppliers.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1985, c. *642*]: No.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

50th Parliament (Celebration)

Mr. Deakins asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will prepare plans to mark the 50th Parliament of the United Kingdom with an appropriate ceremony.

Mr. Biffen: Consideration will be given to what might be appropriate.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Seasonal Workers (Benefits)

86. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he is currently giving to changes in the seasonal workers benefit regulations.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) on 19 November at columns *153-54*.

Child Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures showing the rates of child benefit plus the long-term national insurance child additions, at current and at 1979 prices, in April of each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: Comparison of values at dates other than upratings can be misleading and unhelpful. The figures given in the table show the levels of child benefit and long-term benefits child addition at the November uprating dates since 1979. The values at those dates are given, as requested, at April 1979 and October 1985 prices. Child benefit was increased to £7 a week and the long-term child addition to £8·05 from 25 November 1985, but the retail price index for that date will not be known until later in the year.

Date	Child benefit Actual £	Child benefit at Apr 79 prices £	Child benefit at Oct 85* prices £	Long-term benefits child additions Actual £	Long-term benefits child additions at Apr 79 Prices £	Long-term benefits child additions at Oct 85* Prices £
November 1979	4·00	3·60	6·35	7·10	6·40	11·26
November 1980	4·75	3·17	6·53	7·50	5·86	10·32
November 1981	5·25	3·66	6·45	7·70	5·37	9·46
November 1982	5·85	3·84	6·76	7·95	5·22	9·19
November 1983	6·50	4·07	7·17	7·60	4·76	8·38
November 1984	6·85	4·09	7·20	7·65	4·57	8·04

* Based on the movement in the general index of retail prices at October 1985 the latest date available.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated saving to his Department from changing the uprating date for the basic retirement pension from November 1986 to July 1986 and April 1987.

Mr. Newton: On the assumption in the Chancellor's autumn statement that the movement in prices over the

eight months to January 1986 would be of the order of 1 per cent., the July 1986 uprating will add some £110 million to benefit expenditure on the basic retirement pension by the end of the financial year 1986-87. An estimate of expenditure had the uprating taken place in November instead will not be available until the retail prices index for May 1986 is published.

Review of Nursing Skill Mix

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the districts and the units within each district which those engaged in the review of nursing skill mix have already visited, together with a list of those projected for such visits in the future;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of reference of the review of nursing skill mix currently being conducted by his chief nursing officer on behalf of the National Health Service management board; what are the reasons for conducting this inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The purpose of the review of nursing skill mix is to obtain structured information about the levels and mix of nursing staff, related to costs and activity, and so far as is possible, outcomes and quality of nursing care in these areas with a view to improving it. The review will be a descriptive study which will take note of existing experience, highlight discrepancies and will possibly indicate where further work may be useful.

The review team have now completed their field work and visits have been made to the following district health authorities:

South Birmingham
Waltham Forest
Canterbury and Thanet
Cambridge (T)
Macclesfield
South Derbyshire
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
York

All the above districts unite for the care of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped, and the elderly, intensive care units and special care baby units were visited at Bloomsbury and Camberwell. In these two districts intensive care units and special care baby units only were visited. I am extremely grateful to all the staff in those districts who have contributed to the review.

The report is expected early next year.

Area Health Authorities (Funding)

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all English health authorities giving, for each, its funding during the present year as a percentage of its resources allocation working party entitlement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information in respect of regional health authorities is as follows:

Regional health authority	*Revenue allocation as percentage of RAWP target 1985-86*
Northern	97·0
Yorkshire	96·8
Trent	95·1
East Anglian	96·2
North West Thames	107·1
North East Thames	109·7
South East Thames	105·6
South West Thames	104·3
Wessex	95·7
Oxford	97·3
South Western	97·6
West Midlands	95·3
Mersey	99·9
North Western	98·2

Resource allocation to districts is a matter for regional health authorities. Regions are expected to demonstrate that their 10-year strategic plans make progress in improving equity of access to services, but full details of the funding position year by year are not held centrally.

Asian Mother and Baby Campaign

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the cost in the current financial year of awarding appropriate incremental increases and annual pay awards to linkworkers on the asian mother and baby campaign;

(2) if he will offer the same entitlement to incremental increases and annual pay awards to linkworkers on the asian mother and baby campaign as are available to other workers in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The asian mother and baby campaign is a pilot project for two years in each of 10 selected areas. As the linkworkers have been employed on a fixed-term contract which makes no provision for increments or pay rises, there are no appropriate increases to apply to them. However, it has been decided to increase the rate of pay of linkworkers with effect from 1 December 1985 by approximately 4½ per cent.

Students (Benefits)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the present criteria under which university students may qualify for welfare benefits.

Mr. Newton: University students, unless they fall into a group which is exempt from the requirement to be available for work, are generally excluded from supplementary benefit in term time but may qualify by being available for work in vacations. Overseas students are normally excluded throughout. Students are unlikely to qualify for family income supplement, which is paid to people in full-time work who have children, though a students's spouse may qualify. All students except certain overseas students are eligible for housing benefit if they pay rent and/or rates on accommodation which they occupy as their home. Students may be able to obtain full or partial remission of National Health Service charges, and free welfare foods, on low income grounds.

Health and Social Services (Co-ordination)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy on local co-ordination between local authority social services departments and health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health and local authorities are expected to collaborate closely on planning and operation of services of common concern to those authorities. This is essential to the cost-effective provision of a range of services to meet individual needs. A report of a working group set up jointly by the local authority associations, the National Association of Health Authorities and my Department to look for ways of improving collaboration was published recently and a meeting with representatives of the associations is arranged in January to discuss follow-up; a copy of that report is in the Library. Further guidance on joint planning and collaboration in the light of the recommendations of the joint working group will be published after consultations with health and local authority and other interests.

Trauma (Research)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to reduce the incidence of death following injury in those under 40 years of age; what research into trauma is sponsored by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Regardless of their age, every effort is made to save the lives of patients receiving treatment by the National Health Service following injury. The Department has recently assisted in funding a major research project into trauma arising from road accidents, and has published a report on the medical effects of seat belt legislation in the United Kingdom: a copy has been placed in the Library.

"Health Inequalities and Manchester"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the report, "Health Inequalities and Manchester", a copy of which has been sent to him; if there is any action he will be taking arising from the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health planning in Manchester is the responsibility of the Central Manchester, North Manchester and South Manchester health authorities which are now better funded and treating more patients than ever before. The right hon. Member may, therefore, wish to approach the chairmen of these health authorities for the information he seeks.

Queen Alexandra Hospital, Cosham

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority has applied for additional funds for remedial works for the Queen Alexandra hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has received no such application. I understand that temporary winter repairs have been carried out to the roof of the Queen Alexandra hospital, Portsmouth. The Wessex regional health authority is now considering the situation, and will explore the available options for permanent remedial work next year. The funding of the work is a matter for consideration by the regional health authority.

Health and Personal Social Services Statistics

Mr. Ryder asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if there are any plans to publish health and personal social services statistics for England in 1985.

Mr. Whitney: Health and personal social services statistics for England 1985 edition will be published today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has carried out any assessment of the implications for patients and pharmacists of the proposed new agreement between his Department and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985]: Implementation of the agreement would provide a sound basis for the future development of National Health Service pharmaceutical services by meeting patient's needs without being extravagant of resources. It would be to the benefit of the patient, the profession and the taxpayer.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the joint policy statement on National Health Service expenditure sent to him by the British Medical Association, the Institute of Health Service Administrators and the Royal College of Nursing; what response he is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 November 1985, c. *153*]: Since the report was received details have been announced of the Government's plans for increased spending over the next three years in my reply of 12 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) at columns *162-163*. Current spending on the hospital and community health services will increase by £650 million in 1986-87 to nearly £10·3 billion. Health authorities will also have available their growing cost improvement programmes which contribute significantly to the Health Service's ability to meet the pressures it faces—a point largely ignored by the report. Authorities will have to meet pay and price increases from within their resources but they should also be able to provide for more old people and improve services in line with Government objectives. Further increases of £470 million and £440 million are planned in 1987-88 and 1988-89, bringing total spending to £11·2 billion by the end of the period.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health plans to meet the sponsoring bodies to discuss with them their observations and the Government's decisions.

Mentally-handicapped Young Persons

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the figures are yet available for each district health authority and for each regional health authority of the number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years living in long-stay mental handicap hospitals; and, for each authority, what is the number living in *(a)* units of 25 or more beds, and *(b)* units of under 25 beds at 31 December 1984;

(2) what is the number of children on short-term placements in long-stay mental handicap hospitals for each district health authority and each regional health authority as at 31 December 1984; and, for each authority, what is the number of units of *(a)* 25 or more beds, and *(b)* under 25 beds;

(3) what were the numbers of children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals at 31 December 1984 for each district health authority and each regional health authority; and, for each authority, what was the number living in units of *(a)* 25 or more beds and *(b)* under 25 beds.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *508*]: Mental handicap hospitals and units are not classified by the length of time residents stay. The available information for all mental handicap hospitals and units is given in the table. Most of the small NHS mental handicap units in the community have fewer than 25 beds, but the table includes a few units with exactly 25 beds.

The figures include children and young people admitted for a few weeks, or an even shorter period, for short-term care or assessment, and those who spend part of their time at home and part in National Health Service care. Separate figures are not available centrally for these categories of residents.

As information on the 16-19 age group is not collected centrally, the table gives numbers of young people aged 16-18, which is the nearest equivalent.

Residents at 31 December 1984 in mental handicap hospitals and units in England

Regional and district health authority	*All*		*Mental handicap hospitals and hospital units*				*Small NHS mental handicap units in the Community*	
	No. of residents		*Less than 25 beds No. of residents*		*25 or more beds No. of residents*		*No. of residents*	
	Under 16 years	*16-18 years*	*Under 16 years*	*16-18 years*	*Under 16 years*	*16-18 years*	*Under 16 years*	*16-18 years*
NORTHERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	80	83	—	—	70	77	10	6
Hartlepool	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Tees	11	8	—	—	11	8	—	—
South Tees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Cumbria	6	1	—	—	—	—	6	1
South Cumbria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Cumbria	8	5	—	—	8	5	—	—
Darlington	9	10	—	—	8	9	1	1
Durham	26	20	—	—	26	20	—	—
North West Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South West Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	20	39	—	—	17	35	3	4
Gateshead	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newcastle	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sunderland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
YORKSHIRE REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	68	81	—	—	63	79	5	2
Hull	21	11	—	—	16	9	5	2
East Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grimsby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scunthorpe	4	5	—	—	4	5	—	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
York	11	9	—	—	11	9	—	—
Scarborough	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Harrogate	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bradford	6	9	—	—	6	9	—	—
Airedale	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Calderdale	4	6	—	—	4	6	—	—
Huddersfield	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dewsbury	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leeds Western	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leeds Eastern	9	18	—	—	9	18	—	—
Wakefield	12	22	—	—	12	22	—	—
Pontefract	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TRENT RHA								
RHA Total	100	98	24	8	62	85	14	5
North Derbyshire	12	6	12	4	—	2	—	—
South Derbyshire	14	8	—	—	—	5	14	3
Leicestershire	14	15	—	—	14	15	—	—
North Lincolnshire	14	13	—	—	14	13	—	—
South Lincolnshire	2	5	—	—	2	5	—	—

Regional and district health authority	All		Mental handicap hospitals and hospital units				Small NHS mental handicap units in the Community	
	No. of residents		Less than 25 beds No. of residents		25 or more beds No. of residents		No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Bassetlaw	6	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	7	15	—	—	7	15	—	—
Nottingham	13	11	—	—	13	11	—	—
Barnsley	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
Doncaster	2	2	—	—	2	2	—	—
Rotherham	9	8	—	—	9	8	—	—
Sheffield	7	14	6	4	1	8	—	2
EAST ANGLIAN REGIONAL HEALTH AREA								
RHA Total	32	45	—	—	32	45	—	—
Cambridge	11	10	—	—	11	10	—	—
Peterborough	3	4	—	—	3	4	—	—
West Suffolk	—	2	—	—	—	2	—	—
East Suffolk	8	9	—	—	8	9	—	—
Norwich	6	16	—	—	6	16	—	—
Great Yarmouth	4	4	—	—	4	4	—	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Huntingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NORTH WEST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	52	63	9	8	43	55	—	—
North Bedfordshire	5	4	—	—	5	4	—	—
South Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Hertfordshire	28	24	—	—	28	24	—	—
South West Hertfordshire	5	16	—	—	5	16	—	—
Barnet	5	11	—	—	5	11	—	—
Harrow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent	9	8	9	8	—	—	—	—
Paddington and North Kensington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NORTH EAST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	69	66	—	—	57	57	12	9
Basildon and Thurrock	10	13	—	—	10	13	—	—
Mid Essex	7	9	—	—	7	9	—	—
North East Essex	20	24	—	—	17	19	3	5
West Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southend	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	9	9	—	—	9	9	—	—
Hampstead	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bloomsbury	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
City and Hackney	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	8	—	—	—	—	—	8	—
Enfield	11	3	—	—	11	3	—	—
Haringey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	4	7	—	—	3	4	1	3
SOUTH EAST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	115	63	—	1	88	62	27	—
Brighton	5	9	—	—	5	9	—	—
Eastbourne	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hastings	4	5	—	—	4	5	—	—
South East Kent	23	3	—	—	15	3	8	—
Canterbury and Thanet	5	11	—	—	5	11	—	—

Regional and district health authority	All	Mental handicap hospitals and hospital units				Small NHS mental handicap units in the Community	
		Less than 25 beds		25 or more beds			
	No. of residents	No. of residents		No. of residents		No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Dartford and Gravesham	16	6	—	1	16	5	—	—
Maidstone	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medway	19	—	—	—	—	—	19	—
Tunbridge Wells	5	4	—	—	5	4	—	—
Bexley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greenwich	15	15	—	—	15	15	—	—
Bromley	23	8	—	—	23	8	—	—
West Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camberwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
SOUTH WEST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	68	97	15	10	51	82	2	5
North West Surrey	4	8	—	—	2	3	2	5
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
South West Surrey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Surrey	3	4	—	—	3	4	—	—
East Surrey	10	17	—	—	10	17	—	—
Chichester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Downs	13	5	—	—	13	5	—	—
Worthing District	—	6	—	—	—	6	—	—
Croydon	4	5	—	—	4	5	—	—
Kingston and Esher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1	2	—	—	1	2	—	—
Wandsworth	—	3	—	—	—	3	—	—
Merton and Sutton	33	46	15	10	18	36	—	—
WESSEX REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	153	98	—	—	29	38	124	60
East Dorset	43	6	—	—	—	—	43	6
West Dorset	17	7	—	—	—	1	17	6
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	30	29	—	—	28	15	2	14
Southampton and South West Hampshire	18	16	—	—	1	9	17	7
Winchester	8	4	—	—	—	—	8	4
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	5	3	—	—	—	—	5	3
Salisbury	9	2	—	—	—	—	9	2
Swindon	8	21	—	—	—	13	8	8
Bath District	9	4	—	—	—	—	9	4
Isle of Wight	6	6	—	—	—	—	6	6
OXFORD REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	73	88	7	1	59	70	7	17
East Berkshire	11	17	—	—	11	17	—	—
West Berkshire	17	28	—	—	17	14	—	14
Aylesbury Vale	7	9	—	—	7	9	—	—
Wycombe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milton Keynes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kettering	7	1	7	1	—	—	—	—
Northampton	24	21	—	—	24	21	—	—
Oxfordshire	7	12	—	—	—	9	7	3
SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	106	102	8	—	25	42	73	60
Bristol and Weston	8	3	—	—	8	3	—	—
Frenchay	15	21	—	—	15	21	—	—
Southmead	2	8	—	—	2	8	—	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	31	17	—	—	—	—	31	17

Regional and district health authority	All		Mental handicap hospitals and hospital units				Small NHS mental handicap units in the Community	
	No. of residents		Less than 25 beds No. of residents		25 or more beds No. of residents		No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Exeter	14	21	—	—	—	1	14	20
North Devon	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
Plymouth	12	5	8	—	—	—	4	5
Torbay	17	5	—	—	—	1	17	4
Cheltenham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gloucester	7	11	—	—	—	—	7	11
Somerset	—	8	—	—	—	8	—	—
WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	83	101	4	1	55	85	24	15
Bromsgrove and Redditch	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Herefordshire	7	2	—	—	—	—	7	2
Kidderminster and District	15	28	—	—	15	28	—	—
Worcester and District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shropshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Staffordshire	3	—	—	—	—	—	3	—
North Staffordshire	6	19	—	—	3	14	3	5
South East Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rugby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Warwickshire	6	10	4	1	2	9	—	—
South Warwickshire	9	3	—	—	9	3	—	—
Central Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Birmingham	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
West Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coventry	7	4	—	—	—	—	7	4
Dudley	8	10	—	—	8	10	—	—
Sandwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Solihull	3	3	—	—	—	—	3	3
Walsall	19	21	—	—	18	20	1	1
Wolverhampton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MERSEY REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY								
RHA Total	28	32	—	—	28	32	—	—
Chester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crewe	6	8	—	—	6	8	—	—
Halton	4	7	—	—	4	7	—	—
Macclesfield	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Warrington	2	3	—	—	2	3	—	—
Liverpool (Central and Southern)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liverpool (Eastern)	14	14	—	—	14	14	—	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southport and Formby	2	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
South Sefton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wirral	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NORTH WESTERN RHA								
RHA Total	47	57	—	—	12	40	35	17
Lancaster	7	14	—	—	6	12	1	2
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Preston	2	2	—	—	—	—	2	2
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	5	9	—	—	1	7	4	2
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	4	14	—	—	2	12	2	2
West Lancashire	4	7	—	—	—	7	4	—
Chorley and South Ribble	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bolton	3	—	—	—	—	—	3	—
Bury	3	1	—	—	—	—	3	1
North Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oldham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rochdale	10	7	—	—	—	—	10	7
Salford	3	2	—	—	3	2	—	—

Regional and district health authority	All		Mental handicap hospitals and hospital units				Small NHS mental handicap units in the Community	
	No. of residents		Less than 25 beds No. of residents		25 or more beds No. of residents		No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Stockport	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tameside and Glossop	6	1	—	—	—	—	6	1
Trafford	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wigan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 December 1985

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Primary Schools (Grants)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria primary schools will have to meet in order to qualify for education support grants.

Mr. Dunn: The criteria by which bids by local education authorities for education support grants are considered were published in DES circular 5/85, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Special Education Needs

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the additional annual public expenditure which has arisen from the implementation of sections (4) to (10) of the Education Act 1981, relating to his identification and assessment of children with special education needs.

Mr. Dunn: It is not possible to identify this expenditure within the administrative expenditure of local education authorities.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how much money has been spent on special education for each year since 1979; how many children with special education needs have been educated; and how many and what percentage of students with special education needs aged 16 to 19 years have received full-time education, in each local education authority for each year since 1979;

(2) whether he will give, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the cost of provision of full-time education for students aged 16 to 19 years with special needs, *(b)* the numbers and percentages of students aged 16 to 19 years with special needs receiving full-time education, *(c)* the numbers of requests for full-time education for students aged 16 to 19 years with special needs and *(d)* the number of complaints received from parents under sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944 asking him to intervene or overrule a local education authority's decision.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information available is given in the table. I shall write to the hon. Member with a breakdown between local education authorities of the numbers in lines II and III of the table. No information is available about the cost of provision for young people with special educational needs other than that relating to all age groups in maintained special schools and units given in line I of the table; or about those aged 16 to 19 receiving full-time education in ordinary maintained schools, in non-maintained schools or in the further education sector. It is not possible to provide the percentage figures requested relating to the 16 to 19 age group.

Requests for full-time education between the ages of 16 and 19 are made to local education authorities, and no information is collected by my Department. Since August 1983, I have received 27 complaints about issues related to the provision of full-time education for young people aged 16 to 19 with special education needs.

£ million

England	*Financial year*					
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
I. Expenditure on maintained special schools and units*.	251	314	350	382	411	n/a

* The figures relate to tuition costs in Special Education Schools and Units for which separate accounts are kept. They do not include expenditure on special units attached to primary and secondary schools for which no seperate accounts are kept. Nor do they include non tuiton costs such as transport to school and school meals.

Thousands

	January					
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
II. Number of school pupils with special educational needs*.	163·0	157·9	157·7	155·0	159·6	127·9
III. Pupils aged 16-19 in maintained special schools (excluding hospital schools).	3,160	3,648	4,312	5,536	6,267	6,862

* Figures for 1984 and 1985 are not comparable with earlier years or with each other because of changes in the way statistics were collected after the Education Act 1981 came into force in April 1983. Figures up to 1983 give numbers ascertained by LEAs under the Education Act 1944; the 1985 figure covers those with statements under the 1981 Act; the 1984 figure is a hybrid in a transitional year.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the provision of full-time education for students with special education needs aged 16 to 19 years; whether he intends to produce a circular relating to the provision; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I receive representations from time to time, both general and specific to certain cases. I am considering what general advice can usefully be offered.

Scientific Research

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what factors he took into account when he decided to allocate the sum of £15 million a year for scientific research over the next three years.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend decided to allocate an additional £15 million a year to the science budget to assist the research councils to follow up promising new developments in a variety of scientific fields and so provide more opportunities for talented scientists to pursue research in this country. The allocation of the additional money between the research councils and other bodies grant-aided from the science budget will be determined following advice from the advisory board for the research councils.

Educational and Vocational Courses (Books)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funding is provided for book resources to support educational and vocational courses organised by the Manpower Services Commission.

Sir Keith Joseph: The payment made to a local education authority from Manpower Services Commission funds or from funds provided by the MSC to an intermediary for training purposes takes account of the full cost of operating the course, including essential non-teaching items such as books, materials and equipment.

School Places

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures to show the number of school places taken out of use by each education authority in London *(a)* between 1978 and 1982 and *(b)*since 1982; and if he will give the same information for Leicestershire.

Mr. Dunn: On the basis of returns submitted by local education authorities the figures are as follows:

LEA	*Places taken out of use*	
	July 1978-December 1982	*January 1983-December 1984*
Barking	1,113	75
Barnet	2,012	480
Bexley	1,254	700
Brent	995	30
Bromley	4,520	600
Croydon	2,048	1,710
Ealing	3,288	2,370
Enfield	630	—
Haringey	1,926	1,685
Harrow	2,463	907
Havering	1,127	1,026
Hillingdon	800	794
Hounslow	2,140	841
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,585	935
Merton	1,120	1,465
Newham	*2,425	890
Redbridge	†1,900	502
Richmond-upon-Thames	469	330
Sutton	2,340	30
Waltham Forest	1,450	120
ILEA	18,565	13,541
Leicestershire	11,708	5,777

* 1980-82 only.
† No return for 1980.
The figures relate to numbers of maintained primary and secondary school places permanently taken out of use, taking account of transfers of places between the primary and secondary sectors.

University Lecturers

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many university lecturers have left the profession since 1979.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of full-time academic non-clinical lecturers and assistant lecturers, wholly university financed, who have left a university each year between January 1980 and December 1983 are shown in the following table. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Great Britain

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Total	732	717	1,067	813
of which:				
Retirement	108	140	457	261
Other education employment	72	55	47	34
University employment overseas	90	77	73	43
Other employment overseas	51	50	63	28
Private industry or commerce	50	56	69	53
Central government	19	8	10	16
Self employed	16	13	16	23
Death	43	33	24	26
Other	283	285	308	329

University Students

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what factors he bases his conclusion that the approximate cost of reducing the age of independence in respect of university students from 25 years to 21 years would be around £68 million.

Mr. Walden: £68 million is an approximate estimate of the cost in 1985-86 of reducing the age of independence to 21 for all mandatory award holders. It is based on an estimate of the number of dependent mandatory award holders in England and Wales aged 21 to 24 at about 100,000 and of the average net loss of parental contributions assessed in respect of students at about £680.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to introduce into the procedure of grant assessment a system for calculating the cost of living to university students who as part of their degree course are required to spend one year abroad in a high-cost country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The present method of assessing the mandatory grant payable to students already makes provision for those required to spend a year in a country with a high cost of living. Consideration is, however, being given to changing the present system, without increasing its overall cost, in order to make additional provision available in respect of countries with especially high costs.

Scientists

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the report which has been submitted to him by the advisory

board for the research councils about the decrease in the numbers of scientists from research laboratories; and what action he proposes to take resulting from the findings of the report.

Mr. Walden: The "brain drain" inquiry of the advisory board for the research councils sought evidence from some 40 university and other research groups about the flows of natural scientists into and out of the United Kingdom. The inquiry found evidence of increasing losses overseas of talented students, post-doctoral research workers and more senior scientists. The findings of the inquiry were published last month and copies were placed in the Library.

In response to the findings, my right hon. Friend intends to add £45 million to the science budget compared with previous plans over the three years 1986-87 to 1988-89. My right hon. Friend also intends to increase the amount available to the University Grants Committee for the improvement of equipment in selected centres of research from £7 million to £10 million in each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 and to make the same provision in 1988-89. The additions to the science budget will be distributed following advice from the ABRC. The UGC will be responsible for distributing the selective equipment funds. My right hon. Friend hopes that together the additional provisions will provide more opportunities and better facilities for talented scientists to pursue their work in this country.

Course-related Expenses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to arrange payments of course-related expenses to unemployed people who decide to undertake courses of further or higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Local education authorities already have discretionary powers to make grants to unemployed people who undertake courses of further or higher education but who do not qualify for a mandatory student award; and they can also remit fees in the case of their own institutions. In addition, under the so-called "21 hours rule", unemployed people can, subject to certain conditions, undertake part-time study for up to 21 hours a week without affecting their entitlement to supplementary benefit.

Social Work Courses

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the national advisory body for higher education is currently considering any proposal to reduce the number or scope of courses in universities or colleges leading to qualifications in social work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: No. The national advisory body for public sector higher education advises my right hon. Friend about the academic provision to be made in public sector institutions only. The NAB plans student numbers in terms of broad programme areas, not of individual subjects or courses. My right hon. Friend has not yet received advice from the NAB on the disposition of student number targets or financial resources in 1986-87.

Poundswick School

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what correspondence he has received about the Poundswick school dispute in Manchester; and what replies he has sent or will be sending.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Disabled Students

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 25 November, *Official Report*, column *397*, about deaf, blind, physically handicapped and other disabled children, what he estimates would be the cost of collecting the information he was requested to give the House.

Mr. Dunn: In order to collect this information, it would be necessary to check the destination of every pupil who has left one of these schools since 1981. Since the Department does not know the form in which these schools keep their records, it is impossible to estimate the cost or feasibility of such an exercise.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Appeals Tribunals

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Attorney-General if he lays down any residential qualifications for chairmen of appeals tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: There is no residential qualification.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Attorney-General if he has made any recent changes in the procedure for the appointment of chairmen of appeals tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: There have been no recent changes in the procedure.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils (Women Workers)

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what percentage of workers currently covered by wages councils are women working part-time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. We estimate that about four-fifths of workers covered by wages councils are female and about two thirds of all workers work part-time.

"Careers Bulletin"

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General what grade within the Civil Service the editor of *Careers Bulletin* is; and what percentage of her time it is estimated is devoted to editing *Careers Bulletin*.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information officer; approximately 60 per cent.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many members of the staff of the Department of Employment are directly involved in the publication of

Careers Bulletin; what are their grades; and what proportion of their time it is estimated is devoted to *Careers Bulletin*.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two, apart from the editor; principal and senior executive officer; 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General what was the estimated cost to the Department of Employment of publishing *Careers Bulletin* in 1982-83; and, in real terms, what was the cost for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many times a year *Careers Bulletin* is published; what is its purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Three times a year. Its purpose is to provide a means of communication between careers officers, careers teachers and the Department of Employment's careers service branch, with the aim of publicising and promoting good practice in careers work with young people. The content of the bulletin and the best means of producing and distributing copies widely to careers service staff and careers teachers are currently being considered.

Textile and Clothing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the total number of jobs lost in the textile and clothing industry since 1960.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates. Between June 1960 and June 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) the total number of employees in employment in the textiles and clothing industries in Great Britain decreased by about 715,000.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General how many people have been employed in the clothing industry in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what is this figure as a percentage of the total manufacturing labour force in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Statistics of employees employed in the clothing industry are not available for the United Kingdom, but the Great Britain figures for the period for June 1975 to June 1985 are as follows:

Estimated numbers of employees in employment in the clothing industry in Great Britain*

June of each year	*Number*	*As percentage of all employees in manufacturing industries*
1975	311,900	4·2
1976	294,200	4·1
1977	300,400	4·2
1978	293,500	4·1
1979	291,200	4·1
1980	262,400	3·9
1981	224,200	3·7
1982	210,000	3·6
1983	197,100	3·6
1984	196,400	3·6
1985	191,600	3·6

* Groups 453 and 456 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification

Tourism

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Paymaster General how the extra funding for tourism which he announced on 12 November, *Official Report*, column *445*, will be allocated; on what terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I cannot give details on how the extra funds will be allocated at this stage. I have asked the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board to submit details to me by Christmas on how they would propose to spend the funds. I have asked them to give additional emphasis in their new plans to improving employment opportunities, encouraging the dispersal of visitors throughout the United Kingdom and extending the tourism season.

WALES

Pay Settlements

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will define the phrase "excessive pay settlement" as used in the letter sent on 21 August by his Department to the North Wales provincial council for local authority services.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The level of pay settlements is a key element in the Government's economic strategy. Since pay accounts for around 70 per cent. of local government spending, it is important that settlements for local authority employers should be moderate and at a level the country can afford. In making my proposals for the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement in July I announced that current expenditure provision was estimated to be £1,368 million. The Government are not prepared to increase block support to finance pay awards which cannot be absorbed within this amount.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of local government current spending in Wales in 1983-84 was represented by spending under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Department does not collect information on current spending under section 137. However, total revenue expenditure under section 137 in 1983-84 was £2·9 million and represented 0·23 per cent. of total local authority revenue expenditure.

Farmers (Exceptional Weather Aid)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers in Mid Glamorgan, Gwent and Wales,

respectively, will receive exceptional payments pursuant to his statement of 28 November; and what he expects to be the average payment made per application and the maximum payment made on any single application.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The estimated numbers of farmers of three hectares and over who can qualify for assistance are as follows:

	Number
Mid Glamorgan	450
Gwent	430
Wales	6,000

The average payment for these farmers will be of the order of £250. Weather aid will also be provided for occupiers of less than three hectares. No limit is attached to the number of animals on which a farmer may claim.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made in the review of major non-departmental public bodies under his control.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In accordance with the arrangements outlined by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 19 November 1984, at columns *57-58*, I have arranged for reviews of all the executive non-departmental public bodies under my control so that the main programme of work will be completed by April 1987. A review of the Wales Tourist Board has already been carried out; and over the next year or so reviews will be undertaken of the Welsh Development Agency, the Sports Council for Wales, the National Museum of Wales, the Development Board for Rural Wales, the National Library of Wales and the Land Authority for Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Clothing and Textile Industries

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Prime Minister what information she has as to how the number of people employed in the clothing and textile industries compares with the numbers employed in the motor manufacturing industry and the coal mining industry both in the United Kingdom and throughout the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: The latest available data for most countries relate to 1983 and are given in "Employment and Unemployment 1985", published by the Statistical Office of the European Communities, a copy of which is in the Library. the relevant information for the textile industry is on page 146, for the clothing and footwear industry on page 147, for manufacture of motor vehicles and so on on page 143, and for extraction and briquetting of solid fuels and coke ovens (the closest available approximation to the coal mining industry) on page 134.

Employees in employment by sex and NACE class

1,000

	West Germany	*France*	*Italy*	*Netherlands*	*Belgium*	*Luxembourg*	*United Kingdom*	*Ireland*	*Denmark*	*EUR 9*
TEXTILE INDUSTRY—NACE 43										
Total										
1974	425·9	387·5	549·0	59·8	106·0	†	527·3	20·5	18·5	2,094·5
1975	396·7	365·3	554·3	55·5	96·6	†	485·6	16·7	14·5	1,985·2
1976	368·9	343·2	482·1	46·4	90·8	†	458·2	18·1	15·6	1,823·3
1977	359·6	333·3	490·3	44·0	84·2	†	460·5	18·9	16·9	1,807·7
1978	348·5	318·5	477·9	39·2	75·6	†	444·9	18·5	15·5	1,738·6
1979	338·9	301·5	480·8	34·6	69·4	†	399·0	18·5	15·0	1,657·7
1980	335·8	292·1	475·5	32·9	67·6	†	358·0	18·1	15·1	1,595·1
1981	319·0	273·3	479·6	29·2	65·0	†	299·0	15·8	13·9	1,494·8
1982	290·1	259·1	476·5	26·4	*61·8	†	277·0	14·7	13·9	*1,419·5
1983	268·7	251·5	463·0	22·7	—	†	253·0	11·9	14·1	*1,346·7
Males										
1974	194·8	171·4	151·2	43·0	59·1	†	281·6	—	7·9	*920·7
1975	183·1	161·1	164·3	40·7	54·0	†	261·4	—	6·2	*880·3
1976	170·7	153·1	187·7	35·2	50·4	†	248·8	—	6·7	*862·9
1977	165·7	147·8	192·9	33·2	46·8	†	249·8	—	7·3	*854·5
1978	160·6	140·8	—	29·9	41·4	†	240·2	—	6·8	*818·1
1979	156·7	133·3	—	26·1	38·6	†	209·0	—	6·3	*769·5
1980	153·7	129·1	—	24·4	38·0	†	185·0	—	6·2	*722·8
1981	145·6	121·7	—	21·6	36·7	†	154·0	—	6·0	*673·3
1982	132·9	115·4	—	19·4	*35·2	†	141·0	—	5·8	*635·8
1983	125·1	112·3	—	16·6	—	†	130·0	—	6·0	*604·5
Females										
1974	231·1	216·0	397·8	16·8	46·9	†	245·7	—	10·6	*1,173·7
1975	213·5	204·2	389·8	14·8	42·6	†	224·2	—	8·3	*1,104·6
1976	198·2	190·1	294·3	11·2	40·4	†	209·4	—	8·9	*960·3
1977	193·9	185·5	297·4	10·5	37·4	†	210·7	—	9·6	*953·2
1978	187·9	177·8	—	9·3	34·2	†	204·7	—	8·7	*920·6
1979	182·2	168·2	—	8·5	30·8	†	189·0	—	8·6	*887·1
1980	182·0	163·0	—	8·4	29·6	†	173·0	—	8·9	*872·1
1981	173·4	151·7	—	7·6	28·3	†	145·0	—	7·9	*821·6
1982	157·2	143·6	—	7·0	*26·6	†	135·0	—	8·1	*782·6
1983	143·6	139·3	—	6·2	—	†	124·0	—	8·1	*743·2
LEATHER AND LEATHER GOODS INDUSTRY—NACE 44 (EXCEPT FOOTWEAR AND CLOTHING)										
Total										
1974	50·6	45·2	64·9	5·7	6·0	—	38·4	2·2	2·2	215·3
1975	48·1	43·7	66·0	4·9	5·4	—	37·7	2·1	2·1	210·0
1976	48·3	42·3	79·2	4·3	5·2	—	36·3	2·0	1·9	219·5
1977	46·6	41·0	80·6	4·3	4·6	—	37·2	2·0	2·1	218·4
1978	44·9	40·4	79·3	4·0	4·1	—	35·9	1·9	2·0	212·5
1979	44·7	37·9	78·9	3·5	3·7	—	35·0	1·7	2·1	207·5
1980	43·8	37·2	77·5	3·5	3·3	—	34·0	1·6	2·1	203·0
1981	39·7	34·8	77·8	3·2	3·1	—	29·0	1·4	1·6	190·6
1982	38·4	34·3	76·6	3·0	*2·9	—	27·0	1·1	1·4	*184·7
1983	35·9	32·6	76·8	2·7	—	—	25·0	1·1	1·4	*178·4
Males										
1974	19·6	21·6	18·7	3·7	3·5	—	21·6	—	1·1	*91·5
1975	18·7	21·4	19·6	3·2	3·2	—	21·1	—	1·0	*89·8
1976	18·9	20·4	38·1	2·8	3·0	—	20·7	—	0·9	*106·3
1977	18·0	19·3	37·5	2·7	2·7	—	21·2	—	0·8	*103·7
1978	17·4	18·8	—	2·7	2·4	—	20·1	—	0·8	*100·5
1979	17·3	17·2	—	2·3	2·0	—	19·0	—	0·8	*96·7

	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	EUR 9
1980	16·6	16·8	—	2·2	1·8	—	18·0	—	0·8	*91·7
1981	15·5	15·5	—	2·1	1·7	—	16·0	—	0·7	*87·0
1982	15·1	15·4	—	1·9	*1·5	—	15·0	—	0·5	*84·1
1983	14·3	14·7	—	1·8	—	—	15·0	—	0·6	*82·7
Females										
1974	31·0	23·6	46·2	2·0	2·6	—	16·8	—	1·1	*123·8
1975	29·4	22·3	46·4	1·7	2·2	—	16·6	—	1·1	*120·2
1976	29·4	21·9	41·1	1·5	2·2	—	15·6	—	1·0	*113·2
1977	28·6	21·7	43·0	1·6	1·9	—	16·0	—	1·3	*114·6
1978	27·4	21·6	—	1·3	1·7	—	15·8	—	1·3	*112·0
1979	27·4	20·8	—	1·3	1·7	—	16·0	—	1·3	*111·0
1980	27·2	20·4	—	1·3	1·5	—	15·0	—	1·2	*110·2
1981	24·3	19·3	—	1·1	1·4	—	13·0	—	0·9	*103·7
1982	23·3	18·9	—	1·1	*1·4	—	12·0	—	0·8	*100·5
1983	21·7	17·9	—	0·9	—	—	10·0	—	0·8	*95·8

† included in NACE 45.

FOOTWEAR AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY—NACE 45

Total										
1974	409·7	415·4	501·7	51·7	92·7	1·0	480·8	23·0	23·0	1,999·0
1975	395·8	367·3	517·6	42·4	86·5	1·0	459·8	21·1	18·9	1.990·4
1976	379·8	348·9	555·9	39·4	76·3	1·0	431·1	19·3	21·6	1,873·3
1977	370·5	345·1	565·3	35·5	68·6	1·0	434·8	19·6	25·3	1,865·7
1978	361·2	330·5	555·4	33·2	61·3	0·9	427·0	19·3	23·5	1,812·3
1979	361·2	324·1	547·3	32·0	56·4	0·9	418·0	19·8	22·8	1,782·5
1980	356·9	320·5	552·2	30·3	54·1	0·9	396·0	19·6	22·0	1,752·5
1981	341·2	296·5	547·1	26·4	49·8	0·9	337·0	18·0	19·1	1,636·0
1982	312·4	283·5	543·2	23·5	*47·3	0·8	311·0	17·2	19·5	*1,558·4
1983	290·5	281·2	527·3	22·1	—	0·8	293·0	15·3	20·0	*1,497·5
Males										
1974	81·5	80·3	144·7	17·4	13·8	—	124·3	—	4·8	*473·2
1975	78·6	79·3	153·4	15·0	12·5	—	117·6	—	4·0	*466·3
1976	75·8	76·1	117·9	14·6	11·1	—	111·6	—	4·5	*417·1
1977	74·2	73·9	120·8	13·4	9·9	—	109·8	—	4·7	*412·3
1978	71·6	71·3	—	12·3	8·8	—	108·2	—	4·8	*400·9
1979	71·0	69·6	—	11·5	8·0	—	103·0	—	4·6	*389·7
1980	68·9	68·4	—	10·9	7·7	—	97·0	—	4·2	*372·7
1981	66·6	65·2	—	9·9	7·2	—	87·0	—	4·1	*348·1
1982	62·2	64·6	—	8·9	*6·8	—	80·0	—	4·1	*333·7
1983	59·7	63·4	—	8·5	—	—	75·0	—	4·2	*321·2
Females										
1974	328·1	335·0	357·0	34·3	78·8	—	356·5	—	18·2	*1,525·5
1975	317·2	288·0	364·2	27·4	74·0	—	342·2	—	14·9	*1,444·1
1976	304·0	272·8	438·0	24·8	65·2	—	319·5	—	17·1	*1,456·2
1977	296·3	271·1	444·5	22·1	58·7	—	325·0	—	20·6	*1,453·3
1978	289·6	259·2	—	21·0	52·5	—	319·8	—	18·6	*1,412·4
1979	290·2	254·4	—	20·5	48·5	—	315·0	—	18·2	*1,392·8
1980	288·0	252·0	—	19·3	46·4	—	299·0	—	17·7	*1,379·5
1981	274·6	231·3	—	16·6	42·6	—	250·0	—	15·0	*1,288·0
1982	250·3	218·9	—	14·6	*40·5	—	231·0	—	15·4	*1,224·8
1983	230·8	217·8	—	13·6	—	—	218·0	—	15·8	*1,176·3

TIMBER AND WOODEN FURNITURE INDUSTRIES—NACE 46

Total										
1974	470·7	242·8	335·6	54·3	54·8	0·7	274·2	10·5	27·7	1471·3
1975	445·5	233·4	341·1	52·0	51·3	0·6	256·9	9·9	22·6	1413·3
1976	439·6	227·3	333·2	47·3	48·3	0·7	252·6	10·1	25·9	1385·0
1977	446·5	228·2	350·8	47·2	47·6	0·6	251·6	10·3	29·9	1412·7
1978	460·0	226·0	348·8	46·5	44·8	0·6	245·7	10·2	28·9	1411·5
1979	471·8	223·8	339·7	46·8	41·3	0·6	254·0	9·9	28·1	1416·0
1980	485·7	222·7	345·5	45·8	39·6	0·6	243·0	9·4	29·1	1421·4
1981	478·4	216·6	352·6	42·2	37·7	0·6	224·0	8·9	27·2	1388·2
1982	446·0	209·9	350·7	37·3	36·3	0·6	207·0	9·0	26·5	*1323·3
1983	424·1	203·4	341·4	31·5	—	0·6	206·0	8·5	26·3	*1278·1
Males										
1974	370·9	184·4	257·7	49·0	46·5	—	224·1	—	22·7	*1165·3
1975	352·9	177·2	263·3	47·1	43·4	—	209·9	—	18·5	*1121·6
1976	350·5	172·3	261·8	42·8	41·0	—	207·0	—	21·0	*1106·0
1977	356·0	171·8	279·8	42·9	40·4	—	205·5	—	24·3	*1130·4
1978	367·3	169·1	—	42·0	38·3	—	200·0	—	23·4	*1128·0
1979	376·4	168·0	—	42·1	35·5	—	205·0	—	22·7	*1130·0

	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	EUR 9
1980	385·4	167·3	—	41·1	34·0	—	196·0	—	22·2	*1129·9
1981	380·5	162·2	—	37·8	32·4	—	181·0	—	21·2	*1105·4
1982	355·5	157·7	—	33·7	31·4	—	167·0	—	20·8	*1055·0
1983	339·8	152·8	—	28·7	—	—	167·0	—	20·9	*1021·6
Females										
1974	99·9	58·4	77·9	5·3	8·3	—	50·1	—	5·0	*306·1
1975	92·6	56·2	77·7	4·9	7·8	—	47·0	—	4·1	*291·5
1976	89·2	54·9	71·4	4·5	7·2	—	45·6	—	4·9	*278·9
1977	90·5	56·4	70·9	4·3	7·1	—	46·1	—	5·5	*282·0
1978	92·6	56·9	—	4·5	6·5	—	45·7	—	5·5	*283·4
1979	95·4	55·9	—	4·7	5·8	—	49·0	—	5·5	*286·2
1980	100·4	55·4	—	4·7	5·6	—	48·0	—	6·9	*292·6
1981	97·9	54·4	—	4·4	5·2	—	43·0	—	6·0	*282·7
1982	90·6	52·1	—	3·6	4·9	—	41·0	—	5·7	*269·3
1983	84·3	50·6	—	2·8	—	—	40·0	—	5·4	*257·5
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING—NACE 34										
Total										
1974	1,167·6	481·4	375·2	122·7	101·7	0·8	794·4	11·3	41·0	3,092·1
1975	1,097·7	509·3	373·3	122·8	96·4	0·7	763·8	9·6	35·0	3,008·6
1976	1,031·0	498·4	395·3	116·7	91·9	0·7	696·9	10·7	34·2	2,875·8
1977	1,034·6	505·6	391·7	115·8	86·7	0·9	709·0	11·2	39·5	2,895·0
1978	1,019·3	499·9	394·2	115·1	84·9	0·9	716·2	11·8	39·0	2,881·3
1979	1,029·9	493·0	383·8	115·9	83·1	1·1	749·0	12·6	40·3	2,908·7
1980	1,048·2	485·7	382·0	117·3	82·0	1·1	742·0	13·7	41·5	2,913·5
1981	1,028·9	477·1	384·6	117·1	79·8	1·1	688·0	13·8	36·9	2,827·3
1982	990·2	472·9	369·1	112·6	75·5	1·2	655·0	15·0	36·0	*2,727·5
1983	949·0	470·1	352·6	113·2	—	1·2	648·0	14·4	35·4	*2,659·4
Males										
1974	700·7	288·0	206·1	100·7	64·6	—	463·1	—	25·0	*1,855·0
1975	676·3	302·1	192·4	100·9	61·6	—	461·2	—	21·4	*1,821·7
1976	644·5	298·6	233·2	96·8	59·6	—	436·8	—	20·9	*1,796·7
1977	642·1	301·3	226·3	96·8	57·2	—	442·2	—	25·8	*1,798·6
1978	637·4	300·3	—	96·5	56·7	—	447·4	—	26·1	*1,799·3
1979	645·4	298·0	—	96·9	55·5	—	475·0	—	26·4	*1,826·6
1980	654·6	295·0	—	97·6	55·5	—	473·0	—	27·2	*1,826·8
1981	650·4	293·5	—	97·8	54·5	—	455·0	—	23·3	*1,800·4
1982	634·6	293·8	—	94·8	52·0	—	439·0	—	23·1	*1,755·2
1983	617·0	293·3	—	95·8	—	—	438·0	—	22·9	*1,727·2
Females										
1974	466·9	193·4	169·1	22·0	37·1	—	327·3	—	16·0	*1,237·1
1975	421·4	207·2	181·0	21·9	34·8	—	302·6	—	13·6	*1,187·0
1976	386·5	199·8	162·1	19·9	32·3	—	260·1	—	13·3	*1,079·1
1977	392·5	204·3	165·4	19·0	29·5	—	266·8	—	13·7	*1,096·4
1978	381·9	199·6	—	18·6	28·1	—	268·8	—	12·9	*1,081·9
1979	384·6	195·0	—	19·0	27·6	—	274·0	—	13·8	*1,082·1
1980	393·6	190·7	—	19·7	26·5	—	269·0	—	14·3	*1,086·7
1981	378·5	183·6	—	19·3	25·3	—	233·0	—	13·5	*1,026·8
1982	355·5	179·1	—	17·8	23·5	—	216·0	—	12·8	*972·2
1983	332·0	176·7	—	17·4	—	—	210·0	—	12·5	*932·1
MANUFACTURE OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND OF MOTOR VEHICLE PARTS AND ACCESSORIES—NACE 35										
Total										
1974	634·1	414·8	253·7	22·8	50·7	0·6	497·8	8·0	4·8	1,887·3
1975	591·5	446·7	242·5	21·8	46·4	0·8	478·3	6·6	4·0	1,838·6
1976	589·7	463·7	240·6	21·4	50·5	0·8	448·3	6·4	3·9	1,825·3
1977	619·5	487·0	230·6	22·4	52·5	0·9	464·2	6·5	5·1	1,888·7
1978	646·9	488·9	234·4	22·6	54·6	0·8	473·9	6·3	5·2	1,933·6
1979	672·8	485·5	241·5	24·1	56·0	0·6	436·0	6·3	6·0	1,928·8
1980	692·0	478·8	260·4	24·4	57·5	0·7	425·0	6·6	6·4	1,951·8
1981	657·7	450·1	240·4	24·3	55·9	0·9	371·0	6·5	5·0	*1,811·8
1982	666·4	432·8	216·5	23·3	55·2*	0·9	335·0	5·8	4·9	*1,740·8
1983	657·3	429·4	198·1	21·4		0·9	310·0	5·4	5·3	*1,683·0
Males										
1974	527·6	338·9	238·9	21·4	45·0	0·5	436·0	—	4·4	*1,620·3
1975	494·8	365·5	227·9	20·4	40·9	0·6	419·5	—	3·6	*1,579·5
1976	497·7	379·7	220·9	20·2	44·8	0·6	394·8	—	3·6	*1,568·4
1977	524·8	398·7	217·5	21·1	46·7	0·7	408·9	—	4·6	*1,629·2
1978	549·2	401·7	—	21·4	49·0	0·6	417·1	—	4·7	*1,670·8
1979	571·6	398·3	—	22·8	50·4	0·5	383·0	—	5·3	*1,665·7
1980	587·4	392·4	—	23·0	51·9	0·6	373·0	—	5·6	*1,686·5
1981	557·3	369·5	—	22·9	50·5	0·7	328·0	—	4·3	*1,565·7

	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	EUR 9
1982	566·6	355·9	—	22·0	50·2*	0·7	296·0	—	4·2	*1,504·9
1983	560·8	353·2	—	20·1	—	0·7	275·0	—	4·6	*1,456·2
Females										
1974	106·5	75·8	14·9	1·4	5·7	0·1	61·8	—	0·4	*267·0
1975	96·7	81·2	14·6	1·4	5·5	0·2	58·8	—	0·4	*259·1
1976	92·0	84·0	19·7	1·2	5·7	0·2	53·5	—	0·3	*256·9
1977	94·7	88·3	13·1	1·3	5·8	0·2	55·3	—	0·5	*259·5
1978	97·7	87·2	—	1·3	5·6	0·2	56·8	—	0·5	*262·9
1979	101·2	87·2	—	1·3	5·6	0·1	52·0	—	0·6	*262·0
1980	104·5	86·4	—	1·5	5·6	0·1	52·0	—	0·8	*265·3
1981	100·4	80·6	—	1·5	5·4	0·2	44·0	—	0·7	*247·3
1982	99·8	76·9	—	1·4	5·0*	0·2	40·0	—	0·7	*237·0
1983	96·5	76·2	—	1·3	—	0·2	35·0	—	0·7	*226·8
EXTRACTION AND BRIQUETTING OF SOLID FUELS, COKE OVENS—NACE 11/12										
Total										
1974	191·4	100·2	6·2	4·2	32·5	—	308·5	0·3	—	*643·3
1975	207·9	85·3	6·9	1·7	31·2	—	315·2	0·3	—	*648·5
1976	220·9	83·9	6·3	0·7	28·7	—	308·5	0·4	—	*649·4
1977	228·3	79·2	6·2	0·7	26·4	—	307·5	0·4	—	*648·7
1978	216·5	73·5	6·5	0·3	25·1	—	305·6	0·3	—	*627·8
1979	216·8	68·6	6·4	0·3	24·5	—	302·0	0·3	—	*618·9
1980	172·4	63·5	6·2	0·3	23·4	—	303·0	0·3	—	*569·1
1981	209·4	60·7	6·5	0·0	23·2	—	303·0	0·3	—	*603·1
1982	196·5	59·0	6·6	0·0	*23·1	—	278·0	0·3	—	*563·5
1983	207·2	58·2	6·3	0·0	—	—	267·0	—	—	*562·1
Males										
1974	187·0	100·2	6·0	4·0	32·2	—	298·1	—	—	*627·8
1975	203·0	83·2	6·7	1·6	31·0	—	304·9	—	—	*630·7
1976	215·0	81·3	6·2	0·6	28·5	—	298·0	—	—	*630·0
1977	222·4	76·5	6·2	0·6	26·2	—	296·6	—	—	*628·9
1978	211·0	70·8	—	0·3	25·0	—	294·3	—	—	*608·2
1979	211·3	65·9	—	0·2	24·3	—	290·0	—	—	*598·4
1980	167·0	61·0	—	0·2	23·3	—	292·0	—	—	*550·0
1981	203·9	58·3	—	0·0	23·1	—	281·0	—	—	*573·1
1982	191·5	56·8	—	0·0	*23·0	—	267·0	—	—	*545·0
1983	201·8	55·6	—	0·0	—	—	256·0	—	—	*543·0
Females										
1974	4·4	0·0	0·2	0·2	0·3	—	10·4	—	—	*15·5
1975	4·8	2·2	0·2	0·1	0·2	—	10·3	—	—	*17·8
1976	5·9	2·6	0·0	0·1	0·2	—	10·5	—	—	*19·3
1977	6·0	2·7	0·0	0·1	0·2	—	10·9	—	—	*19·9
1978	5·5	2·8	—	0·0	0·1	—	11·3	—	—	*19·7
1979	5·5	2·6	—	0·0	0·1	—	12·0	—	—	*20·2
1980	5·4	2·5	—	0·0	0·1	—	12·0	—	—	*20·1
1981	5·5	2·4	—	0·0	0·1	—	12·0	—	—	*20·0
1982	5·0	2·4	—	0·0	*0·1	—	11·0	—	—	*18·5
1983	5·4	2·6	—	0·0	—	—	11·0	—	—	*19·1
OF WHICH: COKE OVENS—NACE 12										
Total										
1974	—	0·3	3·4	—	1·6	—	11·3	—	—	—
1975	—	0·3	3·7	—	1·6	—	12·2	—	—	—
1976	—	0·3	3·7	—	1·5	—	11·0	—	—	—
1977	—	0·3	3·6	—	1·5	—	10·5	—	—	—
1978	—	0·3	3·6	—	1·6	—	10·7	—	—	—
1979	—	0·3	3·5	†	1·5	—	4·8	—	—	—
1980	—	0·3	3·6	†	1·5	—	4·8	—	—	—
1981	—	0·3	3·9	†	1·5	—	4·5	—	—	—
1982	—	0·3	3·9	†	*1·5	—	4·3	—	—	—
1983	—	0·3	3·9	†	—	—	4·3	—	—	—
Males										
1974	—	0·3	3·2	—	1·5	—	10·8	—	—	—
1975	—	0·3	3·5	—	1·5	—	11·6	—	—	—
1976	—	0·3	3·6	—	1·5	—	10·5	—	—	—
1977	—	0·3	3·6	—	1·5	—	10·1	—	—	—
1978	—	0·3	—	—	1·6	—	10·2	—	—	—
1979	—	0·3	—	†	1·5	—	4·6	—	—	—
1980	—	0·3	—	†	1·5	—	4·6	—	—	—
1981	—	0·3	—	†	1·5	—	4·3	—	—	—
1982	—	0·3	—	†	*1·5	—	4·1	—	—	—
1983	—	0·3	—	†	—	—	4·1	—	—	—

	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	EUR 9
Females										
1974	—	0	0·2	—	0·0	—	0·5	—	—	—
1975	—	0	0·2	—	0·0	—	0·6	—	—	—
1976	—	0	0·0	—	0·0	—	0·5	—	—	—
1977	—	0	0·0	—	0·0	—	0·4	—	—	—
1978	—	0	—	—	0·0	—	0·5	—	—	—
1979	—	0	—	†	0·0	—	0·2	—	—	—
1980	—	0	—	†	0·0	—	0·2	—	—	—
1981	—	0	—	†	0·0	—	0·2	—	—	—
1982	—	0	—	†	0·0	—	0·2	—	—	—
1983	—	0	—	†	—	—	0·2	—	—	—

† Included in NACE 14

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Prime Minister how the level of Government investment in the textile and clothing industries per capita employee in those industries compares to the level of Government investment per capita employee in *(a)* the coal mining industry, *(b)* the motor manufacturing industry, *(c)* the aerospace industry, *(d)* the shipbuilding industry and *(e)* computer manufacture in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

The Prime Minister: Information on Government support for investment is given in the annual reports of the Industrial Development Act 1982 (formerly the Industry Act 1972) of which copies are in the Library of the House. The totals for the clothing industry, coal mining, the motor manufacturing industry, the aerospace industry and computer manufacture are not separately identifiable. However, the reports do give a breakdown of Government support for investment by broader industrial sectors.

Statistics of employment in the industries concerned are published in the *Employment Gazette*, of which copies are also in the Library, but these statistics are not compiled on quite the same basis as statistics on Government support for investment.

Horticultural Research

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of the identification of needs and derivation of priorities in respect of horticultural research.

The Prime Minister: Yes. There is close collaboration between the chief scientists of the two Departments in relation to research matters which are of mutual interest, but if my hon. Friend has any particular points in mind perhaps he would write to me.

Liverpool City Council

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether, pursuant to her answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *720*, the information given by the Department of the Environment that the arrangements did not require Government approval was in response to representations from the commercial organisations concerned seeking Government approval; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The information was given in response to a request for observations from the organisations concerned.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Junction 12)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the junction 12 signpost on the southbound section of the M1 motorway between Wakefield and London was reported damaged; and on what date it will be repaired.

Mr. Ridley: The half mile advance warning sign at junction 12 was reported damaged following an accident on 15 November. The sign is due to be replaced in early January as part of the general sign replacement programme on this section of the M1.

A1 (Wetherby)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now give a date for the commencement to works to improve the A1 north of Wetherby.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly about the prospects for a start of work on improving the A1 north of Wetherby.

Road Schemes

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress his Department has made in investigating the prospect of speeding up road schemes currently planned to start after 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: We are looking at ways of speeding up preparation of schemes in the light of the Civil Engineering Economic Development Committee's report "A Fairer and Faster Route to Major Road Construction". The additional funds we are allocating to the new construction programme will make some acceleration possible after 1986.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the list of road schemes which the Department of Transport-Confederation of British Industry-Trades Union Congress review team examined in order to assess the economic benefits of accelerating construction, showing for each scheme *(a)* the first year economic benefits, *(b)* the discounted cost of bringing forward the scheme's completion by one year and *(c)* the net present value of advancing the scheme's completion by one year.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department of Transport schemes examined by the review team are listed in the annex to the

Confederation of British Industry's report "The Fabric of the Nation", published in June 1984. I regret that the information requested for each scheme could be provided only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member is interested in a particular scheme, perhaps he will write to me.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the report of the review team of the Department of Transport-Confederation of British Industry-Trades Union Council on the consequences for employment of £500 million worth of road construction.

Mrs. Chalker: I have seen the review team's report, which states that it came to no agreement about the precise number of jobs which could be created as a result of an increase in road construction activity.

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will show how his Department's trunk road new construction budget for 1986-87 will be allocated between *(a)* schemes to be started in 1986-87, *(b)* schemes started in 1985-86 and *(c)* schemes started in 1984-85 giving in each case the number of contracts involved.

Mrs. Chalker: I regret that it is not possible to supply the information requested. The allocation of resources between the various elements of the national road programme has yet to be finalised. Details will be published in the Supply Estimates to be presented to Parliament on Budget day.

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give his Department's latest forecast of capital expenditure on roads by English local authorities in 1985-86 and the provision made for such expenditure in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: The provisional forecast of net capital expenditure on roads by English local authorities in 1985-86 is £494 million. Provision for 1986-87 is £533 million. Final decisions on provision for 1987-88 and 1988-89 will be taken at the usual time, in the autumn preceding those years.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria Her Majesty's Government have for trunking roads in the Vauxhall constituency.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no such proposals.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans Her Majesty's Government have for increasing road capacity in the Vauxhall constituency.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans Her Majesty's Government have to allocate the £1·5 billion they have scheduled for trunk roads in London.

Mrs. Chalker: Details of the Government's current proposals for trunk road expenditure in the London area an on the M25, totalling some £900 million, are set out in the report "National Roads England 1985", a copy of which is in the Library.

Wardair (Transatlantic Scheduled Services)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now approve the application by Wardair to operate transatlantic scheduled services between Canada and regional airports in the United Kingdom, including Cardiff-Wales airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: To date neither the Canadian Government nor Wardair has applied to operate scheduled passenger services other than to London, Manchester and Prestwick. Bilateral discussions with the Canadian Government will take place in January next, when there will be an opportunity to discuss the creation of wider opportunities for British and Canadian airlines.

Light Rail Transport Systems

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate which light rail passenger transport systems have received funding from central Government; and what was the amount of such assistance.

Mr. David Mitchell: The capital cost of the Tyne and Wear Metro has amounted to about £280 million. Of this some two thirds has been met by central Government grant. In addition, the first phase of the London Docklands light railway, currently under construction, will cost £77 million. It is funded equally by London Regional Transport and the London Docklands Development Corporation out of central Government grants; up to two-thirds of the LRT grant is recovered from London ratepayers.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to provide financial assistance for the proposed light rapid transit system in Greater Manchester.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am considering an application by Greater Manchester passenger transport executive for a grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 towards the cost of its proposed light rapid transit system. The PTE has, however, acknowledged that it needs to undertake further work before the project can be fully appraised.

USA-USSR Communications Agreement

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the agreement between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics over communications in the north Pacific will have on British airlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The agreement between the USA, Japan and the USSR was signed on 19 November 1985 and provides for new communication links between Anchorage, Tokyo and Khabarovsk when civil aircraft are in trouble on north Pacfic air routes, and for the use of a radio broadcasting station on Kamchatka as a navigation aid.

The agreement should help to reduce the danger of repetition of the incident involving the shooting down of a Korean airliner and will benefit the aircraft of all nations flying on north Pacific routes.

British Rail

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that British Rail will be able to meet its financial targets in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have set the board the target of reducing its call on PSO grant to £635 million (in 1983

prices) in 1986-87. The freight and inter-city businesses have been set the target of earning a 5 per cent. rate of return on their assets, on a current costs accounting basis, but excluding interest charges, by 1988-89. I expect the board to make progress towards these targets during this financial year. I set a cash ceiling on the current year's PSO grant of £820 million (equivalent to £740 million at 1983 prices); I am pleased to say that I was able to agree a grant settlement £7 million below that ceiling.

Airlines (CAA charges)

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total sum of charges to British-based airlines by the Civil Aviation Authority during the last financial year; and what was the cost of the meteorological services included in this charge.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Revenue from charges for air traffic control services supplied by the Civil Aviation Authority totalled £173·2 million in the financial year ending 31 March 1985. Meteorological services included in these charges cost £15·5 million. The exact amount charged to British airlines cannot be calculated except at disproportionate cost. The CAA estimates, however, that about 50 per cent. of the charges were recovered from operators of British registered aircraft.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce regular health checks on serving prison officers.

Mr. Mellor: No, but the possibility is among matters being considered in a current review of occupational health arrangements in the prison service. Should any firm proposals emerge, staff and other interests will be consulted before their introduction.

Mr. Eric Alley

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list forthcoming visits to local authorities that have been arranged for Mr. Eric Alley, his Department's civil defence adviser, and the dates on which they are to take place.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The civil defence adviser will be visiting west Glamorgan on 19 December.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those local authorities which have received visits from Mr. Eric Alley, his Department's civil defence adviser; and when they took place.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the course of his programme of reviewing local authority progress in civil defence preparedness, the civil defence adviser has visited the following counties:

Local authority	*Date visited*
Avon	20 November 1985
Bedfordshire	18 June 1985
Berkshire	19 December 1984
Buckinghamshire	23 November 1984
Cambridgeshire	4 July 1985
Cheshire	17 July 1985
Cleveland	20 August 1985
Clwyd	1 April 1985
Cornwall	3 October 1985
Cumbria	30 July 1985
Derbyshire	27 March 1985
Devon	2 October 1985
Dorset	3 May 1985
Durham	8 July 1985
Dyfed	26 March 1985
East Sussex	11 September 1985
Essex	17 June 1985
Gloucestershire	8 May 1985
Greater Manchester	19 November 1985
Gwent	17 December 1984
Hampshire	3 July 1985
Hereford and Worcester	22 June 1985
Hertfordshire	16 April 1985
Humberside	29 April 1985
Isle of Wight	23 April 1985
Kent	13 June 1985
Lancashire	18 July 1985
Leicestershire	21 March 1985
Lincolnshire	19 July 1985
Merseyside	9 July 1985
Mid Glamorgan	22 August 1985
Norfolk	5 August 1985
Northamptonshire	3 April 1985
Northumberland	6 June 1985
North Yorkshire	23 July 1985
Nottinghamshire	10 June 1985
Oxfordshire	1 May 1985
Powys	19 March 1985
Shropshire	1 August 1985
Somerset	12 June 1985
South Glamorgan	18 March 1985
South Yorkshire	29 July 1985
Staffordshire	21 June 1985
Suffolk	5 June 1985
Surrey	15 August 1985
Tyne and Wear	11 November 1985
Warwickshire	24 July 1985
West Midlands	10 July 1985
West Sussex	14 May 1985
West Yorkshire	4 September 1985
Wiltshire	7 June 1985

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the conditions of employment of Mr. Eric Alley, his Department's civil defence adviser.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Mr. Alley's appointment is for three years in the first instance with the possibility of an extension. The post attracts a salary on the Civil Service principal scale.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the terms of reference of Mr. Eric Alley, his Department's civil defence adviser.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The civil defence adviser's main responsibility is to advise my right hon. Friend on matters affecting the civil defence functions of local authorities.

Government Wartime Headquarters

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a site has been found for the central Government wartime headquarters in civil defence zone 81, in north Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes.

Aircraft (Hijacking Incidents)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all aircraft hijacking incidents in the United Kingdom since 1970 which required a police presence or intervention; and if, for each incident, he will estimate the policing costs involved.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The incidents concerned are as follows. The additional cost to the police of handling the incidents could not be determined without disproportionate cost.

6 September 1970
An attempted hijack of an El Al Boeing 707 en route from Amsterdam to New York was foiled when one of the two hijackers was shot dead by armed sky marshals and the other was overpowered by the crew. The aircraft made a emergency landing at Heathrow airport where the second hijacker was taken into police custody.

11 January 1977
A lone hijacker threatened to blow up a TWA Boeing 747 over the Atlantic whilst en route from New York to London. The crew recognised the man as being mentally disturbed and were able to restrain him until after the aircraft landed at Heathrow where the police boarded the aircraft and took the man into custody.

26 February 1982
Five Tanzanians hijacked a Tanzanian Airways internal flight. After refuelling at Nairobi the aircraft travelled to Jeddah and Athens before finally arriving at Stansted on 27 February 1982. After negotiations the aircrew were released the following day and the five men surrendered to the police.

29 March 1985
A lone male British national who was being deported from the Federal Republic of Germany hijacked a Lufthansa Boeing 737 en route from Hamburg to London. The aircraft landed safely at Heathrow and after a period of negotiations the hijacker, who proved to be unarmed and seemingly mentally unstable, surrendered to the police.

Police Operations, Tottenham

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *136*, when he intends to write to the hon. Member for Tottenham giving the information requested about police operations in Tottenham.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I wrote to the hon. Member on 28 November 1985 and have placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

Tactical Options Manual

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available to Members of Parliament and to police committees the tactical options manual.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The tactical options manual was prepared by the Association of Chief Police Officers as a guide to the range of tactics police forces might adopt in dealing with disorder. I understand that ACPO has no plans at present to publish the manual.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Commercial Staff

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary oif State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many commercial staff (diplomatic grades) are currently in post at British embassies, consulates and high commissions; how many of those have been in post longer than three years; and how many were recruited specifically because of their commercial expertise.

Mr. Renton: There are around 350 UK-based staff serving with diplomatic status in posts overseas in which they are wholly or mainly engaged in commercial work. Four years is the normal length of tour in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and some other countries. Three years is the standard tour elsewhere, except in a few particularly hard posts. About 50 of the staff in question have currently been in post for longer than three years. The diplomatic service generally seeks to recruit staff for a long-term career, rather than for specific posts or functions. There have been additional special competitions open to older candidates which have attracted officers at first secretary level from the private sector.

Joint Liaison Group Meeting (Peking)

Sir Philip Holland asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress was made at the recent joint liaison group meeting in Peking; whether agreement was reached on the right of abode endorsement to be placed in BN(0) passports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We are arranging for the text of the communiqué issued after the joint liaison group meeting to be placed in the Library of the House. I am happy to say that the Chinese side agreed in principle that the wording of the endorsement should be as follows:

"The holder of this passport has Hong Kong permanent identity card no (XYZ) which states that the holder has the right of abode in Hong Kong".

It is expected that formal agreement on this and other related matters will be reached at the next meeting of the joint liaison group.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The usual written forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present, 11 meetings of the Council are scheduled for December.

The Labour and Social Affairs Council will meet on 5 December and will discuss the draft directive on the protection of workers from noise at work and the draft decision on an action programme in education and training for technology—the COMETT proposals. There is a possibility that these two items may be agreed. Other items on the agenda include the draft directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons, and the Commission memorandum on political guidelines in the employment, education and training of young people. The Council will also consider two proposals to amend European social

fund rules: (i) in order that fund support may be given to schemes where the jobs created are for self-employed people, and (ii) in view of the accession of Spain and Portugal.

The Economic and Finance Council is expected to meet on 9 December to discuss the annual report on the economic situation in the Community and an Economic Policy Committee report on labour markets and employment. The Council is also likely to consider the calculation of commercial interest reference rates which apply to export finance; abolition of tax borders; tax measures to encourage cooperation between firms in different member states; and a statement by the Belgian delegation concerning application of the treaty rules on competition to insurance.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 9 and 10 December to consider cereal and rapeseed prices; the review of the sugar regime; sugar for the chemical industry; reform of the starch regime; GATT beef quotas and the beef balance sheet; disposal of intervention alcohol; the rationalisation of abattoirs; forestry protection; hormones; battery hens and possibly the annual premia for goats and mountain ewes and certain harmonisation issues in the veterinary/phytosanitary/foodstuff sectors. A further meeting is expected to take piace on 19 December to discuss perspectives for the common agricultural policy.

The Research Council will meet on 10 December and will discuss R&D programmes in the fields of materials and the environment together with a proposal for a programme of assistance for the development of endogenous scientific and research capacities in the developing countries. The Council will alsc consider a report from a seminar to be held on 3 and 4 December on an initiative for research in informatics applied to society and a progress report on the European Community's joint research centre multiannual programme 1984-87. There may also be a follow-up discussion to the European Council of 2 and 3 December on the European technological Community.

The Council will discuss, amongst other things, cooperation between member states and EC in developing links between customs computer systems to facilitate inter-Community trade.

The Internal Market/Consumer Council will look at questions related to the entry into force of the community patent convention (CPC) and the status of the proposed common patent appeal convention and any other problem that may arise at the conference on the CPC.

The Foreign Affairs Council will discuss proposals for further finance to support soeial measures taken by member states to ease the problem of restructuring the coal and steel industries.

The Council may review progress on EC-EFTA consultations to take account of enlargement. The Council will review progress in the negotiations on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement.

The Council will be asked to adopt the final series of non-quota measures proposed under the old ERDF regulation. The Council will discuss trade relations between the Community and Japan.

The Fisheries Council is expected to meet on 16 and 17 December to discuss 1986 total allowable catch quotas; 1986 quotas in certain third country waters; Norway pout; amendment of the fishing control regulation; various enlargement measures and possibly 1986 guide prices.

The Culture Ministers' meeting will receive a report from the Commission on the operation of resale price maintenance on books in the Community.

Uganda

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to promote further the peace process in Uganda.

Mr. Rifkind: We believe that the prospects for a stable and prosperous Uganda depend on a reconciliation between the parties to the peace talks currently taking place in Nairobi. We wholeheartedly support these talks and wish them every success.

As an earnest of the importance we attribute to the peace process we have, with the agreement of President Moi, attached Major General Pollard to our High Commission in Nairobi. His role will be to offer advice on the military aspects of any settlement once agreement has been reached, and to recommend what form future British military assistance to Uganda might take.

We are also considering with other donors what economic assistance we intend to provide to help a new Government put Uganda back on the road to economic recovery.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many British companies are known to his Department to be currently operating in South Africa.

Mr. Howard: My Department does not keep records of the companies operating in particular markets. However, under the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa, 171 United Kingdom companies submitted reports to my Department for the year ended 30 June 1984.

Dangerous Products (Information)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce a rapid information exchange system on dangerous products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The European Community has already introduced a system for the rapid exchange of information on hazardous consumer products under which member states advise each other through the Commission of consumer goods posing an immediate hazard against which they have taken action. Within the United Kingdom local authority enforcement agencies, in conjunction with the Government, run a regular national information service to keep each other up to date on potentially hazardous consumer products giving them concern and on prosecutions for supplying unsafe products.

Small Firms (Liquidations)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small firms in England have gone into liquidation since May 1979.

Mr. Howard: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. There are no separate

figures for either bankruptcies or company liquidations affecting small firms, figures for company liquidations are not available for England on its own, and there are no monthly bankruptcy statistics for England in 1979.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom trade balance in pharmaceutical goods in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Channon: In the period from November 1984 to October 1985 the United Kingdom had a crude trade surplus of £824 million in medicinal and pharmaceutical products.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and if he has any future plans for such meetings.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *17*.]: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the Equal Opportunities Commission in his present ministerial capacity since the Nairobi conference. I met Baroness Platt, chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, to discuss women in engineering on 7 November 1984. I shall be meeting the Equal Opportunities Commission shortly to discss the participation of women in commerce as part of Industry Year 1986.

Goat Cheese

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the present consumption of goat cheese in the United Kingdom; and how much is imported in both volume and money terms.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.

There are no official statistics on the consumption of goat cheese in the United Kingdom and goat cheese is not separately identified in United Kingdom trade statistics. It is understood, however, that some 130 tonnes of goat cheese was exported by France to the United Kingdom in 1984. Information from the industry suggests that domestic production is very small.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatisation

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the receipts to the Treasury have been from privatisation in each year from 1979-80 to 1984-85 inclusive, expressed in 1984-85 price levels, using the assumptions for the gross domestic product deflator given in footnote 2 to table 2.1 of the autumn statement.

Mr. Moore: Proceeds treated as special sales of assets expressed in 1984-85 prices for the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 were as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	565
1980-81	521
1981-82	577
1982-83	533
1983-84	1,194
1984-85	2,091

Note:

Excludes advance oil payments from BNOC which net out to zero.

These figures are calculated using assumptions incorporated in table 2.1 of the autumn statement but not stated in footnote 2.

Inland Revenue Records

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *523*, about asbestos at Bradford central depository for the Inland Revenue, if he will list the number of requests for information which have been received and not yet dealt with.

Mr. Moore: Seven thousand requests for information have been received since 2 November 1984. Tax offices have reconsidered these cases and normally have been able to deal with them without recourse to the papers held in the repository.

International Trade (Tax Arrangements)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to seek any amendment of the arm's length principle in tax arrangements for international trade in transfer price goods.

Mr. Moore: No. The arm's length principle is internationally accepted and we adhere to it both in our domestic legislation and in our double taxation agreements.

Child Tax Allowance and Benefit

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1965 the weekly value at 1985 prices of child tax allowance and child benefit.

Mr. Moore: The table below gives the weekly value of child support to families paying tax at the basic rate. Child support covers child tax allowances, family allowances and child benefit. Values are expressed at November 1984 prices, since the general index of retail prices for the 12 months to November 1985 is not yet available. The weekly value shown for November 1985 at November 1984 prices is therefore provisional.

Value of child support for each child in basic rate tax-paying families expressed at November 1984 prices†*

Date	Children under age 11			Children aged 11 to 15			Children aged 16 and over		
	1st child	2nd child	‖3rd	1st child	2nd child	‖3rd	1st child	2nd child	3rd
April 1965	5·59	7·31	7·68	6·82	8·48	8·91	8·05	9·71	10·14
April 1966	5·40	7·06	7·42	6·59	8·19	8·60	7·77	9·37	9·79
April 1967	5·24	6·85	7·20	6·39	7·95	8·35	7·54	9·10	9·50
April 1968	5·02	6·29	6·67	6·12	7·39	7·72	7·22	8·44	8·82
April 1969	4·75	6·22	6·58	5·80	7·26	7·63	6·84	8·31	8·62
April 1970	4·50	5·89	6·23	5·49	6·88	7·22	6·48	7·87	8·16
April 1971	5·25	6·65	6·96	6·06	7·51	7·82	6·92	8·32	8·64
April 1972	4·93	6·25	6·55	5·70	7·06	7·86	6·51	7·83	8·12
April 1973	4·48	5·61	5·88	5·30	6·39	6·66	5·96	7·05	7·32
April 1974	5·14	6·09	6·32	5·92	6·80	7·07	6·56	7·44	7·71
April 1975	4·50	6·23	6·23	5·14	6·86	6·86	5·70	7·45	7·45
April 1976	4·72	6·19	6·19	5·26	6·73	6·73	5·75	7·20	7·20
April 1977	4·54	5·19	5·19	4·99	5·69	5·65	5·39	5·03	6·03
April 1978	5·40	5·40	5·40	5·83	5·83	5·83	6·18	6·19	6·18
April 1979‡	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70
November 1980	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22
November 1981	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14
November 1982	6·44	6·44	6·44	6·44	6·44	6·44	6·44	6·44	6·44
November 1983	6·82	6·82	6·82	6·82	6·82	6·82	6·82	6·82	6·82
November 1984	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85
November 1985¶	6·64	6·64	6·64	6·64	6·64	6·64	6·64	6·64	6·64

* The combined value of child tax allowances after clawback and family allowance/child benefit.
† Based on the movement in the general index of retail prices.
‡ Child tax allowance ceased after the 1978-79 tax year and uprating dates for child benefit are shown from 1979 onwards.
‖ And subsequent children.
¶ Provisional. The November 1985 rate of child benefit (£7·00) has been expressed at November 1984 prices using an assumption of an increase in the General Index of Retail Prices of 5½ per cent. over the 12-month period, consistent with the forecast of the annual rate of inflation for the fourth quarter of 1985, published in the autumn statement.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Colvin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to Her Majesty's Government's Customs and Excise in lost revenue if the value added tax threshold was raised to £50,000.

Mr. Brooke: It is not known how many traders would deregister if the threshold were raised to £50,000, but the best estimate that can be made in the circumstances is that the revenue cost would be between £100 million and £200 million a year.

SCOTLAND

Children in Care

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many parental rights resolutions were passed or rescinded annually; what was the proportion of these in respect of which parental objections were lodged; and what was the outcome of sheriff court hearings in respect of the latter group in each regional and island area.

Mr. John MacKay: Table 1 below gives the number of parental rights resolutions made and rescinded for each regional and islands area (except Strathclyde for which no information is available) for the three years ending 31 March 1984.

	Resolutions made			Resolutions rescinded		
	1982	1983	1984*	1982	1983	1984*
Regions						
Borders	1	1	—	—	1	—
Central	17	2	—	1	—	4
Dumfries and Galloway	3	—	2	—	—	—
Fife	7	8	7	—	—	—
Grampian	32	11	22	1	5	5
Highland	4	3	—	—	—	—
Lothian	135	41	25	19	19	8
Tayside	29	27	13	—	—	—
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	1	—	—	—	—	—

* Provisional.

The other information is not available in the form requested. Table 2 gives by court district the number of determinations by courts of cases where resolutions were opposed for the three years ending 31 December 1984. Information on the outcomes of determinations by the courts is not held centrally.

Determinations under section 16(8) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

	1982	1983	1984
Glasgow	—	5	9
Aberdeen	—	2	—
Stonehaven	1	—	—
Banff	—	—	1
Stornoway	—	—	1
Edinburgh	8	5	1
Linlithgow	1	—	—
Jedburgh	1	—	—
Selkirk	1	—	2
Paisley	4	2	—
Dumbarton	1	1	—
Greenock	1	1	—
Hamilton	8	5	—
Airdrie	—	1	3
Ayr	1	—	1
Dumfries	—	1	1
Dundee	10	4	—
Perth	—	3	—
Kirkcaldy	30	—	—
Cupar	—	—	1
Stirling	2	1	1
Alloa	1	—	4

Regional Authorities (Public Services)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make funds available to regional authorities in Scotland for the purpose of advertising the public services they provide; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No. It is for authorities to determine within the resources available to them their own priorities for expenditure on particular items, including advertising the services they provide.

Teachers and Social Workers (Training)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make funds available for the in-service training of teachers and social workers in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Provision for the in-service training of both teachers and social workers is included in local authorities' rate support grant relevant expenditure, although it is not separately identified.

In addition, so far as teachers are concerned, (i) the full-time equivalent of some 200 academic staff in colleges of education are engaged on in-service training; (ii) in 1984 my right hon. Friend introduced two schemes of assistance towards the expense of teachers attending approved in-service training; the specific grant available under these schemes for the current financial year is £763,000; and (iii) for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 a total of about £2·5 million is available to education authorities in Scotland through the Manpower Services Commission's scheme for in-service training in the field of its technical and vocational education initiative.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amounts of rate support grant paid to *(a)* all Scottish district councils as a group and *(b)* Glasgow district council in each of the years since 1978-79; and if he will express these figures at constant prices.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Glasgow district		*All Scottish districts*	
	Cash	*1985-86 Prices*	*Cash*	*1985-86 Prices*
	£000	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*
1978-79	27,572	51,707	119,679	224,439
1979-80	34,223	54,917	140,701	225,779
1980-81	41,886	56,586	169,114	228,465
1981-82	38,195	46,865	168,965	207,320
1982-83	43,610	49,994	183,537	210,407
1983-84	44,577	48,917	193,543	212,389
1984-85	40,088	42,092	175,531	184,307
1985-86	33,944	33,944	128,500	128,500

Notes:

(a) The figures for the years 1978-79 to 1982-83 are final; those for 1983-84 to 1985-86 will be varied following the next rate support grant order.

(b) The figures are in cost terms, which show expenditure adjusted for the effect of general inflation, using GDP market price deflator factors brought to a 1985-86 base.

(c) The figures comprise the three elements of rate support grant (domestic, resources and needs) and are in respect of each financial year. They reflect selective and general abatements of grant.

Motorways (Safety Barriers)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce concrete barriers for the central reservations of Scotland's motorways.

Mr. Ancram: No.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what undertakings have been given for the provision of safety barriers for the central reservations of Scotland's motorways.

Mr. Ancram: Safety barriers are provided where justified.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement about action being taken in Scotland against the spread of Legionnaire's disease.

Mr. Younger: Greater Glasgow health board has acted with commendable speed to track down the sources of this infection where it has appeared in Glasgow, and prompt action has been taken to prevent the spread of the disease there. We shall look carefully at what has happened in Glasgow to see if there are any general conclusions on which further action might be taken to prevent the spread of Legionnaire's disease elsewhere.

Senile Dementia

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been given by his Department to institutions and organisations for the study of the problems of senile dementia in each of the past five years.

Mr. Younger: Grants awarded by the Scottish Office for research into senile dementia since 1980 amount to some £220,000. It is not possible to give the information requested for separate years.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

15. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress with council house sales in Norwich during the last six months.

Sir George Young: Progress has been satisfactory. I have had no complaints, in that time, from Norwich tenants seeking to buy their homes.

27. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants since May 1979.

Sir George Young: From April 1979 to September 1985 about 665,000 dwellings were sold to sitting tenants by local authorities and new towns in England.

Crown Immunity

16. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from the Institute of Environmental Health Officers concerning Crown immunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Housing Investment Programme

17. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the housing investment programme allocations for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

33. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the housing investment programme allocations for 1986-87.

Mr. John Patten: I hope to announce the housing investment programme allocations for individual local authorities before Christmas.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

19. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the recent visit by the then Minister for Housing, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) together with the hon. Member for Brent, South and the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) to see homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Paddington, he will make a statement on the provision of further resources for people in such accommodation.

Sir George Young: Homeless families want permanent accommodation as soon as possible. To that end we are making £3,253 million available for housing capital investment in 1986-87. The local authority share is £2,532 million, which is 9 per cent. up on this year. Of this, £1,465 million will be available for housing investment programme allocations to local authorities. Individual allocations will be announced shortly.

Local Authorities (Political Propaganda)

20. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate how much money was spent on party political propaganda by local authorities in 1984 and to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information necessary to estimate total expenditure by local authorities on publicity of a party political nature is not available. It is clear, however, that at least £20 million has been spent on publicity of this nature since this Parliament began.

Flats (Right-to-buy Sales)

21. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to facilitate the sale of flats under the right-to-buy legislation.

Mr. John Patten: I have announced proposals for legislation in this Session to increase the discount on sales of flats by 10 per cent. Purchasers are also to have protection against unexpectedly high service charges for repairs and the right to a loan in respect of such charges in the early years of the lease.

Water Meters

22. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many domestic water meters have been installed in each of the past three years.

Mr. John Patten: About 20,000 over the three-year period.

Marine Nature Reserve

23. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce a decision on the first marine nature reserve.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that the Nature Conservancy Council is making progress and I would hope to be able to reach a decision on the first statutory reserve by next summer.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

24. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the report prepared by the joint centre for land development studies on public rights of way, a copy of which has been sent to him, he is considering any changes to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mrs. Rumbold: We await further advice from the rights of way review committee, which commissioned this report.

Basildon (Town Centre Square)

25. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the hon. Member for Basildon, the Basildon development corporation and others about the roofing over the town centre square in Basildon.

Mr. Tracey: In August this year it was decided not to allow Basildon development corporation to proceed with the roofing of town square on the financial terms which were then proposed. At her request, on 25 November I met the chairman of the corporation, together with my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend, the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) to discuss the corporation's concern about this decision and to see whether a way could be found of allowing the project to go ahead, I recognise the benefits

which roofing town square would bring to the town centre, but I must also be satisfied with the financial aspects of any proposal.

Council of Environment Ministers

26. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the November meeting of the European Economic Community Council of Environment Ministers.

Mr. Waldegrave: I led the United Kingdom delegation at this meeting, which was held on 28 November.

On the draft directive on polluting emissions from vehicles the Council reached substantial agreement on a range of points left outstanding from its meeting in June 1985; this is, however, subject to general reserves by the two other member states and to a parliamentary reserve by the United Kingdom.

The Council held an exchange of views on the draft directive on the control of emissions to the air from large combustion plants, but without reaching decisions.

The Council discussed the chapter on the environment in the Commission's Green Paper on "Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy", giving a general welcome to the Commission's proposals; and held a preliminary exchange of views on the designation as European Year of the Environment the 12 months beginning on 21 March 1987.

Other items discussed included draft directives on the discharge of dangerous substances to water; the sulphur content of gas oil; a Community information system for the control and reduction of pollution caused by hydrocarbons discharged at sea; the use of sewage sludge in agriculture; pollution by waste from the titanium dioxide industry; and a proposed regulation establishing a scheme to provide forests in the Community with increased protection against fire and atmospheric pollution.

Animals (Protected Species)

28. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to add further species of animal to the list of protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have no plans to do so at present.

I am, however, awaiting advice from the Nature Conservancy Council, which is conducting a quinquennial review of the operation of schedule 5 to the Act. I expect to receive its advice next year.

Housing Associations

29. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions are being taken by his Department to improve the performances of housing associations.

Sir George Young: Under section 1(2) of the Housing Act 1974 the Housing Corporation is responsible for exercising supervision and control over registered housing associations and for promoting and assisting their development. The corporation carries out a regular programme of monitoring visits to ensure that associations are conducting their affairs properly and that committees of management are exercising adequate control. To help housing associations to improve their performance, the corporation lays down guidelines and procedures and provides financial support for training and development.

Housebuilding

30. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future increase in the housebuilding programme.

Mr. John Patten: It is not the practice of my Department to make forecasts of future levels of housebuilding.

Local Authority Housing

31. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the recent report of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers on the effects of mould growing in damp housing, a copy of which has been sent to him, he has any proposals to assist local authorities to perform their statutory duties under the Public Health Act.

Sir George Young: The Government's public expenditure plans allow for expenditure of £2,532 million by local authorities on housing in 1986-87, an increase of £200 million over the provision for 1985-86. The distribution of housing investment allocations to local authorities for 1986-87 is currently being considered in the light of consultations with the local authority associations.

39. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes discussing with the local authority associations the report of his Department's "Inquiry into the Condition of the Local Authority Housing Stock in England 1985".

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 2 December 1985.

43. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in response to his Department's "Inquiry into the Condition of the Local Authority Housing Stock in England 1985", published last month.

Sir George Young: The report of the inquiry has been generally welcomed as an important contribution towards a better understanding of local authority housing renovation problems. Preliminary discussions have already been held with the local authority associations and more will follow.

51. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were started and completed in Leicester in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

Sir George Young: The numbers of housebuiling starts and completions reported by Leicester in 1979 and 1984 appear in issues 59 and 74 of "Local Housing Statistics"; copies are available in the Library.

Local Authorities (Secrecy)

32. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the level of secrecy in local government and in particular the practice of some councils of excluding opposition parties from council decision-making processes.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government believe it is important for local authorities to conduct their business as openly as possible. To this end the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 was fully supported by the Government and will be effective from 1 April 1986. In addition, the Widdicombe committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business is considering the need to clarify the status and role of party groups in local authority decision-taking; and to ensure the proper participation and accountability of individual elected members in the decision-taking process. My right hon. Friend expects to receive the committee's main report in the early part of next year.

Urban Programme

34. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimated cost of the urban programme in England for the current financial year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We estimate that the cost in public expenditure for the urban programme in 1985-86 will be £335 million. Local authorities receive from central Government 75 per cent. of the cost of financing their urban programme expenditure.

Land Disposal

35. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to accelerate the disposal of unused and underused land in the ownership of public bodies.

Mr. John Patten: We are continuing to encourage public bodies to dispose of their surplus underused land. My Department has regular contacts with owning bodies to discuss land holdings.

In addition, on 19 November my right hon. Friend directed the owners of 21 pieces of unused or underused land to dispose of their interest in the land within four months. The Government are determined to bring about more releases of land, by directing further disposals in future months.

We also see an important role for the private sector in speeding up the release of underused publicly owned land. On 7 June this year my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State invited private sector bodies to draw to his attention sites that are possible candidates for directions to dispose of the land. He also made the computerised data base, containing records of sites on the register, available to the public in May 1985.

Disused Factories (Demolition)

36. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what future assistance is to be given to local authorities for the demolition of disused factories and restoration of these sites.

Mr. John Patten: Aid is available in the form of derelict land, urban development and European regional development fund grants.

Sports Council

37. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Sports Council to discuss the implications of the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: The implications for sport and recreation of the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC have been taken into account in the 1986-87 grant-in-aid settlement for the Sports Council announced recently. I hold regular meetings with the chairman of the council to discuss important issues of this kind.

Derelict Land

38. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the acreage of derelict land in the Greater London council area; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The latest information available on the amount of derelict land in England is that contained in the 1982 survey of derelict land. This showed that at 1 April 1982 there were just over 3,900 acres of derelict land in Greater London.

47. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of reclaiming derelict land in the inner cities.

Sir George Young: Resources totalling £69·7 million were spent on derelict land reclamation in 1984-85. Nearly a quarter of this was spent in the inner cities. This year I expect nearly £82 million to be spent and the high priority given to the inner cities will be maintained. The importance that the Government attach to inner city reclamation will be emphasised in a circular to local authorities to be issued shortly.

South Africa (Rugby Tour)

40. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to meet officials of the Rugby Union to discuss the forthcoming British Lions tour of South Africa.

Mr. Tracey: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlisle) on 3 December 1985.

Berkshire Structure Plan

41. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet received from Berkshire county council submissions in respect of the new Berkshire structure plan.

Mr. Tracey: No. I understand that Berkshire county council will be meeting on 17 December to reach decisions on its proposals and I hope that it will submit its replacement structure plan to me shortly after that.

Canary Wharf

42. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to evaluate the impact of the Canary wharf development in the London enterprise zone on the social and economic life of east London and its strategic significance for Greater London.

Sir George Young: None, but the London Docklands Development Corporation is currently considering the economic and social implications of the scheme.

54. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the claims

of the sponsors of the Canary wharf project in respect of the number of jobs which the project will create; and how many of these jobs are likely to go to local people.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment, but the London Docklands Development Corporation is currently examining the employment implications of the scheme with the prospective developers.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the costs and results of any feasibility studies by the London Docklands Development Corporation for the development of Canary wharf.

Sir George Young: The London Docklands Development Corporation has allocated £300,000 for a range of feasibility studies into proposals for the development of Canary wharf. It is not yet possible, however, to estimate the total cost of this work because the contribution of the interested bodies with whom the corporation is having discussions may expand the scope of these studies.

Rent Arrears

44. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to differential levels of rent arrears in local authorities in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on Monday 2 December.

The information on rent arrears in different local authorities will be placed in the Library when it is ready.

Water (Nitrate Pollution)

45. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received from water authorities for exemptions from the maximum permissible levels of nitrate pollution; and how many of these applications he has approved.

Mr. John Patten: Fifty six applications have been received from water authorities and water companies for derogation in respect of the nitrate parameter under the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC). In accordance with the policy on drinking water quality set out by my hon. Friend the member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), on 23 July 1985, at columns 455-56, 54 of these have been approved, subject to a number of conditions.

Football Authorities

46. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the football authorities.

Mr. Tracey: I shall be meeting representatives of the Football Association tomorrow to discuss preparations for the World Cup finals in Mexico next year and the implications of the recent UEFA decision to allow England's participation in the European Nations' Cup in 1988. Discussions on other football-related issues will continue as necessary in my working groups on measures to combat hooliganism and on the financing of safety improvement work. The next meetings of these groups will be early in the new year.

Construction Industry

48. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of unemployed construction workers.

Sir George Young: The collection of unemployment statistics classified by individual industries was discontinued in May 1982.

Liverpool City Council

49. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met councillors from Liverpool to discuss the city council's funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has not met the council to discuss its funding.

Homes Insulation Scheme

50. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the existing criteria for eligibility for the homes insulation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The criteria for eligibility for the homes insulation scheme are kept under review. My right hon. Friend has no plans for altering eligibility at present.

Inner Urban Areas

52. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the provision of resources to inner urban areas in the light of the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's commission on urban priority areas, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Sir George Young: The Government's policy is to continue to provide resources to secure lasting improvements in inner urban areas through a range of initiatives and programmes. These include the urban programme, which has doubled in real terms since 1978-79; urban development grant, which is attracting more than £300 million in private investment to inner areas, while creating or safeguarding 17,000 jobs; derelict land grant, which has doubled in real terms since 1979-80; the urban development corporations, which are transforming disused land and buildings and bringing in substantial private investment—over £1,000 million in the case of the London Docklands Development Corporation alone; and the setting up of enterprise zones. Local authorities' need to spend is reflected in the distribution of rate support grant. Other Departments' programmes are also relevant to the needs of inner urban areas.

Rate Support Grant

53. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the efficiency of the current method of distributing rate support grant and controlling capital expenditure.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am generally content that the block grant system meets its present objectives. However, there

is room for improvement in the overall arrangements for financing local government, and I am now looking at all the aspects of this.

I have repeatedly acknowledged that the present capital control system is not working as it should. The system is currently under review in consultation with the local authority associations.

I hope to publish our preferred options for the future of the local government finance system, including capital controls, at the turn of the year.

Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission

55. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to support the work of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government will make further substantial increases in their grants-in-aid next year to further their work in safeguarding the natural heritage. The NCC will receive £32·1 million, an increase of £9·3 million and the Countryside Commission £17·7 million, an increase of £2·4 million, subject in each case to the approval of Parliament.

Rural Communities

56. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the problems facing rural communities; and what steps he is taking to alleviate them.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government receive numerous representations from individuals and interested organisations about the problems facing rural communities. They also meet regularly the chairman of the Development Commission, Lord Vinson. The commission has a statutory duty to advise Ministers on all matters relating to the social and economic development of rural England and to carry out measures likely to further such development.

To this effect the commission concentrates its efforts in designated "Rural Development Areas" where need is greatest. In each of these areas rural development programmes have been drawn up at the request of the commission and form a co-ordinated plan of action for all the local agencies involved as well as providing the basis for the commission's own spending programmes. These include a major advance factory building programme, grants to convert redundant buildings to workshop or craft use and through its agency COSIRA a full range of advice and assistance to small firms. The main thrust of the commission's social policies is to guide and support voluntary activity in the countryside which will contribute to community development and self-help. It also operates schemes to facilitate the provision of low-cost housing, to improve village halls, and to support village shops and rural transport services.

In recognition of the value of the commission's work the Government have increased their grant-in-aid for this year by £4 million to £28 million and similar additional resources have been announced for next year.

Planning Regulations

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend planning regulations so that change of use applications are not needed for the conversion of retail shops into restaurants or fast food outlets.

Mr. Tracey: In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 2 December at columns 55-56, that he was publishing for consultation a report by a sub-group of the Department's property advisory group on the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972. We shall need to consider the comments of interested persons and bodies before reaching conclusions on the sub-group's detailed proposals for amending the order.

Development Applications (Consultation)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the level of public consultation on matters of permitted development.

Mr. Tracey: Yes. The Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 grants permission for various forms of mostly minor development which are of such a character that they can be carried out without the need for specific planning permission or public consultation.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the general development order to include greater public consultation for local authority applications.

Mr. Tracey: Article 3 and class XIII of the first schedule to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 grant planning permission to local authorities to carry out various, mostly minor forms of development, including works on land belonging to or maintained by them, for the purposes of any of the functions exercised by them on that land. It is open to the local authority to decide that in a particular case public consultation would be desirable because of the nature of the development proposed.

Sheltered Accommodation (Portsmouth)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the ratio of places available in sheltered accommodation in Portsmouth per 1,000 people aged 65 years and over in each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: The available data on sheltered accommodation are the numbers of dwellings within each authority's area in April, reported in the annual housing investment programme returns. The numbers of these dwellings, including housing associations' and privately owned dwellings, per 1,000 people aged 65 or more in Portsmouth are as follows:

April	*Number*
1979	25
1980	39
1981	40
1982	40
1983	56
1984	60
1985	70

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many designations have been made by the Nature Conservancy Council since 1973 to establish or extend sites of special scientific interest; whether any requests for designation have been declined or modified and in which areas these were located; and what percentage of the total present site of special scientific interest acreage such refusals and modifications constitute.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the information is not readily available in this form and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

To date the NCC has notified 2,356 sites in Great Britain under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; of these, 1,691 were previously notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

A further 2,445 were notified under the 1949 Act; of these, 53 have been denotified and the remainder await re-notification under the 1981 Act.

The 1981 Act requires the NCC to consider representations or objections from owners and occupiers of sites not previously notified under the 1949 Act. In a few cases, the boundaries of proposed sites have been modified as a result. Details of such cases are not available, but the NCC considers that the percentage of land so affected is very small.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of total hill and upland acreages in Scotland are currently designated as sites of special scientific interest; and on what proportion of this acreage the owner or occupier may not undertake schemes of drainage, re-seeding or the planting of trees.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available. Notification of a site of special scientific interest does not itself prevent an owner or occupier from undertaking activities of the kind described. However, if the activities are specified as potentially damaging operations in the notification, they may not be carried out unless the Nature Conservancy Council has been notified in writing and one of the conditions in section 28(6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 has been fulfilled.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total borrowing outstanding in respect of each local authority as at 1 April 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have today placed in the Library a table showing the total borrowing outstanding at 31 March 1985 in respect of each local authority in England for which the information is available. The borrowing is defined as external debt administered by the authority, including debt administered on behalf of other local authorities and public bodies. The sources of the figures are in most cases the CIPFA questionnaire on capital expenditure and debt financing statistics for 1984-85 (for long-term borrowing) and the DOE borrowing and lending inquiry for March 1985 (for short-term borrowing). In cases where authorities have not returned the CIPFA questionnaire for 1984-85 figures have where possible been updated from the 1983-84 questionnaire using the DOE borrowing and lending inquiries for the intervening period.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to which local authorities have borrowings outstanding to foreign banks and as to the value in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities provide information in aggregate form on the extent of their borrowing from and repayments to overseas lenders. This information does not distinguish banks from other overseas bodies. Details of individual authorities' transactions of the sort are subject to commercial confidentiality.

Rural Development Areas

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the approximate total population of those parts of the rural development areas designated by the Development Commission which do not fall within assisted areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: Approximately 1·8 million, representing about 75 per cent. of the total population living in rural development areas.

New Town Corporations

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will take steps to permit the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to investigate complaints against new town corporations.

Mr. Tracey: As stated in the Government's White Paper, Cmnd. 9563, published in July of this year, legislation to amend the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 will be introduced, in due course, to extend the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to about 50 non-departmental public bodies—including new town corporations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Straw and Stubble Burning

57. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the model byelaws on combating the ill-effects of straw and stubble burning.

Mrs. Fenner: There has been a further encouraging fall in the number of complaints received by and incidents reported to my Department on straw and stubble burning associated with the 1985 harvest.

Austrian Wine (Adulteration)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will explain why district councils were not kept fully informed by his Department on the adulteration of Austrian wine, when county councils were so informed.

Mrs. Fenner: Diethylene glycol is not a permitted additive to wine and its presence is therefore illegal. Trading standards officers of county councils thus had a responsibility to discharge and it was necessary to provide them with appropriate information. My right hon. Friend

the Secretary of State for Social Services was advised that no acute health risk existed. No action by environmental health officers of district councils was necessary and they were so advised by telephone on 12 July 1985.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if applicants for hill livestock compensatory allowance will be entitled to receive both hill livestock compensatory allowance and Forestry Commission subsidy in respect of the same acreage under changes announced in his statement of 28 November; and if hill livestock compensatory allowance paid under this new provision will differ from payments made in respect of non-afforested land;

(2) if the fact that an applicant for hill livestock compensatory allowance has already received Forestry Commission subsidy will in any way be prejudicial to his application for hill livestock compensatory allowance made in respect of afforested land under the changes announced in his statement to the House of 28 November; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will give details of the rule changes to allow afforested land to be taken into account in hill livestock compensatory allowance applications referred to in his statement of 28 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Amending regulations have been laid before Parliament in draft, which, if approved, will give effect to the changes in the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme that I announced on 28 November. In relation to afforestation, we propose that where a recipient of HLCAs converts part of his eligible land to forest on or after 1 January 1986, the afforested area shall be treated as if it were eligible land, for a maximum of 15 years, in calculating the total allowances payable within the financial ceilings laid down in the HLCA regulations. This will not affect the rates of allowance for eligible animals. However, as I said on 28 November, we will be introducing special checks to prevent over-grazing in the areas concerned.

The fact that a person has previously received Forestry Commission grants will not of itself prejudice an application for HLCAs, although land afforested prior to 1 January 1986 will not be taken into account in HCLA calculations. Furthermore, the fact that an area of land is taken into account for HCLA calculations will not affect eligibility for Forestry Commission grants in respect of this land.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the increase in real and cash terms, in hill livestock compensatory allowances payable in each year from 1980 to date in the original less-favoured areas and from their inception to date in the new less-favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Research and Development

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he proposes to announce the savings in programmes within his responsibility referred to in his statement of 28 November.

Mr. Jopling: I and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be making appropriate statements shortly.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what amount he expects the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service income for the year 1985-86 to be reduced as a result of the exemptions announced in his statement of 28 November.

Mr. Jopling: On the basis of throughput in 1984-85, it is expected that revenue from charges for hay and silage analysis would fall by some £6,000 as a result of the suspension of these charges announced on 28 November.

SOCIAL SERVICES

No Smoking Campaign

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Health Education council on the National Opinion Poll survey on the effectiveness of national no smoking day 1985.

Mr. Whitney: Discussions have taken place at official level.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of recipients of housing benefit in each year since 1979 and at the latest date for which this information is available.

Mr. Major: The information requested is in the table, which is broken down into rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates since information is not readily available on the numbers receiving help with both rent and rates.

Housing benefit was not fully introduced until 1983-84. For each year from 1979-80 and 1982-83 inclusive, therefore, the number of local authority tenants, private tenants and all householders in receipt of supplementary benefit has been included in the figures for rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates respectively.

Housing benefit (and supplementary benefit equivalent) caseloads 1979-80 to 1984-85

Great Britain: Thousands

Year	*Rent rebate*	*Rent allowance*	*Rate rebate*
1979-80	2,630	690	5,400
1980-81	2,840	710	5,800
1981-82	3,350	800	6,560
1982-83	3,540	860	6,590
1983-84	3,900	1,080	7,520
1984-85	3,810	1,060	7,290

Figures for 1984-85 are provisional and are subject to revision in the light of local authorities' final subsidy claims for that year.

NHS (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence he has received as to racial discrimination in the provision of National Health Service facilities since 1981.

Mr. Hayhoe: Officials of my Department are currently making a short series of visits to discuss with health

authorities, community health councils and community relations councils the provision of health services for ethnic minorities, and if there is any evidence of conscious or unconscious racial discrimination appropriate remedial action will then be considered.

Nursing Manpower

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has now finished his consideration of the report of the National Audit Office on nursing manpower which was published on 24 August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I welcome the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the control of nursing manpower in the National Health Service, but, as the Accounting Officer was examined by the Public Accounts Committee on 2 December, it would be inappropriate for me to make a statement at present.

Benefit Payments (Staff Levels)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to increase the level of staff, facilities and space at Department of Health and Social Security offices to enable benefits of increasing numbers of claimants to be dealt with more swiftly.

Mr. Major: A comprehensive review of the staffing requirement for DHSS local offices was started in October 1985 and results are expected to be available in the second half of 1986. Meantime, work loads and staffing levels will continue to be monitored quarterly in accordance with the established complementing system, a process which recently resulted in the addition of 733 posts. The provision of office facilities sufficient for the effective transaction of business remains an important objective within the limits of the funds available.

Benefits (Overpayments)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of unemployment, supplementary or other social benefits that have been wrongly calculated by Department of Health and Social Security offices during the past five years and the number of cases in which claimants have been required to pay back excess monies which have been paid out to them by mistake.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why there has been a reduction of some 10,000 in the number of posts in offices of the Department of Health and Social Security since 1979; what particular grades of the Department of Health and Social Security staffing have been most affected by this reduction; and if he will list the numbers of officers who have been employed at the social security offices at Molineux house, Temple street, Wolverhampton, in each single year since 1979.

Mr. Major: Staff employed in local offices of the Department numbered 65,027 in April 1979 and 62,687·5 in November 1985. Total departmental figures were 98,369 and 92,849. The Government's policy regarding Civil Service manpower is to maintain a staffing level commensurate with work requirements. The reduction in DHSS local office numbers reflects reduced work loads resulting from, among other items, the introduction of housing benefit and statutory sick pay and the introduction of postal claims forms for certain groups of supplementary benefit claimants. The effect of this reduction on particular grades in local offices is shown in the table:

Grade	*1 April 1979*	*1 November 1985*	*Difference*	*Percentage difference*
Principal	252·0	239·0	−13·0	−5·2
Senior Executive Officer	555·0	369·0	−186·0	−33·5
Higher Executive Officer	2,607·0	2,710·0	+103·0	+4·0
Local Officer I	15,222·0	16,243·5	+1,021·5	+6·7
Executive Officer	8·0	14·0	+6·0	+75·0
Local Officer II	34,716·0	31,423·5	−3,292·5	−9·5
Clerical Officer	10·0	7·0	−3·0	−30·0
Clerical Assistant	9,080·5	8,907·0	−173·5	−1·9
Superintendent/Senior/Chief Typists	73·0	76·0	+3·0	+4·1
Typist	1,313·5	1,233·0	−80·5	−6·0
Security Officer	230·0	330·5	+100·5	+43·7
Messenger	567·5	526·0	−41·5	−7·3
Medical Board Assistant	13·0	20·0	+7·0	+53·8
Radiographer	0·5	0·0	−0·5	−100·0
Cleaners	475·0	432·0	−43·0	−9·0
Total	65,207·0	62,687·5	−2,519·5	−3·9

The local office at Molineux house, Temple street, Wolverhampton was not opened until January 1981. Staffing, grade by grade, is given in the table:

Grade	January 1981	November 1981	November 1982	November 1983	November 1984	November 1985
Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1·0
Senior Executive Officer	1	1	1	1	1	1·0
Higher Executive Officer	7	6	7	6	8	9·0
Local Officer I	41	41	43	47	49	50·0
Local Officer II	82	82	92	87	84	93·0
Clerical Assistant (including telephonist)	28	33	27	24	27	26·5
Typist	4	4	4	4	4	4·0
Security Officer	2	2	2	2	2	2·0
Messenger	1	1	1	1	1	1·0
Total	167	171	178	173	177	187·5
Casually employed Clerical Assistant	0	2	2	0	6	2·0

Child Benefit

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the levels of child benefit which have been paid out to claimants in each year since 1979 and the average number of people who have claimed them in each year during the same period from the offices of the Department of Health and Social Security in Wolverhampton.

Mr. Newton: Child benefit is administered centrally, and there is no information specific to Wolverhampton.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement outlining the conditions of entitlement for supplementary benefit as they apply to persons in further education and especially advanced education.

Mr. Newton: There are a number of conditions of entitlement for supplementary benefit which apply to all claimants. Where a student is excluded from benefit, it is likely to be because of the condition which requires able-bodied people under retirement age to be available for work. A student on a full-time course of further education, whether advanced or not, is unlikely to fulfil this condition in term times, though he may fulfil it and qualify for benefit in vacations. A student who is in a group not required to be available for work (for instance, single parents and some disabled people) is eligible for supplementary benefit throughout the year including term-times. A person who is studying part-time may qualify for supplementary benefit if he is available for work and is prepared to leave his studies should an opportunity for employment arise.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the arm's length principle for transfer pricing in the new pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mr. Hayhoe: This is one of the detailed matters which is currently being discussed with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry as part of the negotiations on the renewal of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Surgeons

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek to increase the ratio of general surgeons per 100,000 population in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: Draft regional strategic plans provide for increases in consultants in general surgery.

Family Practitioners

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the Green Paper on the family doctor service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Green Paper on primary health care is now expected to be published in the new year.

Supplementary Benefit (Religious Closed Orders)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if religious persons in closed orders are entitled to supplementary benefit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the eligibility for supplementary benefit of nuns and monks following the change of rules in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Members of religous orders who are not being fully maintained by their order are entitled to claim supplementary benefit in the normal way. There was no change in the law in 1984, but fresh guidance was issued to local offices. This reminded them of the possible eligibility for supplementary benefit of infirm monks or nuns who had been placed in nursing homes where the order lacked adequate facilities to care for them and provide the necessary financial support.

Pharmaceutical Investment

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he has taken to seek to encourage United States pharmaceutical investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: The promotion of inward investment is primarily the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. So far as my Department is concerned, the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme is intended not only to provide that medicines are available to the National Health Service at reasonable prices but also to encourage the growth of

a successful, research-based pharmaceutical industry in the United Kingdom. In negotiating the renewal of the scheme with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, we shall seek to maintain the attractiveness of this country for pharmaceutical investment by British, American and other companies.

Mid-Downs Health Authority

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage increase in funding for the Mid-Downs health authority, by year, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: For the five years since the establishment of Mid-Downs as a health authority in 1982, the information is as follows:

1982-83 1·5 per cent. increase
1983-84 no increase
1984-85 no increase
1985-86 0·9 per cent. increase
1986-87 projected 0·9 per cent. increase

These represent cash increases. The real terms value of these additions was maintained by annual inflation increases.

Child Abuse

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present incidence of child abuse; and what steps are being taken to make estimates of the incidence of child abuse more widely available.

Mr. Whitney: Local authorities which have the responsibility for protecting children from abuse keep records of the number of child victims in their area, but these are not collected centrally. The Department has issued guidance on the records that local authorities should keep, and will be reviewing that guidance through a consultative paper, on the procedures used to handle such cases, which should be issued early in the new year.

Child Care Law

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received in response to his consultative paper on child care law; and when he intends to introduce legislation based on the proposals contained therein;

(2) whether he intends to introduce legislation based on the proposals contained in his recent consultative paper on child care law before a decision is taken on the introduction of a system of family courts.

Mr. Whitney: The report of the interdepartmental working party reviewing child care law was published in October as a consultative document on which comments were sought by 15 January. A decision on the next steps will be taken in the light of responses to the consultative document. The establishment of family courts is a separate issue and is for my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the prevention of child abuse; what funds are devoted to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Our policy on the prevention of child abuse is that the interests of the child must come first and that the agencies, and their staff, concerned with child abuse must keep that as their main objective in working with children who have been abused or who are at risk. Successful prevention must depend largely on the knowledge and skill of professional staff, and their adherence to thorough and agreed local procedures for co-ordination and action. The Government already have in hand a programme of work to help prevent child abuse cases and improve their handling. This includes a review of child care law, of the procedures for handling abuse cases, and of inquiries that follow serious abuse cases; the development of better methods to review the situation of all children in care; and the use of the Department's social services inspectorate to improve the supervision and management of social workers involved in child abuse cases. It is, however, not practicable to identify and total the overall expenditure on activities that involve staff in the range of agencies involved in child abuse work.

Repatriation Assistance

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to the granting of assistance for the repatriation back to their country of origin of applicants who have had their supplementary benefit converted to special hardship allowance.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Annual Report)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he disclosed the contents of "The Health Service in England—Annual Report 1985", at a meeting of the Conservative Medical Society prior to its official publication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend spoke to a meeting of the Conservative Medical Society about the developments in the Health Service, on the basis of figures first published in an NHS statistical bulletin and subsequently in the NHS annual report. The purpose was to set out the improved performance of the Health Service in a number of important areas. For example, in 1984 the NHS treated more patients than ever before. Over 1983, in-patient cases were up 159,000 to 6·2 million; day cases were up 90,000 to 903,000; new outpatient attendances were up 197,000 to 8·5 million; total outpatient attendances were up 523,000 to 37·0 million; total accident and emergency attendances were up 166,000 to 13·8 million.

Married Women's Pensions

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in ensuring payment of pensions to married women qualifying by the abolition of the half-test; what further steps he is taking to bring their entitlement to the attention of possible beneficiaries; and whether he will take action to overcome any possible unfairness arising from the way in which contributors were credited into the national insurance scheme in 1948.

Mr. Newton: I am glad to say that we have now identified, and awarded pensions to, some 20,000 of the

25,000 married women we estimate will benefit from the abolition of the half-test, including some 600 who are living overseas. I am grateful to the Department's staff who have achieved this.

We remain anxious to hear from those we have not been able to identify from our records. To this end, we have arranged for advertisements in the national press, women's magazines and publications for retired people; for posters in DHSS local offices, post offices, citizens advice bureaux and doctors' surgeries; and for a special leaflet to be available to those who inquire. We have also written to all British embassies and high commissions, asking them to take appropriate steps to seek to inform women living abroad who may have an entitlement. It is important that anyone who thinks she may be entitled to a pension as a result of this change should contact us before 22 December 1985, since benefits cannot normally be backdated more than a year.

No one who actually paid contributions can be disadvantaged by the transitional arrangements made in 1948, when existing contributors were credited into the new scheme by a system of credits whose number depended on a randomly allocated suffix to their national insurance number. There may, however, be a very small number of cases in which the marginal effects of these arrangements operate to prevent the award of a pension for which the number of credits, as distinct from actual contributions, is a crucial factor. I regret that there is no practicable way of identifying these cases, but we will consider sympathetically any which are brought to our attention.

DEFENCE

Footpath 43, Menwith with Darley

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he closed footpath 43 in the parish of Menwith with Darley; under what powers he acted; with which local authorities and bodies representing users of the footpath he consulted prior to acting; and what opportunity members of the public had to object to his action.

Mr. Stanley: Footpath 43 in the parish of Menwith with Darley was stopped up and reprovided in accordance with sections 16 and 17 of the Defence Act 1842 on 1 October 1985, after consultation with North Yorkshire county council. The Act makes no provision for representations from members of the public.

9 and 14 Signals Regiments

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men of 9 Signals Regiment have been posted to other units since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: According to our records of those serving in 9 Signals Regiment on 3 February 1984, 338.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of 9 Signals Regiment have been discharged before completion of their engagement since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: According to our records, of those serving in 9 Signals Regiment on or after 3 February 1984, 83 have been discharged from that regiment before completion of their engagements.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of 14 Signals Regiment have been discharged since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: According to our records, of those serving in 14 Signals Regiment on or after 3 February 1984, 81 have subsequently been discharged from that regiment.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of 14 Signals Regiment have been discharged before completion of their engagement since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: According to our records, of those serving in 14 Signals Regiment on or after 3 February 1984, 50 have subsequently been discharged from that regiment before completing their engagements.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of the 9 Signals Regiment have been discharged since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: According to our records, of those serving in 9 Signals Regiment on or after 3 February 1984, 121 have subsequently been discharged from that regiment.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members or former members of 9 Signals Regiment are yet to be discharged before completion of their engagement.

Mr. Stanley: This information could not be provided in respect of all former members of 9 Signals Regiment, except at disproportionate cost. Of the current members of the regiment, two are in the process of being discharged from that regiment before completing their engagements, and applications for discharge from a further five are currently being considered.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members or former members of 14 Signals Regiment are yet to be discharged before completion of their engagement.

Mr. Stanley: This information could not be provided in respect of all former members of 14 Signals Regiment except at disproportionate cost. Of the current members of the regiment, discharge before completing their engagements is currently being considered in two cases.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many former members of 9 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 February 1984;

(2) how many service men currently serving with 9 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 February 1984;

(3) how many service men currently serving with 14 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether *(a)* men of 9 Signals Regiment charged with destroying classified material, or *(b)* any other members of that regiment were searched upon leaving their place of work prior to 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: It is not our practice to give details of our security precautions at defence establishments.

BARPLAN

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list those groups of ports in the United Kingdom for which there exist contingency plans analogous to the one contained in BARPLAN for Barry, Cardiff and Newport;

(2) whether the BARPLAN document takes into account the transition-to-war measures contained in the 1983 United States-United Kingdom lines of communication agreement;

(3) if he will describe the status of the BARPLAN document sent to certain officers working for South Glamorgan and Gwent county councils by the Royal Navy Flag Officer, Plymouth.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

RAF Houses (Maidenhead)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Defence for how long the 38 Royal Air Force-owned properties off Heywood Avenue, Woodlands Park, Maidenhead, have been unoccupied; why they have not been used since their last occupation by Royal Air Force personnel; what is the loss in revenue so far caused by the non-occupation of these properties; what are the present plans for the future use or disposal of all of these properties or any of them; and if he will make it his policy to use these properties to house, with or without security of tenure, families in need of accommodation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: After the last property was vacated in April this year, these houses were passed to the Property Services Agency for disposal; for this reason occupancy in the interim period has been impracticable, so that there has been no loss of revenue. Their design precludes individual sale and the estate will be put on the market as a single lot in the very near future. It is Ministry of Defence policy to allow local authorities to lease temporarily vacant property, subject to guarantees about maintenance and repossession: where property is substandard and surplus to requirements, however, such occupation would only impede disposal and would not be in the interests of homeless people.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the net cost of the Meteorological Office during the financial year ended April 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The net cost of the Meteorological Office in the financial year 1984-85 on a fully cost-accounted basis was £47·5 million, after taking into account receipts from repayment services amounting to £20·9 million.

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the Sharp-Hansford report on the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No, but I shall consider doing so as soon as decisions have been taken on the recommendations in the report.

Enriched Uranium (Capenhurst)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what market highly enriched uranium from the Capenhurst plant is being produced.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 November 1985, c. *705*]: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the enrichment plant mentioned in the then Secretary of State for Defence's statement in June 1982, at columns 128-29. This plant is entirely separate from the facilities used for the production of enriched uranium for civil purposes. It produces uranium enriched to an intermediate level, which, after further enrichment in the United States of America, will satisfy all the foreseeable United Kingdom defence requirements for highly enriched uranium.

Defence Contracts

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Hatfield-Lostock division, at (i) Hatfield, and (ii) Lostock were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(2) how many employees at British Aerospace, Weybridge division, at (i) Weybridge and (ii) Woodford were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(3) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, dynamics group at (i) Bristol division, Bristol and (ii) Bristol division, Weymouth were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(4) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Bracknell division, at (i) Bracknell and (ii) Plymouth were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(5) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Weybridge division, at (i) Dunsfold, (ii) Hamble and (iii) Kingston-on-Thames were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(6) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Weybridge division, at (i) Bristol, (ii) Brough and (iii) Chadderton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(7) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, Warton division, at (i) Preston, (ii) Samlesbury and (iii) Warton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(8) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, civil division, at (i) Bristol, (ii) Chester, (iii) Hatfield and (iv) Prestwick were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(9) how many employees of British Electric Traction Company plc, at (i) Rediffusion Radio Systems, London and (ii) Rediffusion Simulation, Aylesbury, Brighton and Crawley were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(10) how many employees at Leyland Vehicles working on self-changing gears in Coventry were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(11) how many employees of British Leyland plc at (i) Leyland Vehicles, Preston and (ii) Leyland Vehicles, Watford, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(12) how many employees in Cambridge Electronics Industries plc, defence and electronic systems division, at Graseby dynamics in (i) Surbiton, (ii) Watford and (iii) Weybridge were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(13) how many employees in BTR plc at Dunlop, Coventry and Dunlop, Loughborough, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(14) how many employees in Cable and Wireless plc, London, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(15) how many employees at the warship building division at (i) Brooke Marine, Lowestoft, (ii) Swan Hunter, Hebburn and Wallsend and (iii) Vickers, Barrow-in-Furness were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(16) how many employees in the merchant shipbuilding and composite division at Cammell Laird, Birkenhead, and Hall Russell, Aberdeen, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(17) how many employees in British Shipbuilders at (i) Cammell Laird, Birkenhead, and (ii) Hall Russell, Aberdeen, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(18) how many employees at British Aerospace plc, space and communications division, at Bristol and Stevenage were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(19) how many employees at Marconi Secure Radio Systems, Dunfermline, Kidsgrove and Portsmouth were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(20) how many employees at Marconi Space Systems, Portsmouth, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(21) how many employees at Marconi Underwater Systems at (i) Farlington, (ii) Frimley, (iii) South Wirral, (iv) Waterlooville and (v) Wembley were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(22) how many employees at Marconi Radar Systems at (i) Chelmsford, (ii) Gateshead, (iii) Leicester and (iv) Norwich were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(23) how many employees at Marconi Instruments at (i) Dunfermline, (ii) Luton, (iii) St. Albans and (iv) Stevenage were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(24) how many employees at Marconi Defence Systems at (i) Dunfermline, (ii) Kidsgrove, (iii) Portsmouth, (iv) Stanmore and (v) Watford were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(25) how many employees at Marconi Communication Systems at (i) Chelmsford, and (ii) Witham were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(26) how many employees at Marconi Command and Control Systems, Frimley were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(27) how many employees at Marconi Easams, at (i) Camberley and (ii) Fleet were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(28) how many employees at Dowty Rotol, Gloucester, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(29) how many employees at Dowty Fuel Systems at (i) Atworth, (ii) Cheltenham and (iii) Staverton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(30) how many employees at Dowty Boulton Paul, Wolverhampton, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(31) how many employees at Dowty and Smiths Industries Controls, Cheltenham, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(32) how many employees at Dowty Group, Gresham Lion, Basingstoke, and Feltham, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(33) how many employees at Ferranti Instrumentation (i) Bracknell, (ii) Manchester and (iii) Newport Pagnell were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(34) how many employees at Ferranti Defence Systems at (i) Bellshill, (ii) Dalkeith, (iii) Dundee and (iv) Edinburgh were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(35) how many employees at Ferranti Computer Systems (i) Bracknell, (ii) Cwmbran and (iii) Stockport were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(36) how many employees at General Electric Company Avionics at (i) Basildon, (ii) Borehamwood, (iii) Rochester and (iv) Stanmore were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(37) how many employees at General Electric Company Computers at (i) Borehamwood and (ii) Dunstable were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(38) how many employees at General Electric Company Electrical Projects at (i) London and (ii) Rugby were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(39) how many employees at General Electric Company Telecommunications at (i) Coventry, (ii) Hartlepool, (iii) Glenrothes and (iv) Pontypridd were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(40) how many employees at Paxman Diesels, Colchester, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(41) how many employees at Yarrow Shipbuilders, Glasgow, were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(42) how many employees at Vauxhall Motors at (i) Ellesmere Port, (ii) Luton and (iii) Toddington were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(43) how many employees at GKN Sankey at (i) Bilston, (ii) Telford and (iii) Wolverhampton were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date;

(44) how many employees at Hunting Engineering at (i) Bedford, (ii) Bristol, (iii) Farnborough and (iv) Hoddesdon were employed on Ministry of Defence contracts at the latest available date.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. 92]: The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on the number of persons employed on its contracts by individual companies at separate locations.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 December 1985

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Primary Schools (Curricula)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to issue guidelines to appropriate local education authorities about establishing curricula for primary schools in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's White Paper "Better Schools" envisages all schools, including inner city schools, offering a curriculum which is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated, within the framework of appropriate LEA policies. Her Majesty's Inspectorate is currently issuing a series of curriculum discussion documents which cover the age-range five to 16 and offer guidance about the design of the curriculum as a whole and in its parts, including such matters as differentiation of work to meet the range of ability to be found in schools.

16-plus Examination

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which people from outside Her Majesty's Government have been responsible for advising Ministers of his Department about his plans for merit and distinction awards in the 16-plus examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: Some 390 responses, from individuals and bodies both within and outside the education service, were received to the consultation paper on GCSE distinction and merit certificates issued last December. In the light of these, revised proposals are to be brought forward for further consultation.

Research Grants

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of research grants which have been given by his Department to academic and scientific institutions during the last six years; and what this number represented as a proportion of the applications for research grants submitted to his Department during the same period.

Mr. Dunn: Information on this is published annually by the Department in "List 1: Current Educational Research Projects supported by the Department of Education and Science", and copies for the years 1979 to 1985 inclusive are available in the Library. The number of research grants awarded to academic and scientific institutions by the Department during the last six years totalled 430. Information as to what this number represented as a proportion of the applications for research grants submitted to the Department during the same period is not available.

Pupils (Midday Supervision)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting between representatives of local education authorities and officials of his Department about proposed legislation on midday supervision.

Mr. Chris Patten: The meeting formed part of the Department's consultation with the local authority associations on the proposal to add

"securing the supervision of pupils in schools at midday"

to the schedule of purposes specified in the Education Support Grants Regulations as those for which education support grants may be paid. Draft regulations incorporating this amendment have now been laid before the House as the Education Support Grant Regulations (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1985. As a result of the meeting, a draft addendum to circular 5/85 was issued to the local authority associations on 27 November seeking their further comments. Copies of the draft addendum are available in the Library.

Mathematics and Modern Languages

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to improve facilities in secondary schools for the teaching of mathematics and modern languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Arrangements for the teaching of mathematics and modern languages are the responsibility of the local education authorities and the schools themselves. The Department's architects and building group has published design advice on secondary school accommodation.

Disabled University Students

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to introduce a maintenance payment system for disabled university students to enable them to retain accommodation which they occupy as a result of their disability and to introduce an additional allowance to reimburse students who can supply satisfactory medical evidence of special dietary needs for vouched items of expenditure on diet incurred wholly by reason of those needs.

Mr. Walden: There are no plans to change the present arrangements, which provide for a disabled student to be reimbursed up to a specified sum additional expenditure incurred by reason of his disability and in respect of his attendance on a course.

Married University Students

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the present level of allowances for university students who are married to take into account requirements for dependent families or relatives.

Mr. Walden: The allowances for students' dependants are increased each year to reflect the change in social security benefit rates to which they are directly related.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving pupil-teacher ratios in England and Wales for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales. The pupil-teacher ratios for maintained primary and secondary schools in England since 1979 are as follows:

January of each year	*Pupil-teacher ratio in Primary Schools*	*Pupil-teacher ratio in Secondary Schools*
1979	23·1	16·7
1980	22·7	16·6
1981	22·6	16·6
1982	22·5	16·6
1983	22·3	16·5
1984	22·1	16·2
1985	22·2	16·1

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving the pupil-teacher ratio in Hertfordshire for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in Hertfordshire since 1979 are as follows:

January of each year	*Pupil-teacher ratio in Primary Schools*	*Pupil-teacher ratio in Secondary Schools*
1979	22·5	15·9
1980	22·3	16·0
1981	22·2	15·9
1982	21·9	16·0
1983	22·4	16·2
1984	22·4	16·1
1985	22·2	16·0

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving the pupil-teacher ratio in Buckinghamshire for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in Buckinghamshire since 1979 are as follows:

January of each year	*Pupil-teacher ratio in Primary Schools*	*Pupil-teacher ratio in Secondary Schools*
1979	24·2	16·8
1980	23·8	16·5
1981	23·9	16·7
1982	23·8	16·7
1983	24·1	16·4
1984	24·3	16·5
1985	24·2	16·4

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will raise with the chairman of the Post Office a request that both the English and Welsh languages should be treated as official languages for the purposes of addressing mail within Wales.

Mr. Pattie: No, this is a matter for the Post Office board.

Motor Car Industry

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he does not distinguish between wage claims and wage settlements in describing the position of the United Kingdom motor car industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend makes the appropriate distinction between a wage claim for negotiation and a wage settlement which may be subsequently agreed as a result of negotiation.

Pharmaceutical Investment

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he has taken to seek to encourage United States pharmaceutical investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Morrison: Medical products and biotechnology are among the key industry sectors in the United States from which it is aimed to attract investors through the Department's Invest in Britain Bureau's major promotional campaign — Britain Means Business. In collaboration with the public and private sectors, the bureau is conducting this campaign in addition to its normal activities and draws attention to the undoubted attractions of the United Kingdom to foreign investors, not least of which is the favourable business climate created by this Government.

To coincide with the Biotech '85 exhibition in Washington in October the Invest in Britain Bureau organised a successful seminar "Biotechnology — the national habitat" attended by more than 20 corporate executives and representatives of the two trade associations covering this sector of the pharmaceutical industry.

As a result of the Government's earlier efforts to encourage United States pharmaceutical investment, Damon Biotech announced recently that it intended to set up a £30 million biotechnology manufacturing facility in Livingston, Scotland to provide 300 jobs over the next four years.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any representations from British firms in the export market regarding the implication for United Kingdom export prospects of the recent increase in commission charged by the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Hong Kong Festival

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *626*, he has at any

time requested the West Midlands county council to keep his Department informed of any business which might have been generated by that council's mission to Hong Kong in autumn 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. As the mission was not officially sponsored, no such request was made.

Electricity (Resale)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's response to the report by the Director General of Fair Trading on the resale of electricity by landlords; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government expect to deal with this subject not by making overcharging a separate criminal offence but as part of the proposed new legislation on misleading price indications announced in my predecessor's statement of 4 March to the House. When the necessary powers become available under that legislation, we expect to introduce an order requiring those who resell electricity to give itemised bills which include a statement showing the number of units charged for, the rates applied and the statutory maximum rate. The general provisions of that legislation, under which it would be a criminal offence to give a misleading price indication or to fail to comply with an order, would then apply to those bills and the information given in them. The present civil remedy would also continue to be available.

The electricity supply industry, with the agreement of the Government, has decided not to abolish the daily availability charge as recommended in the report but, instead, to rationalise it throughout the United Kingdom on the basis that the maximum any tenant pays through the daily availability charge will be no more than he would pay through the domestic standing charge if he were a standard direct credit customer of his electricity board. The industry has satisfied itself that this will be a fair arrangement for both tenants and landlords and expects to introduce this change in the next general round of tariff changes, probably in the spring of 1986. The arrangements for itemised bills will also embrace the daily availability charge.

I understand that many electricity boards are discussing with their area electricity consultative councils what steps should be taken with regard to the report's recommendation that there should be increased publicity for maximum resale prices. In some areas, discussions have already taken place and in others the subject will be included as part of the normal discussions regarding the next general round of tariff changes. The Government recognise that additional publicity will be necessary for the new powers which I have outlined today at the time they become available and will consider the form this should take in due course. The industry has however already informed the Government of its willingness to play its part by incorporating details of the new arrangements in its own leaflets, showroom notices and other advertisements about the maximum resale price of electricity.

Grants (Job Creation)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the answer of 2 December, if, in the light of his letter to each right hon. and hon. Member detailing grants related to jobs in each constituency, he will now publish the same information in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Brittan: The information on which the letters were based is as follows:

	£'000
Aberavon	6,743
Aldridge-Brownhills	295
Alyn and Deeside	3,825
Angus, East	1,295
Ashton-under-Lyne	140
Ayr	3,725
Barnsley, East	26
Barnsley, West and Penistone	49
Batley and Spen	320
Berwick-upon-Tweed	85
Beverley	361
Birkenhead	314
Birmingham, Erdington	432
Birmingham, Hall Green	25
Birmingham, Ladywood	225
Birmingham, Northfield	25
Birmingham, Selly Oak	50
Birmingham, Small Heath	188
Birmingham, Sparkbrook	2,633
Birmingham, Yardley	65
Bishop Auckland	2,336
Blackburn	525
Blaenau Gwent	2,193
Blaydon	240
Blyth Valley	998
Bolton, North-East	208
Bolton, South-East	92
Bolton, West	175
Boothferry	370
Bootle	700
Bosworth	259
Bradford North	1,146
Bradford South	215
Bradford West	494
Brecon and Radnor	136
Bridgend	2,343
Bridlington	9,060
Brigg and Cleethorpes	5,234
Bromsgrove	38
Bury, North	137
Bury, South	40
Caenarfon	157
Caerphilly	468
Calder Valley	40
Cannock and Burntwood	80
Cardiff, Central	221
Cardiff, North	2,850
Cardiff, South and Penarth	428
Cardiff, West	155
Carmarthen	123
Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley	617
Central Fife	2,819
Ceredigion and Pembroke	185
Chorley	174
City of Chester	293
City of Durham	795
Clackmannan	1,020
Clwyd, North-West	508
Clwyd, South-West	80
Clydebank and Milngavie	1,812
Conwy	10
Copeland	253
Corby	6,199
Coventry North East	70
Coventry South East	737
Coventry South West	428
Crosby	134
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	11,571
Cunninghame North	3,839
Cunninghame South	710

	£'000
Cynon Valley	2,145
Darlington	360
Delyn	2,909
Don Valley	324
Doncaster, Central	50
Doncaster, North	25
Dudley, East	175
Dudley, West	493
Dumbarton	109
Dundee, East	1,610
Dundee, West	4,774
Dunfermline, East	3,158
Dunfermline, West	1,630
Easington	1,178
East Kilbride	1,587
East Lindsey	80
East Lothian	380
Eastwood	197
Eddisbury	240
Ellesmere Port and Neston	117
Falkirk, East	3,080
Falkirk, West	103
Falmouth and Cambourne	655
Fylde	18
Gainsborough and Horncastle	724
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	1,528
Gateshead, East	1,634
Glanford and Scunthorpe	4,370
Glasgow, Cathcart	925
Glasgow, Central	1,528
Glasgow, Garscadden	2,452
Glasgow, Govan	427
Glasgow, Hillhead	8,663
Glasgow, Maryhill	494
Glasgow, Pollok	662
Glasgow, Provan	300
Glasgow, Rutherglen	2,463
Glasgow, Shettleston	1,412
Glasgow, Springburn	165
Gower	70
Great Grimsby	151
Greenock and Port Glasgow	4,642
Halesowen and Stourbridge	1,938
Halton	1,285
Hamilton	2,625
Hartlepool	1,687
Hexham	6
Heywood and Middleton	385
High Peak	1,620
Houghton and Washington	1,777
Hyndburn	368
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	800
Islwyn	897
Jarrow	199
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	747
Kingston upon Hull, East	338
Kingston upon Hull, North	170
Kingston upon Hull West	114
Kirkcaldy	550
Knowsley, North	447
Knowsley, South	8,500
Lancaster	70
Langbaurgh	69
Leigh	1,097
Linlithgow	14,399
Littleborough and Saddleworth	468
Liverpool, Broadgreen	208
Liverpool, Garston	1,569
Liverpool, Mossley Hill	33
Liverpool, Riverside	654
Liverpool, Walton	556
Liverpool, West Derby	33
Livingston	12,188
Llanelli	1,188
Ludlow	48
Makerfield	984
Manchester, Blackley	25
Manchester, Central	1,461
Manchester, Gorton	135
Meriden	38
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	2,516
Mid-Worcestershire	815
Middlesbrough	1,263
Monklands, East	1,328
Monklands, West	539
Monmouth	1,520
Motherwell, North	1,587
Motherwell, South	853
Neath	480
Newcastle upon Tyne, Central	92
Newcastle upon Tyne, East	259
Newcastle upon Tyne, North	617
Newport	7,245
Newport, West	673
North Cornwall	808
North Devon	150
North Durham	340
North east Derbyshire	45
North Warwickshire	51
North-west Durham	1,544
Northavon	40
Nuneaton	929
Ogmore	818
Oldham, Central and Royton	35
Oldham, West	1,194
Paisley, North	1,688
Paisley, South	9,782
Pembroke	1,071
Penrith and the Border	141
Perth and Kinross	239
Plymouth, Devonport	372
Plymouth, Drake	163
Plymouth, Sutton	3,343
Pontypridd	6,939
Pudsey	650
Redcar	304
Renfrew, West and Inverclyde	390
Rhondda	1,349
Richmond (Yorks)	32
Rochdale	356
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	543
Rossendale and Darwen	358
Rother Valley	578
Rotherham	2,600
Rutland and Melton	38
Salford, East	118
Scarborough	271
Sedgefield	224
Sheffield, Attercliffe	14
Sheffield, Brightside	80
Sheffield, Central	142
Sheffield, Hillsborough	10
Shipley	912
Solihull	80
South-East Cornwall	15
South-East Staffordshire	292
South Hams	132
South Shields	225
South Staffordshire	815
Southport	270
St. Helens, North	859
St. Helens, South	1,336
St. Ives	433
Stalybridge and Hyde	71
Stirling	592
Stockton, North	804
Stockton, South	1,008
Stratford-on-Avon	39
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	516
Stretford	55
Sunderland, North	1,093
Sunderland, South	245
Sutton Coldfield	41
Swansea, East	128

	£'000
Swansea, West	116
Tatton	30
Teignbridge	60
The Wrekin	973
Torfaen	7,919
Torridge and West Devon	110
Truro	307
Tyne Bridge	1,627
Tynemouth	1,492
Vale of Glamorgan	2,281
Wallasey	163
Wallsend	942
Walsall, North	114
Walsall, South	2,750
Wansbeck	873
Warley, East	375
Warley, West	937
Warrington, South	30
Wentworth	578
West Bromwich, East	200
West Bromwich, West	1,119
West Gloucestershire	731
West Lancashire	1,371
Wigan	521
Wirral, South	321
Wirral, West	185
Wolverhampton, North-East	32
Wolverhampton, South-East	148
Workington	515
Worsley	9
Wrexham	5,932
Wyre	40
Wyre Forest	188
Ynys Mon	466

ENERGY

British Gas (External Financing Limit)

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on revisions to the British Gas Corporation's external financing limit for 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Walker: BGC's EFL for 1985-86 was published in Cmnd. 9428 as −£352 million. The figure had been agreed with the corporation in November 1984. In the early part of this year, exchange rates were markedly lower than had been assumed. The cost to BGC of its gas purchases is closely linked to exchange rates, albeit with some delay. Although the rates have since improved, the corporation's gas costs for 1985-86 are expected to be higher than had been forecast when the EFL was agreed. I have, therefore, decided it would be right to set a new EFL and have agreed with the corporation a figure of −£176 million, which takes into account offsetting savings made by BGC. BGC's negative EFL reflects the net cash generated by the business and is a cssh surplus, retained by the corporation, although it counts as negative public expenditure. The change in BGC's EFL from −£352 million to −£176 million will be charged to the reserve and therefore will not affect the public expenditure planning total.

Sellafield (Separation of Facilities)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to implement a full physical separation of civil and military facilities and activities at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Amongst other conclusions, the final declaration of the non-proliferation treaty review Conference recommended

"consideration of separation of the civil and military facilities in the nuclear weapons states".

Her Majesty's Government are considering this recommendation.

Natural Gas

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has held any discussions with representatives of the Norwegian Government concerning the purchase of natural gas by the British Gas Corporation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend and I meet the Norwegian Minister for Petroleum and Energy from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest in relation to both oil and gas on the United Kingdom and Norwegian continental shelves. The most recent meeting was at the Anglo-Norwegian Co-ordinating Committee in Oslo on 21 November which I attended.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Plastic Bullets

68. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has issued guidelines to chief police officers on the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Guidelines were issued to chief officers of police in 1981 when plastic baton rounds were first made available to forces in Great Britain. They cover the following points:

Baton rounds are to be used only with the express authority of the chief officer of police (or, in his absence, his deputy), under the direction and control of a senior officer whom he has designated as officer in charge, and by police officers who have been trained in the use of the equipment and know its characteristics.

Baton rounds are to be used only as a last resort where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances obtaining be unlikely to succeed if tried, and where the chief officer judges such action to be necessary because of the risk of loss of life or serious injury or widespread destruction of property. Wherever practicable, a public warning of their use is to be given.

Only baton rounds and riot guns of a type authorised by the Home Office may be used for these purposes. Nothing in the guidelines will affect the principle, to which section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 gives effect, that only the minimum force necessary in the circumstances must be used. The degree of force justified will vary according to the circumstances of each case.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Reform

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for the future of the ecology section following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: This is a matter for the borough councils; I understand that a report on the ecology unit is being prepared for the London co-ordinating committee.

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his intentions for the transfer at abolition of property owned by the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: Proposals for the making of orders under section 100 of the Local Government Act 1985 were issued for consultation in September in my Department's second property memorandum. This proposed that orders should be made on general principles, transferring land and other property according to the statutory purpose for which it was held on 16 July 1985. These principles were designed to ensure that property needed for the continuing provision of inherited services would pass immediately at abolition to the appropriate successor authority. Other property, including that for which the appropriate successor has not been identified, would pass initially to the residuary bodies.

My right hon. Friend has now considered the responses to his published proposals. He has concluded that, as a first step, it is essential that a general order, applicable in all the seven areas concerned, should be made as soon as possible. The order would be based on the general principles set out in the second memorandum. It would deal also with contractual and other rights and liabilities, proposals for which were set out in the third memorandum issued on 12 November.

In some areas, proposals have been put forward that virtually all property should pass directly to successor authorities at abolition. This would include the categories of land which the second memorandum proposed should go to the residuary bodies. The making of any initial general order on the lines now proposed will not rule out the bringing forward of further orders to meet more closely the wishes of successor authorities. However, before making such supplementary orders, my right hon. Friend would wish to be satisfied *(a)* that the arrangements would not prejudice third parties' interests; *(b)* that there is unanimous support for the proposals from all the boroughs and districts; and where appropriate other successor authorities in the area concerned, and agreement as to the arrangements for dealing with such matters as shared occupation and the distribution of the proceeds from the disposal of land; and *(c)* that the arrangements are acceptable to the residuary bodies in terms of access to property which they may require for their own purposes such as administrative buildings and computers.

My right hon. Friend will consider proposals put forward by successor authorities in any area in the light of these considerations, and where appropriate will make supplementary orders under section 100. If such an order cannot be made before abolition, he will give early consideration to proposals by the appropriate residuary body under section 67 of the Act, so that orders can, where appropriate, be made under that section for the early transfer of property to functional successor authorities.

By proceeding in this way we shall provide a clear statutory framework for dealing with property, rights and liabilities at abolition, if alternative arrangements as described above have not by then been made.

My right hon. Friend will shortly invite the local authority associations to let him have their views on a draft of the proposed general order. In addition, discussions will be held with residuary bodies and successor authorities in each area both about the implications of the general order, and about the handling of proposals for the making of further orders.

Cresswell Crags

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received relating to the implications for the archaeological heritage of the possible development of the Cresswell Crags site in Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: A planning application from the Severn-Trent water authority for improvements to a water reclamation plant near Cresswell Crags was publicly advertised in May this year. The local planning authorities received notices of objection from at least 100 individuals and organisations, while my right hon. Friend received representations against these proposals from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn), from Sheffield university and from the chairman of the Council of Europe sub-committee on arts and architecture.

On the advice of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission my right hon. Friend scheduled Cresswell Crags as an ancient monument on 29 July, and on 12 August served a direction on the local planning authorities withdrawing their powers to approve this development while he considered whether the application should be called in.

Further discussions are now taking place between the Severn-Trent water authority, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, the local planning authorities and other interested parties, which my right hon. Friend hopes will bring about an acceptable solution.

Woolwich Prison

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigation has been made into the extent of soil contamination at the site of the new Woolwich prison; and what steps have been taken to deal with the problem.

Sir George Young: The Property Services Agency commissioned reports from a specialist laboratory and from the environmental safety group of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Harwell. In the light of the reports' recommendations, some limited areas heavily contaminated with metal were identified. The contamination will be disposed of under controlled conditions. The greater part of the site will then be covered with clean fill to varying depths of up to 1·5 metres. The necessary work is scheduled to begin early in 1986.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public dividend capital has been allocated to each of the nationalised industries for which he is responsible in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Pollution

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the 11th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have today received this report and will be giving it detailed consideration. I intend to make a statement very soon about the Government's proposals

for strengthening waste disposal legislation and I am pleased to have the opportunity to consider the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's views before so doing. A full response to the wider issues addressed in the report will follow as soon as possible.

Guildhall, Dartmouth

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to decide on the restoration of the guildhall windows at Dartmouth, the application form for which was returned to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission on 1 May; if he will explain why no reply has yet been sent and no decision yet given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The distribution of grants for the repair of historic buildings and monuments are the responsibility of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission rather than of my right hon. Friend. I understand that although an application for grant was made to the commission on 1 May, complete information on the costs of the repairs work and their design were not submitted until 5 September. The commission will inform the applicants of its decision shortly.

Old Battery, Dartmouth Castle

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why it has taken three years to conclude negotiations with the estate of the late Mr. King, the former lessee of the Old Battery at Dartmouth Castle, with regard to compensation; and what estimate he has made of the potential income lost as a result of the delay.

Mr. Tracey: These negotiations were complicated by the fact that there were four separate interests in the property that had to be reconciled. No estimate has been made of potential income lost during the negotiations.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for how long the Old Battery at Dartmouth Castle has been empty.

Mr. Tracey: Four years.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report* the use envisaged for the Old Battery at Dartmouth Castle; and what steps he is taking to see the premises are re-let at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Tracey: The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission plans to open the Old Battery to the public in an improved presentation of Dartmouth Castle as a whole. These plans will seek to provide better refreshment facilities and new lettings are being urgently negotiated.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will consult Dartmouth town council about the future use of the Old Battery at Dartmouth Castle.

Mr. Tracey: The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission will, I am informed, consult Dartmouth town council about its plans.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the factors which have resulted in the Old Battery at Dartmouth Castle being unoccupied for three years since the death of the former lessee.

Mr. Tracey: The factors were as follows: first, the late Mr. King's landlord, the South Hams district council, chose not to renew their lease from the Crown Estates Commission in 1981 and instead asked the Secretary of State who had guardianship of the monument to renegotiate a new lease between the freeholder and Mr. King.

Secondly, Mr. King died in 1981 before terms could be agreed.

Thirdly, Mr. King's estate claimed a protected tenancy facility entitling them to a renewal of the sub-lease.

Fourthly, management under guardianship was transferred from the Department of the Environment to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission.

Fifthly, the Commission's plans to improve presentation of the monument were delayed by protracted negotiations with Mr. King's estate on the surrender value of the sub-lease.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the eligible expense limits applicable to home improvement grants in the light of changes in the costs of building materials since these limits were last set; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The eligible expense limits are kept under regular review to take account of variable factors such as inflation. We have received few representations about their present level and have no plans to revise them in the immediate future.

Catering Equipment (Import Penetration)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the findings of the surveys being carried out by the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency into import penetration of commodities used in the catering equipment industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Property Services Agency seeks to assist British firms to compete more effectively in those product areas in which import penetration is particularly high. The agency has commissioned a study to assess the degree of and reasons for import penetration in the commercial catering equipment industry.

A report is expected in January 1986. Within the constraints of commercial confidentiality, any significant findings will be brought to the attention of British manufacturers.

Weedon Aqueduct

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the latest cost of repairing the aqueduct at High Street, Weedon.

Mr. John Patten: Current repairs of the aqueduct at Weedon are being undertaken by the British Waterways Board within its general budget for waterways operation about which we do not require specific information.

North Oxford Canal (Emergency Works)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the extent of the emergency works being carried out on the north Oxford canal between

Brinklow and the Hawksbury junction in Warwickshire; what is the cost; and whether there is any casual relationship between these repair works and those carried out in the area where the M69 crosses the canal near Anstey in Warwickshire.

Mr. John Patten: Repairs to Nettlehill cutting on the north Oxford canal are to be undertaken by the British Waterways Board at an estimated cost of £500,000 over two winters and from the programme of backlog work requiring specific grant aid from my Department. However, the start of this work has had to be deferred until January to tie in with the repair programme elsewhere in the area. There is no connection between the work on the cutting and any nearby road works on the M69 at Anstey where it crosses the Oxford canal.

Municipal Housing (Repair Costs)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each housing authority the estimated cost of repairs referred to in his Department's recent report on local authority housing stock; and if he will place the full submission from each authority in the Library.

Mr. John Patten: The Department's inquiry was undertaken with the primary objective of obtaining a picture at the national level of the condition of the local authority housing stock; the returns were completed and analysed with that in mind. We are now considering, in consultation with the local authority associations, what further information might appropriately be released, beyond that already given in the stock condition inquiry report.

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will state the number of outstanding applications for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 submitted by the Greater Manchester county council; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* less than two months and *(c)* more than three months;

(2) if he will state the number of outstanding applications for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 submitted by West Midlands county council; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* less than two months and *(c)* more than three months;

(3) if he will state the number of outstanding applications for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 submitted by West Yorkshire county council; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* between one and two months and *(c)* three months or more;

(4) if he will state the number of outstanding applications for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 submitted by Tyne and Wear county council; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* less than two months and *(c)* three months or more;

(5) if he will state the number of outstanding applications made by the Merseyside county council for consent under the Local Government Act 1985; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* less than two months and *(c)* more than three months;

(6) if he will state the number of outstanding applications for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 submitted by South Yorkshire county council; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* between one and two months and *(c)* and for three months or more;

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number of outstanding requests for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 submitted by the Greater London council; and how many have been outstanding for *(a)* a month or less, *(b)* two months or less and *(c)* three months or more.

Mr. Tracey: The position regarding outstanding applications for consent under sections 91 and 92 of the Local Government Act 1985 and section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 as amended by section 95 of the 1985 Act is set out in the table below:

Authority	*Number of applications outstanding*			
	One month or less	*Between one and two months*	*Over three months*	*Total outstanding*
Greater London council	61	34	101	208
Greater Manchester council	39	6	28	75
Merseyside county council	2	2	0	4
South Yorkshire county council	7	1	9	19
Tyne and Wear county council	10	4	4	18
West Midlands county council	11	4	4	19
West Yorkshire county council	1	1	11	13

Asbestos Removal

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce a decision under section 95 of the Local Government Act 1985 relating to repair work and the removal of asbestos being carried out at the Emerald club, 263 Hammersmith road, for which he gave his consent under section 8 of the Local Government Act 1985 on 19 February.

Mr. Tracey: A decision on this proposed contract will be reached as soon as possible. In the meantime the council's attention has been drawn to the existence of a general consent for the carrying out of emergency work in certain circumstances.

Mineral Damaged Land

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his decision on a

contract for the monitoring and evaluation of mineral damaged land for which the Greater London council applied on 5 June.

Mr. Tracey: Further consideration will be given to this application when the council responds to the Department's request for further information.

Water Authorities (Civil Defence Plans)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports or representations he has received from water authorities pursuant to his request in May 1983 that they drew up civil defence plans by mid-1985; and if he will place copies of those reports or representations in the Library.

Mr. John Patten: Water authorities have reported their progress at April 1985 on drawing up civil defence plans. They expect to complete this task by the end of the year or within the following six months. I do not intend to place copies of these reports in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Facsimile Document Transmission

Dr. Cunningham asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will arrange for facsimile document transmission facilities to be installed in the House of Commons for the use of hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that facsimile document transmission facilities have been available in the Post Office in Central Lobby since 20 November 1985.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Holy Trinity Church, Paddington

Mr. Dicks asked the hon. Member for Wokingham as representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church Commissioners received from the sale of the Holy Trinity Church site at Bishops Bridge Road, Paddington; and whether the valuation of the site was based on its future use for residential purposes.

Sir William van Straubenzee: To give the information requested in the first part of the question would be in breach of the commissioners' normal commercial practice; the answer to the second point is yes.

"Faith in the City"

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what input was made by the Church commissioners into the recent report, "Faith in the City", commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners gave both written and oral evidence to the commission. I am arranging for a copy of their written submission to be placed in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Q130. **Mr. Forth** asked the Attorney-General if he will give the estimated costs over a full year of the proposed Crown prosecution service; if he has received any estimate of the cost of the alternative salary structure proposed by the representatives of the legal staff involved; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The estimated costs over a full year of the proposed Crown prosecution service are £115 million. This includes the additional costs of about £1·7 million arising from the revised salary and grading structure, and the package of other terms and conditions of service, which I detailed in my answer to the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) on 13 November 1985 at column 172. The most comprehensive proposals for a salary structure for lawyers have in fact been put forward by the Council of the Prosecuting solicitors' Society of England and Wales pursuant to a resolution passed at its annual conference. Although the society does not have formal negotiating rights, its proposals were of course carefully considered. They would have increased salary costs by a further £1·7 million. I am confident that the salary structure which will now be used in the Crown prosecution service will recruit and retain sufficient staff of the appropriate quality.

TRANSPORT

Thames Water (Mogden Works)

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department expects to receive a copy of the report of the consulting engineers who have been commissioned by the British Airports Authority and Thames Water to investigate alternative options for the treatment and disposal of the sludge from Thames water's Mogden works; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: A study of options for the release of the Perry Oaks sewage disposal site to Heathrow airport has been commissioned jointly by the British Airports Authority and the Thames water authority. It will be for these bodies to decide whether to publish the report, but in any event I expect them to make the findings public and shall make an announcement at the time.

British Rail (Modernisation)

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total value of the capital investment programme approved for British Rail in connection with its five-year rolling programme of modernisation of the locomotive and carriage fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board corporate plan 1985 records that over the next five years it is planning to invest £716 million in traction and rolling stock. The Government have already approved projects totalling some £340 million, which will provide more than 90 new locomotives and 1,130 new passenger vehicles.

North Sea Oil (Support Vessels)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state for the latest available date such information as he has on the numbers of oil supply boats, crane barges, diving support boats and stand-by boats operating under foreign flags in the Scottish jurisdictional sector of the North sea; if he will list these by country; and if he will give comparative figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: There is no Scottish jurisdictional sector in the North sea but the information for the United Kingdom sector is not available.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of oil supply boats, crane barges, diving support boats and stand-by boats operating under the United Kingdom flag in each of the continental shelf zones in the North sea belonging to Norway, Denmark, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and France; and what are the comparable figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: This information is not available.

Drivers (Testing)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider establishing a post-test probationary period for drivers, during which a driver's maximum speed is limited to 50 miles per hour; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have already considered introducing a probationary scheme for newly qualified drivers. Schemes in various countries have been examined including those involving a speed limit. But there is no clear evidence of road safety benefits.

It is an idea we shall continue to look at in the light of current evidence of any benefits which it might offer for road safety.

Motorway (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents there have been involving loss of life on motorways in each of the past five years; and what information he has as to how many involved drivers of less than one year's post-test experience.

Mrs. Chalker: Information on fatal accidents on motorways in Great Britain is given in table 4 of "Road Accidents Great Britain 1984", a copy of which is in the Library. No information is recorded about the driving experience of those involved in road accidents.

Woolwhich Ferry (Traffic Forecasts)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the number of vehicles he expects to use the Woolwich ferry in the year 1986; and how many such vehicles originate or are destined for the London boroughs of Newham and Greenwich.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not have a forecast for vehicles using the Woolwich ferry in 1986, but an origin and destination survey carried out in 1984 indicated that at that time some 3,500 vehicles used the ferry on an average weekday. Of these, four fifths had origins or destinations outside Newham and Greenwich, with a fifth having both origins and destinations in those two boroughs.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the mileage of trunk roads for which he is responsible in the London boroughs of Newham and Greenwich, respectively, and the sums he has expended on capital or maintenance purposes for these roads in each borough.

Mrs. Chalker: There are 5·5 km of existing trunk roads in Newham. During 1984-5, about £275,000 was spent on their maintenance. Contracts have recently been let to construct the A406 South Woodford to Barking relief road, some 2 km of which lies within Newham.

There are no trunk roads in Greenwich.

M20 (Maidstone-Ashford)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Transport if work on the Maidstone to Ashford section of the M20 is proceeding to schedule; and when it will be completed.

Mrs. Chalker: Draft orders for an interchange and the remaining alterations to side roads will be published on 6 December. The publication of the draft compulsory purchase orders will follow in the new year. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the remaining statutory procedures we are still on schedule to start construction in 1987 for completion in 1989.

M1 Motorway

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on how many occasions closed circuit television cameras have been installed on the M1 between London and Wakefield; when they were installed; for what period of time they were used; for what specific purposes they were operated; when, in each case, they became inoperative; when they were removed; and what was the entire cost of the various operations in manpower and equipment;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *670*, on what date and for what reasons the closed circuit televison cameras were removed from the M1 motorway; why the supporting brackets were not removed with the cameras; when the brackets will be recovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Temporary closed circuit television cameras have been used on several occasions for roadworks on the M1 motorway. They are operational during the critical period of the work for the purpose of aiding traffic management and deployment of emergency services. They are an integral part of the roadwork schemes and the costs and manpower involved are therefore not separately available.

They were in use on the M1 motorway for the roadworks at junction 14 during October 1985. They ceased operation on 4 November and were subsequently removed. Supporting brackets were removed from lamp columns at the same time but a small number mounted on special posts remain in position to await their re-deployment to a future roadworks site.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of unlit motorway exist on the M1 between London and Wakefield; which sections are unlit; and if he will identify the various authorities responsible for those sections.

Mr. Ridley: There are 104 miles of unlit motorway on the M1 between London and junction 39.

The following sections are unlit:

Newport Pagnell service area to junction 16.
Junction 17 to junction 24, except for a short section at junction 21.
Junction 26 to junction 39.

I am, as Secretary of State, the highway authority.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what tests were carried out on the highway drainage system on the M1 motorway in July between Leeds and Wakefield;

(2) what tests were carried out on the highway drainage system on the M1 motorway in June 1983 and December 1983 between Leeds and Wakefield.

Mr. Ridley: In June 1983, following mining subsidence on the M1 motorway just south of junction 41, inspections of the drainage using closed circuit television were carried out. At the same time, the levels of the drains were surveyed. As a result of these inspections, the drainage was reconstructed, between December 1983 and March 1984. The reconstructed drains were air-tested on completion, and inspected visually in July 1985, when they were found to be satisfactory.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what type of drainage was installed on the M1 motorway between Leeds and Wakefield when it was constructed; and what frequency of inspection is carried out to ensure safety on the M1 carriageway and surrounding areas.

Mr. Ridley: When the M1 motorway between Leeds and Wakefield was constructed, the drainage system installed consisted mainly of gullies and sealed pipes leading to drainage outfalls. The gullies are inspected visually once a week, and if any ponding is observed, or if a complaint has been received, more detailed investigations are put in hand.

GLC (Taxicard Scheme)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the failure by the London boroughs to reach an agreement on the scheme, he will now take steps to guarantee the future of the Greater London council taxicard service.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. My understanding is that the London boroughs, through the London co-ordinating committee, are continuing to work towards an agreement. We have repeatedly made clear the Government's view that the funding of concessionary travel, including Taxicard, is a matter for the local authorities.

Long Haul Flights (Route Licences)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in granting route licences for long haul flights, the Civil Aviation Authority imposes any conditions regarding the use of two-man crews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The crew composition is determined by the CAA certification standards of the aircraft and by flight time limitations, not by the conditions of route licences.

Both the CAA and the flight time limitations board are considering whether special rules are required for long-range two crew operations.

Helicopter Pilots

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Civil Aviation Authority study of the working environment of North sea helicopter pilots is due to commence; what are its terms of reference; and what information he has as to when it will be completed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority study of the working environment of North sea helicopter pilots is due to commence in January 1986 and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The CAA tells me that the study, which also involves Southampton university and the Institute of Aviation Medicine, will investigate the fatigue factors in North sea rotary wing operations. The terms of reference cover the noise, vibration and temperatures to which pilots are exposed in the course of their work.

Aircraft (Smoke Hoods)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Civil Aviation Authority has made any studies of the stowage and use of smoke hoods on board aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Safety matters are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority and not of my right hon. Friend. The CAA has made a study and I understand that smoke hoods are commercially available which would enable cabin crew to fight in-flight fires. These types of hood are bulky and special training is needed in their use. They are not suitable for passengers.

From time to time, the CAA reviews the availability of devices which would be effective for passenger protection.

Aircraft (Halon Gas Flooding)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Civil Aviation Authority has made any studies of halon gas flooding on civil passenger aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Aviation safety matters are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, not of my right hon. Friend.

I understand that the Civil Aviation Authority is aware of the tests carried out by the US Federal Avaiation Adminstration on the use of halon 1301 gas, and the conclusion is that it does not offer an effective system for a typical post crash fire.

Seat Belts

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will respond to the recommendations made by the independent assessors commissioned by his Department in their report of the effects of compulsory seat belt wearing; and if he intends to publish a supplementary report.

Mrs. Chalker: I accept the recommendations. Durbin and Harvey's further study confirms the analyses contained in the main study report. I have placed copies of our response to the recommedations and the results of the supplementary study in the Library.

Oil Spillage (Report)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the report of the counter-pollution measures taken following a spill of oil from the Bridgeness, after the vessel grounded off the Pembrokshire coast on 16 June.

Mr. Ridley: The report is being published today. It gives an account of the action taken by my Department's marine pollution control unit and explains the limitations of at-sea clean-up techniques in dealing with the type of oil split on this occasion. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House.

WALES

Hotel and Catering Industries

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people were employed in youth training schemes in the hotel and catering industries in Wales during November.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is not available. However, the latest statistics show that from April to the end of September 1985 there were 253 youth training scheme entrants in the hotel and catering industries in Wales.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many vacancies were notified to the jobcentres in Wales during the month of November in the hotel and catering industries; and how many of these vacancies remain unfilled.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres in Wales during the quarter 5 August to 8 November in the hotel and catering industries was 3,911. The number of unfilled vacancies at 8 November in the hotel and catering industries was 758.

Housing (Financial Allocations)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of financial allocations for housing in Wales in 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend is making available to local authorities housing allocations totalling £141·3 million, an increase of almost 30 per cent. over this year's figure of £109·5 million. The allocatable total may be supplemented by individual authorities' use of the prescribed proportion of receipts which remain unchanged from 1985-86. This is a significant increase in the resources available for housing in Wales. Special allocations will be made to local authorities to help them to renovate the worst of the council housing stock and to reduce the backlog of renovation grant applications. In addition allocations will be made to encourage the repair of whole terraces or groups of houses, and to meet bids in full for expenditure under the Housing Defects Act. Special allocations will also be made under the priority estates programme, whose aim is to bring improved management to some of the most difficult council estates.

Furthermore, net provision for the Housing Corporation has been increased by almost 15 per cent. to £44·7 million thus recognising the vital role that the housing associations play, both in renovating the older stock and in providing new homes.

Copies of individual local authority housing strategy and investment programme bids and letters notifying them of their individual allocations will be placed in the Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia (Food Aid)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he takes to ensure that grain given as food aid to Ethiopia reaches the people for whom it is intended; and if he is satisfied that it always does so.

Mr. Raison: We do all we can to ensure that food aid reaches its intended destination. Following standard practice the Ethiopian Government, through which most of our food aid passes, provides the world food programme (WFP), acting for the British Government in this case, with facilities to monitor, transport, storage and distribution of food aid. The WFP fulfils this obligation through a network of food monitors, including two from the United Kingdom who are financed by my Department. The remainder of our food aid passes through voluntary organisations which organise and monitor its distribution on our behalf. Although there may be occasional lapses, I am in general satisfied with the reports I receive.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Proportional Representation

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek to introduce proportional representation for Westminster elections for Northern Ireland constituencies.

Mr. Scott: No. The Government remain of the view that all Members of the United Kingdom Parliament should be elected on the same basis.

Hotel and Catering Industries

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people were employed in youth training schemes in the hotel and catering industries in Northern Ireland during November.

Dr. Boyson: An estimated 350.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vacancies were notified to the jobcentres in Northern Ireland during the month of November in the hotel and catering industries; and how many of these vacancies remain unfilled.

Dr. Boyson: One hundred and eighty notified; 96 remain unfilled.

Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the hospital development schemes costing over £5 million in Northern Ireland *(a)* completed since May 1979 and *(b)* started since May 1979, giving for each the health and social services board, the number of beds involved, the completion date and the cost.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *46*]: The hospital development schemes are as follows:

Project	Board	Start date	Completion date	Cost £ million	Number of beds
(a) Completed since 1979					
Daisyhill hospital stage II	Southern	November 1973	March 1980	5·9	220
Belfast city hospital tower block	Eastern	1971	February 1984	69·5	583
(b) Started since 1979					
Altnagelvin hospital, Londonderry	Western	November 1980	August 1988	8·5	78

HOME DEPARTMENT

British Broadcasting Corporation

13. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has discussed the Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co. management review with the chairman of the British Broadcasting Corporation board of governors.

Mr. Hurd: While considering the BBC's application last year for an increase in the television licence fees, the then Home Secretary discussed a number of matters relevant to the application, including the Peat Marwick Mitchell report on possible efficiency savings, with the chairman of the BBC's board of governors.

28. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed television programming with the director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Hurd: I have not yet done so since becoming Home Secretary.

Criminal Statistics

15. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of recorded notifiable offences were cleared up by the police in the Metropolitan police district in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Giles Shaw: 108,907, or 21 per cent., of recorded notifiable offences were cleared up by the police in the Metropolitan police district in 1979 and, 119,565, or 17 per cent. in 1984.

29. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile offenders received youth custody sentences in 1984; and by what percentage this exceeded the number who received borstal sentences in 1982.

Mr. Mellor: Detailed statistics of sentencing are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Statistics of sentencing for indictable offences are presented in chapter 7 of the 1984 issue (Cmnd. 9621) and table 7.16 gives the relevant figures. Statistics of sentencing of juveniles for all offences are given in the "Supplementary Tables", in volume 1, table S1.1(C), for magistrates' courts and in volume 2, table S1.2(C), for the Crown court. 2,300 persons aged 14 and under 17 were sentenced to youth custody in 1984, 50 per cent. more than were sentenced to borstal training in 1982.

30. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of all offenders released from youth custody centres and what proportion of juvenile offenders are reconvicted within two years.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information on juveniles and young adults reconvicted within two years of discharge from prison department establishments is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales". (Information about those discharged in 1981 is given in tables 8(e), 8.4 and 8.5 of the latest issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9622). Figures for youth custody trainees are not yet available.

31. **Mr. Guy Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and percentage increase in the number of offences of robbery recorded by the police between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The number of offences of robbery recorded by the police increased by 12,400 or 99 per cent. between 1979 and 1984. Statistics of offences recorded by the police are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", and figures for recorded offences of robbery are given in table 2.10 of the latest issue for 1984 (Cmnd. 9621).

33. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of untried and unsentenced prisoners in England and Wales at the most recent convenient date; and by what percentage this has risen since the same date in 1984.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985, about 9,700 untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners were in prison department establishments in England and Wales, an increase of 2 per cent. compared with a year earlier.

42. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of untried and unsentenced prisoners in England and Wales at the most recent convenient date; and by what percentage this has risen since the same date in 1979.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985, about 9,700 untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners were in prison department establishments in England and Wales, an increase of 48 per cent. compared with 31 October 1979.

45. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is recorded by his Department on the age, sex, residence and occupation of victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: Information on individual victims of crime is not regularly collected centrally except in respect of victims of homicide. However, it is the usual practice of police forces to record the addresses of victims, and about half of all police forces regularly record their age and sex, but not, I believe, their occupations. The Department has recently carried out an ad hoc survey of such information for those forces that record it, and in due course the main results will be published.

More information is however collected in the British crime survey, which has been published.

73. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what use he makes of the criminal statistics as an index of the actual amount of crime at any time.

Mr. Mellor: The statistics published in "Criminal Statistics" provide a measure of the amount of crime as recorded by the police. They therefore do not provide a full picture of the amount of crime committed, and are supplemented by other relevant data, in particular the results of the British crime surveys.

Inner Cities

17. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many major inner city disturbances occurred in each year from 1974 to date.

Mr. Hurd: There was one major inner-city disturbance in 1980, five in 1981 and four in 1985. There were no comparable instances of public disorder in the other years.

38. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his general policy towards policing of inner cities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The policing of inner cities is a matter for chief officers. The essential features are that police officers should know the area which they police and understand those whom they serve and protect. Effective consultative procedures and training tailored to the realities in the inner cities are essential if the law is to be upheld and trust is to be maintained between the police and the community.

Shops Bill

19. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the number of representations he has received from members of the public and interested parties for and against the shopping on Sundays proposals contained in the Shops Bill [*Lords*] since the Bill was published.

Mr. Waddington: We have received 6,664 representations opposed to the Shops Bill [*Lords*] since its publication, and 24 in favour.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has made any study of the additional costs and responsibilities for the police as a result of an extension of Sunday trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Association of Chief Police Officers has been consulted, but until the extent of any increase in trading can be assessed it is not possible to make any more precise estimate of these matters than is contained in the report of the Auld committee (paragraph 176 et seq).

Crime Prevention

20. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for further measures for crime prevention.

Mr. Hurd: Measures recently announced include the introduction of local crime prevention projects in five areas and the further development of crime prevention activity funded through the community programme. The Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention is considering how best to implement the various recommendations contained in the recently published reports of its three working groups on car security, residential burglary, and revised guidelines for crime prevention panels. On 20 November I announced that the Prime Minister is to chair a crime prevention seminar in January involving representatives from key industries and organisations, which will take stock of progress so far and consider future measures.

34. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much additional finance has been made available by central Government to implement the recommendations of his Department's circular No. 8/1984 on crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As circular 8/1984 pointed out, much crime prevention activity does not so much require new money, but rather a re-allocation of existing resources. However, the Government provide considerable funds for crime prevention projects in a number of ways, for example, through the Department of the Environment's urban programme and the Department of Health and Social Security's intermediate treatment programme. As part of the expansion of the community programme a substantial number of places are now available for crime prevention projects. The Home Office is also meeting the salary cost (£175,000) of the co-ordinators supporting the five local crime prevention projects announced by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on 3 October.

43. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to make any recommendations to the Metropolitan police on crime prevention and police efficiency as a result of the report issued by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research entitled, "Spending on Law and Order", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have read this report with interest. Its observations will be taken into account in developing policies for improving the efficient and effective use of police resources.

61. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his planned initiatives on the prevention of crime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The existence of a strong and efficient police service, which the Government have done much to create, is essential to the development of good crime prevention practice. But commitment by the police alone is not sufficient and we are therefore working to extend the scope of crime prevention activity at local level and engage the support and co-operation of all sections of the community. To this end, my right hon. Friend has recently announced the local crime prevention initiative in five areas, which is designed to generate public confidence that crime and the fear of crime can be reduced by local preventive action. The inclusion of crime prevention as a central theme within the recently expanded community programme is another example of the Government's efforts to stimulate local preventive measures. We also devote considerable resources to crime prevention publicity, to training, to research and to dissemination of good practice.

Immigration

21. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to meet the chief inspector of immigration concerning the correspondence from hon. Members on immigration matters.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend and I meet senior officials of the immigration and nationality department, including the chief inspector of the immigration service, as often as the conduct of public business requires. Correspondence from hon. and right hon. Members is one of the subjects which is discussed on some of these occasions.

SCOPE Report

22. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration the Government have given to the SCOPE report and its implications for civil defence planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the report by the International Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment is due to be published in its final form later this year. We will consider its findings and their implications for civil defence planning very carefully.

Police Policy

23. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for his police policy of the conclusions in the final report of the "Merseyside Crime and Police Survey", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This report was commissioned as a local survey of crime and policing in Merseyside and, although valuable in its context, I would not consider it appropriate to seek to apply its conclusions more generally.

Visas

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce a visa scheme for those wishing to visit the United Kingdom from outside the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The nationals of certain countries already need visas whenever they come to the United Kingdom. All immigration control arrangements, including the extent of visa requirements, are kept under continuous re-examination in the light of changing patterns of travel and traffic.

Civil Defence

25. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an inquiry into the feasibility of a long-term civil defence programme of adapting existing buildings and incorporating shelters in new construction.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under the current Civil Defence Regulations, local authorities are already required to plan for the adaptation of existing buildings and other structures as public shelters. To assist them undertake this substantial task the Home Office plans to establish pilot studies with the object of developing a suitable methodology. Simultaneously, as part of a continuing research programme, investigations will be maintained into shelter design, including low-cost means of adapting existing buildings for shelter.

26. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what improvements have been made to the Civil Defence college library.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The library's budget was almost doubled last year, to £3,000, and the hours when it is staffed during the week increased from 22 to 29½.

32. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to issue guidance on planning for a wartime rescue service.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This matter is under active consideration and we hope to issue guidance early next year.

39. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to local authorities on the adoption of the international civil defence insignia and identity card laid down in the Geneva convention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Adoption of this symbol is one of the requirements of the protocols added in 1977 to the 1949 Geneva convention. Although these have not yet been ratified by Her Majesty's Government, we have agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that the Government should nevertheless adopt the symbol. Appropriate guidance will be issued accordingly.

46. **Mr. Dover** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to release his new information booklet and film on civil defence; and what the costs will be.

69. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to release his new film and information booklet on civil defence; and what the costs will be in each case.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I expect the film to be available around the middle of next year. One hundred thousand pounds has been allocated for its production. Printed public information material should be available at the same time, but no estimate of costs has yet been made.

50. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to have his information package on the police role in war available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is hoped to have this material ready early next year. It is intended primarily for the use of police officers in explaining the police role to civil defence volunteers.

54. **Mr. Lewis Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much of the civil defence research programme has been undertaken outside of his Department during the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86, by subject agencies, and costs.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Total extramural civil defence expenditure in 1984-85 was £178,235 and for 1985-86 is estimated to be £719,000. The details are as follows:

Subject	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Improvised shelter studies	74,845	678,978
EMP effects	22,746	—
Radiation detection equipment	72,147	—
Training material	8,397	5,000
Warning and monitoring	—	35,000

55. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to issue training material for civil defence volunteers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is hoped that the bulk will be ready for issue next spring.

57. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to seek to ensure that staff at the Civil Defence college understand the inner workings of local authorities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Civil Defence college staff at all levels are in regular contact with the many local authority members and officials who attend courses at the college, and through the Civil Defence college liaison committee.

59. **Mr. Andrew Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make his first regular report to the House on local authority civil defence performance.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Local authorities have been asked to complete plans under the 1983 regulations by the end of the year. We shall take stock in the light of those plans and prepare a staged programme for further action and shall report to the House at that point.

60. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to local authorities for the preparation of evacuation plans for the civil population living close to major service establishments, similar to the plans required by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. Whilst the Government recognise that there are some common elements in planning localised evacuations whether in peacetime or war, they have no present plans for adding to existing guidance on the basis proposed.

63. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to develop the work of the Civil Defence college.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The role and work of the college is currently being reviewed in the light of recent and likely future developments in civil defence policy and planning. The aim is principally to identify improvements in course arrangements, teaching content and, where practicable, facilities.

Identity Cards

27. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to introduce an identity card in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government have no proposals to introduce identity cards in the United Kingdom.

Buses and Lorries (Speeding Offences)

35. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will examine ways of using evidence from tachographs to prosecute drivers of buses and lorries for speeding.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The evidence needed to support prosecutions for speeding is a matter for chief officers of police, who already have the technical assistance of speed detection devices.

Arrested Persons (Tottenham)

36. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that all those young persons arrested and taken to the police station for questioning following the violence in Tottenham on 6 October last were given full advice as to their statutory rights and were accorded full access to solicitors, parents or friends within the time prescribed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Section 62 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 entitled an arrested person to have someone informed of his arrest, with no more delay than is necessary in the interest of the investigation or prevention of crime or the apprehension of offenders. There are no other relevant statutory requirements. Informal arrangements to operate some of the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and its associated codes of practice which will come into effect on 1 January 1986 in advance of that date have no statutory authority. If any of those arrested believes he was mistreated by the police in any way, it is open to him to make a formal complaint to the Commissioner, who will cause the matter to be investigated in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Crime and Deprivation

37. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has made any studies of the possibility of a correlation between the levels of crime in inner city areas and levels of unemployment and deprivation.

Mr. Mellor: Extensive research has not demonstrated a clear link between levels of unemployment and recorded crime. The latest British crime survey showed that inner city areas experienced a much higher rate of crime and vandalism, but there is no evidence to suggest that poor physical conditions in themselves contribute to greater criminality.

Murder (Penalty)

40. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to alter the fixed penalty for murder.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Thames Valley Police

41. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any proposals for a further increase in the establishment of Thames Valley police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Thames Valley police authority has recently applied for an increase of 200 additional police posts in the authorised establishment of the force. We shall give careful consideration to the application in the light of advice from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary.

Extradition

44. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress made towards reform of the law and practice of extradition.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend intends to publish proposals on extradition and other criminal justice legislation early in the new year.

Television Licence Fee

47. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the resources currently available to detect the evasion of the television licence fee.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Consideration is now being given, in the light of recommendations made by independent consultants appointed to examine the present television licence collection and enforcement procedures employed by the Post Office, to the resources committed to detecting evasion and to their more efficient and effective use.

Probation Service

48. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many senior probation officers were employed in England and Wales in each of the years from 1980 to 1985; whether he has any proposals for the expansion of the probation service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of senior probation officers in England and Wales at 31 December in each of the years 1980 to 1984 and at 30 June 1985 were as follows. The Government provisionally plan for growth of about 1 per cent. in the probation service in 1986-87 to enable it to respond to an expected increase in its work load.

Numbers of Senior Probation Officers

	Numbers
31 December 1980	957
31 December 1981	966
31 December 1982	980
31 December 1983	1,020
31 December 1984	1,031
30 June 1985	1,038

Bodies (Forensic Identification)

49. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the new techniques developed at Leicester university for forensic identification of bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: These techniques enable parts of the genetic sequence of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) isolated from human tissue or blood to be analysed in detail. The probability that two people exhibit the same genetic sequence is so remote that the sequence can be regarded as unique to an individual (other than an identical twin) and can therefore be used for identification purposes (the DNA fingerprint). The Home Office forensic science service is studying these techniques and has applied them to other body fluids and dried stains. The use of these techniques for forensic purposes is at an early stage but shows great potential.

Violent Crime

51. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the efficacy of sentencing powers currently available for crimes of violence, manslaughter and murder.

Mr. Mellor: Long prison sentences may be imposed for offences of violence, and the Government's policy on the release of life sentence prisoners and on the granting of parole is designed to reinforce their deterrent effect. We are satisfied that the maximum penalties currently available are sufficient to enable the courts to deal adequately with the worst cases, though the effectiveness of sentencing powers is not easy to measure and they are by no means the only relevant factor in preventing violent crime.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to implement paragraph 76 of the Nairobi conference document "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" relating to guidance to law enforcement and other authorities on dealing with women who are victims of violent crimes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is a comprehensive body of law on sexual offences in this country, and penalties for attempted rape and indecent assault against a woman have recently been very substantially increased in line with recommendations of the Criminal Law Revision Committee. Home Office circular 25/1983, issued in March 1983, gave comprehensive guidance to chief constables on the investigation of rape offences. It stressed the need for sensitivity and tact in the treatment of victims and encouraged chief constables to keep training needs under constant review.

Unlawful Killing

52. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent trend in crimes of unlawful killing.

Mr. Mellor: The trend in the incidence of offences initially recorded as homicide has been slightly upwards over the past decade, but particular years can show considerable variations in the number of type of homicide recorded. The number recorded in 1984 was less than that in either 1979 or 1980.

Community Policing

53. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on recent developments in community policing.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The essential features of what is known as community policing are that police officers should know the area which they police and understand those whom they serve and protect. Establishing consultative procedures at local level and training in each force have a significant part to play. The support and co-operation of the community is also important, particularly in the inner cities.

Nuclear Electromagnetic Pulse

56. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the working party looking into the problems of nuclear electromagnetic pulse to report to Ministers.

58. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to extend guidance to local authorities on the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As a first step the working party is identifying various types of electrical equipment likely to be vulnerable to this effect and the specific protection measures which might be necessary in each case. This is a complex subject, and it is unlikely that firm results will be available before early 1987. Some advice on the effect in regard to communications equipment has already been given to local authorities, and this will be extended when the conclusions of the working party and other research are known.

Police and Prison Officers

62. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to encourage the recruitment of prison and police officers from the ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Chief officers of police are responsible for recruitment of police personnel. Both the police and prison services make substantial efforts to encourage recruitment from within ethnic minority communities; particular reference is made to them in all advertising material; from time to time special campaigns are mounted in areas of high ethnic concentration; regular contact is maintained with community leaders; and the prison service in particular enjoys ongoing assistance from job centre staff.

Nuclear Weapons

64. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Home Department when he expects to publish the review of the casualty and damage effects of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We expect to publish material dealing with the effects of nuclear weapons next year as part of our information programme.

Trespass

65. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make all forms of trespass a criminal offence.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so, but my right hon. Friend would be prepared to consider giving support to a measure making it an offence, without reasonable excuse, to enter residential premises as a trespasser.

Rape Victims

66. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Home Department if there has been any change in Metropolitan police procedures which encourage victims of rape to report to the police; and what has been the effect of such changes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police have taken a number of initiatives to improve procedures for dealing with rape victims. These include a special training scheme for police officers in sexual offences investigation technique; police assistance in the training of victim support scheme volunteers for the long-term counselling of rape victims; advice about birth control methods; and arrangements for victims to receive priority appointments at a number of hospitals with clinics specialising in sexually transmitted diseases. Disposable sterile clothing has been introduced for victims whose own clothing is taken for examination, and the police intend to open a number of special "victim examination suites" with shower facilities for the victims of rape and serious sexual assault. It is hoped to introduce the first of these in Brentford shortly.

No evidence is available as to whether these changes have affected the number of offences reported.

Prison Places

67. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current adequacy of prison places available to support judicial sentencing policy, particularly for crimes of violence.

Mr. Mellor: The prison system will continue to find room for all those committed to it by the courts.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

70. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on progress in implementing the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984; and what discussions he has held with chief constables about necessary staffing resources for this.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Most of the remaining provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will be implemented on 1 January 1986. Police preparations for this are well advanced. The Government have always recognised that the provisions of this Act may in some instances create increased demands on police resources and my right hon. Friend has said that he will consider on their merits bids from chief officers for variations in establishments resulting from implementation. Approval has already been given for adjustments in establishments in a number of forces, for reasons associated with the implementation of the Act.

Police Establishments

71. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the chief inspector of constabulary about force establishments.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police authorities are responsible for fixing the authorised establishment of forces, subject to my right hon. Friend's approval and he looks to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for advice on applications from provincial police authorities. My right hon. Friend will shortly be considering a number of applications for increases in force establishments.

Age of Consent

72. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the age of consent.

Mr. Mellor: We have at present no plans to change the age of consent.

Car Sirens

74. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department over what distance police car sirens used in the Metropolitan police area can be heard under normal circumstances and under the most unfavourable circumstances.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that under normal conditions in a busy London street the electronic METSOUND audible warning system can be heard by a pedestrian at a distance of between 200m. and 300m. The performance of the equipment is, of course, less satisfactory under less favourable conditions, but it is not possible to give precise estimates of performance characteristics under such conditions.

Greenham Common

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley on the incident which took place at Greenham common between the police and members of Cruisewatch in the early hours of Tuesday 26 November.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of the Thames Valley police informs me that shortly after midnight on 26 November a missile convoy returned to Greenham common air base. Demonstrators had gathered outside and, as the convoy entered the base, paint was thrown at police officers manning the gates. Four police officers had paint thrown in their faces and were subsequently treated in hospital. Nine other officers suffered damage to their uniforms and a police vehicle was also damaged. Eight people were arrested as a result of this incident and, of these, six have been charged or reported for summons for offences including criminal damage, wilful obstruction and assault on a police officer.

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the measures introduced in the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Act has been in force for only three months and it is therefore too soon to make any firm assessment, but the police believe that it is making a useful contribution in dealing with the problem of football hooliganism.

Woolwich Prison

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects work to start on the new Woolwich prison; and when the first inmates are expected to be in residence.

Mr. Mellor: The advance works are due to start early in the new year with the main construction beginning in January 1987. The first intake of prisoners is expected in the latter part of 1991.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the operational requirement for the new Woolwich prison provides for 60 per cent. of the inmates to be housed in double cells.

Mr. Mellor: The provision of double cells for some prisoners is desirable on control or medical grounds. In the context of the Woolwich design, the savings on building costs have allowed us, within the budget for the project, to adopt a galleried solution to the design of the living blocks, which experience has shown to have many operational advantages. They also make an appreciable contribution towards achieving value for money for the project as a whole, bearing in mind the high development costs of the site, and towards the delivery of the announced and costed programme of prison building and refurbishment, of which Woolwich is an essential component.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any alterations have been made to the layout of the staff housing at the new Woolwich prison, in the light of the representations from the London borough of Greenwich; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The original housing proposals associated with the Woolwich project have been considerably revised during the development of the design. The London borough of Greenwich suggested in relation to the layout of the housing estate a staggering of the building line, and this has been incorporated into the current proposal.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff housing units are now planned as part of the new Woolwich prison development.

Mr. Mellor: We currently plan to provide 48 three-bedroom houses and seven four-bedroom houses. The level of provision will be kept under review in the light of any future changes in the requirement for staff housing associated with the new prison.

Swansea and Cardiff Prisons

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the recognised capacity of Swansea prison and Cardiff prison, respectively; and what is the number of prisoners currently being held at each prison.

Mr. Mellor: On 29 November the certified normal accommodation and population of Her Majesty's prison and remand centre Cardiff and Her Majesty's prison Swansea (including the remand centre unit) were as follows:

Establishment	*CNA*	*Population*
Cardiff	339	464
Swansea	241	280

Drug Offences

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his latest proposals to deal with drug offences.

Mr. Mellor: As my right hon. Friend announced in answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 19 November, at columns *141-42*, a statement of the Government's proposals is available in the Library and in the Vote Office.

Obscenity

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish the proportion of

convictions for offences involving obscene publications, including pleas of guilty in *(a)* magistrate's courts and *(b)* Crown courts over the past 10 years:

(2) how many cases have been brought to trial in the Crown court on counts alleging obscenity in each of the past 10 years; how many were guilty pleas; how many were not guilty pleas; and how many not guilty pleas resulted in conviction.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, is published annually under offence classification 86 in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" in volume 1, table S1.1(A) for magistrates' courts and in volume 2, table S2.1(A) for the Crown court. The figure of persons found guilty includes cases where the defendant pleaded guilty. Reliable information on plea is not available.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is currently considering a reform of the definition of obscenity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has introduced a Bill to amend section 1 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and we shall be considering the proposals very carefully.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his assessment of the present level of obscene publications; and if he will give comparable figures for the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information available does not allow any reliable assessment to be formed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to implement paragraph 85 of the Nairobi conference document "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" relating to the control of pornography.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1979 the Government have introduced or supported a number of measures to strengthen the law. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has introduced a Bill to amend section 1 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and we shall be considering the proposals very carefully.

Crime (Incidence)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if his Department has made any study of the relationship between the incidence of crime, and of different types of crime, and *(a)* the different days of the week, *(b)* public holidays and special events, *(c)* the seasons and *(d)* the weather; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department has made any study of the incidence of crime on Sundays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Evidence from police statistics and crime surveys suggests that the incidence of different types of crime fluctuates according to opportunity, which may itself be affected by any or all of the factors mentioned by the right hon. Member, but no specific research has been undertaken.

Demonstrators

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for reports from chief constables on the operation of manoeuvres designed temporarily to incapacitate demonstrators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The overriding principle—set out in section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967—is that no more force shall be used than is reasonable in the circumstances. The tactics adopted to control a particular instance of public disorder are a matter for the operational judgement of the chief constable of police concerned.

Police Officers (Fatalities and Injuries)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state for each year since 1973 the number of police officers killed or injured on duty.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information on the number of police officers injured on duty is not held centrally. The number of officers killed on duty is as follows:

	Number
1973	12
1974	4
1975	5
1976	5
1977	13
1978	14
1979	10
1980	5
1981	10
1982	15
1983	16
1984	15
1985*	7

* up to 3 December.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the revised version of the "Protect and Survive" pamphlet will be published; and if it will include advice on protection against chemical or biological weapon attack.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Next year; work is in hand on protection against chemical attack and guidance will be issued when this is complete. The Government consider the use of biological weapons to be highly unlikely.

Housebreaking

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to make housebreaking and theft from a home a serious arrestable offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Burglary and theft both carry sufficiently serious penalties to render them arrestable offences as defined by section 24 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. If in any particular instance the offence involved any of the consequences listed in section 116(6), it would count as a serious arrestable offence. Those consequences include causing substantial financial gain to any person, or serious financial loss to any person—and the section provides that loss is serious for these purposes if, having regard to all the circumstances, it is serious for the person who suffers it.

This approach recognises that the gravity of instances of an offence may vary greatly from case to case. It would not be right to add burglary and theft to the list in schedule 5 to the Act (which includes treason, murder and very serious sexual assaults) of offences which count in all circumstances as serious arrestable offences.

PRIME MINISTER

Central Scotland

Q28. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Prime Minister when she next plans to pay an official visit to central Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Low-paid and Pensioners

Q42. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Prime Minister what is the Government's estimate of the number of low-paid and pensioners who have become eligible to claim supplementary benefit because income tax deductions have reduced their net weekly spending power below the relevant supplementary benefit cut-off levels.

The Prime Minister: The available information, derived from family expenditure survey data covering people in private households, suggests that the number of people, including pensioners, currently eligible to claim supplementary benefit because of income tax deductions is negligible. People in full-time work are not eligible to claim supplementary benefit, regardless of the level of their earnings.

USSR (Visit)

Q67. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she has received an invitation to visit the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have not received such an invitation.

European Summit

Q85. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the outcome of the European Council of Heads of Government on 2 and 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made today.

Disarmament Conference

119 **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the United Kingdom's role in the conference on disarmament in Europe.

The Prime Minister: We and our allies are working for agreement at the conference on disarmament in Europe on practical confidence and security building measures that would reduce tension and the risk of surprise attack through increased openness about normal patterns of military activity.

Cabinet Papers

129 **Mr. Madel** asked the Prime Minister whether she has yet reached any conclusions as to whether it will be necessary to withhold any Cabinet papers of 1956 on grounds of national security when it is time to publish them under the 30-year rule; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Under the provisions of section 5(1) of the Public Records Act 1958 as amended by the Public Records Act 1967, official records of 1956 will be available for public inspection in the Public Records Office by January 1987, unless the Lord Chancellor has by then prescribed that they should be withheld for a longer period. In accordance with normal practice, any applications for approval to withhold Cabinet or other records on any of the criteria laid down by the Lord Chancellor will not be considered by him Until nearer the time.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Brunivels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Holt asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Israeli Espionage

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister is she will ask the Security Commission to examine and report on measures being taken to prevent Israeli espionage within the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. In any case a reference to the Security Commission would not normally be made unless it was known, or there was good reason to believe, that a breach of security had taken place.

Heads of Government (Entertainment Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister what has been the total cost of entertaining foreign heads of Government for each of the past six years.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Prime Ministerial Travel (Aircraft Use)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1979 Ministry of Defence aircraft have been used for Prime Ministerial foreign travel; on how many occasions civil aircraft were used; and what was the cost in each case.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

EC Meetings

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister how many European Economic Community meetings since the Milan Summit meeting for the purpose of developing the formal and informal structures of the European Economic Community have been attended by the Foreign Secretary, other Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers and United Kingdom officials based in the EEC, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The Intergovernmental Conference has met six times at ministerial level. The United Kingdom has been represented by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs or by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). There have also been 11 preparatory meetings of officials.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if he will state the percentage of those unemployed for 12 months and more in each region of the United Kingdom, the level in April 1979 and the percentage difference between the figures in the regions.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the available information. The comparisons are affected by the change in the basis of the count in October 1982, and the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer need to sign on at unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit.

Unemployed over 12 months as a percentage of total unemployed

Region	*Registrants—April 1979*		*Claimants—October 1985*	
	Number unemployed over 12 months	*Percentage*	*Percentage*	*Difference*
South East	62,358	22·4	36·3	13·9
East Anglia	7,805	23·3	34·8	11·5
South West	25,262	26·5	34·2	7·7
West Midlands	34,154	28·6	47·0	18·4
East Midlands	20,152	27·9	40·4	12·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	32,728	28·3	41·8	13·5
North West	60,088	31·1	45·2	14·1
North	35,885	31·7	45·7	14·0
Wales	22,785	27·1	42·4	15·3
Scotland	45,578	26·0	40·9	14·9
Northern Ireland	19,916	32·8	48·5	15·7

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if he will state the total number in each region who are at present in Manpower Services Commission or other state schemes involving temporary employment of all kinds, including the youth opportunities programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The youth opportunities programme no longer exists. Periods of employment do not exceed a year for most participants on the community programme and the community industry scheme. A regional breakdown of total numbers employed under these measures, whether for more or less than a year, is as follows:

Region	*Figures for October*
London	12,111
South East	13,856
South West	10,484
Midlands	30,911
Wales	11,843
North West	26,427
Scotland	22,566
Northern	17,103
Yorkshire and Humberside	20,186
Total for Great Britain	165,487

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the total number of 17-year-olds in full-time work as a percentage of that age group;

(2) what is the total number of 16-year-olds in full-time work as a percentage of that age group.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information in the precise form requested is not available. The latest available relevant estimates are shown in the following table:

Young people in Great Britain in January 1985

	Numbers	*Per cent.*
Age 16 years*		
Total population	870,000	100
of which:		

	Numbers	Per cent.
(a) in full-time education of YTS, or claimant unemployed	740,000	85
(b) other: mainly employed outside YTS†	130,000	15
Age 17 years*		
Total population	895,000	100
of which:		
(a) in full-time education or YTS, or claimant unemployed	470,000	53
(b) other: mainly employed outside YTS†	425,000	47

* Ages as at 31 August 1984.

† Mainly those in employment but excluding those employed under the youth training scheme and including some who were seeking work but not claiming benefit and others who were neither employed nor seeking work—for example, because of domestic responsibilities. This group is obtained by subtracting from the total population of the age group those estimated to be in full-time education or in the youth training scheme and the claimant unemployed: no subdivision is available showing numbers in full-time or part-time employment.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Paymaster General if he will list in order those parliamentary constituencies in which unemployment has been reduced by 5 per cent. or more since June 1983, giving the percentage reduction in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows those parliamentary constituencies where unemployment has been reduced by five per cent. or more between June 1983 and October 1985. The change will be affected by seasonal factors and by the 1983 Budget provisions, which meant that certain men mainly aged 60 and over no longer need to sign on to obtain benefit. Comparisons over the period cannot be made for a few parliamentary constituencies where the figures are affected by the late conversion of some unemployment benefit offices to the computerised system of counting claimants.

Parliamentary constituency	Percentage reduction
Corby	14·8
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	13·9
Glanford and Scunthorpe	10·5
Banff and Buchan	10·1
Bosworth	9·9
Kettering	9·1
Aylesbury	9·0
Stoke-on-Trent, North	8·6
Aberavon	7·3
West Bromwich, East	6·9
Harlow	6·7
Solihull	6·7
Stamford and Spalding	6·6
Birmingham, Yardley	6·5
Nuneaton	6·2
Norfolk, North-West	6·0
Bedfordshire, North	5·6
Stoke-on-Trent, Central	5·5
Hertfordshire, West	5·3
Thurrock	5·0
Stoke-on-Trent, South	5·0

Hotel and Catering Industries

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General if he will arrange to meet the chairman of the English Tourist Board to discuss the job opportunities for young people in the hotel and catering industries and how these can be promoted to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Trippier: The English Tourist Board has already taken steps through its comprehensive "Handbook of Careers in Tourism and Leisure" to promote to young people the wide range of job opportunities available in the hotel and catering industries. The handbook, published in June, has been distributed to careers advisers and to secondary schools throughout England and will be re-issued annually, together with information about relevant college courses and qualifications. In addition the ETB is in the process of producing a video on careers in tourism including in hotels and catering. I fully support these and the ETB's other initiatives to promote training and career opportunities in the tourism industry which are the subject of regular discussions between my Department and the board.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General if his Department will make a television film or video on the job opportunities for young people in the hotel and catering industries.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission, in conjunction with the hotel and catering industry training board, has produced two videos "Working in Popular Catering" which was launched in September this year and "Working in Hotels" launched just over a year ago. Both are aimed at young people interested in careers in the hotel and catering industries and are available through the MSC's careers and occupational information centre, Sheffield. The English Tourist Board is also in the process of producing a video on careers in tourism which is expected to be available early next year and will include a section on careers in hotels and catering. This is designed to be used in schools' careers education programmes and will be also sold through the MSC's careers and occupational information centre.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General what steps his Department takes to promote the job opportunities in the hotel and catering industries.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is already active through the jobcentre network and local authority careers service in promoting the job opportunities for young people in the hotel and catering industries and in tourism more generally. The statutory hotel and catering industries training board which my Department sponsors also plays a major role in the provision of information about hotel and catering jobs. Through the youth training scheme and other Manpower Services Commission programmes such as the job training scheme my Department seeks to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills and training needed to benefit from the increasing number of job opportunities which the hotel and catering industries have to offer.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General how many young people were employed in youth training schemes in the hotel and catering industries in England during November.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not available. However, the latest statistics show that from April to the end of September 1985 there were 5,135 youth training scheme entrants in the hotel and catering industries in England.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General how many vacancies were notified to the jobcentres in England during the month of November in the hotel and catering industries; and how many of these vacancies remain unfilled.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres in England during the quarter 5 August to 8 November in the hotel and catering industries was 71,716. The number of unfilled vacancies at 8 November in the hotel and catering industries was 17,239.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General what steps are taken by his Department to alert careers officers in schools to the job opportunities for young people at all levels in the hotel and catering industries.

Mr. Alan Clark: Hotel and catering is covered in "Occupations '86", the careers and occupational information centre's annual guide to opportunities and trends in employment which is issued free to all careers officers. In addition, my Department has written to all principal careers officers drawing their attention to the report by the enterprise unit on the tourism and leisure industries; and has arranged for officials of the hotel and catering industries training board to talk to regional meetings of principal careers officers about opportunities in the industry.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow University

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps in conjunction with the University Grants Committee and the university court to seek to ensure the continuance of a social work department at Glasgow university.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government do not determine the range of education provision offered in universities, and do not intervene in decisions taken by individual universities and the University Grants Committee in that regard.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps in conjunction with the University Grants Committee and the university court to provide funds to establish a linguistics faculty at Glasgow university.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The funding, through the University Grants Committee, of universities throughout Great Britain is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid or payable to each regional, islands and district council in Scotland for each of the years from 1979-80 to 1985-86 expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Younger: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply of 3 December by my hon. Friend to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). The information has been placed in the Library.

Housing Support Grants

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of housing support grant paid or payable to each district and islands council in Scotland for each of the years from 1979-80 to 1985-86 at both current prices and expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Younger: The information is set out in the following tables.

*Individual entitlements to housing support grant at 1985-86 prices**

Area	*Financial year*						
	1979-80 £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Berwickshire	2,093,315	1,765,550	1,274,063	786,698	712,072	475,738	327,760
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2,769,456	2,369,264	1,416,792	633,488	409,784	64,864	0
Roxburgh	2,783,067	2,663,572	1,886,261	1,336,367	1,383,051	1,236,458	966,507
Tweeddale	464,089	386,064	133,811	0	0	0	0
Clackmannan	2,969,044	2,457,072	1,575,445	790,597	49,405	0	0
Falkirk	12,769,042	10,104,104	5,433,837	1,713,094	0	0	0
Stirling	3,096,691	2,588,664	1,247,322	1,530,684	22,421	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,755,898	1,961,756	1,561,928	1,590,129	1,727,352	1,676,732	1,459,412
Nithsdale	1,841,900	1,222,899	123	0	0	0	0
Stewartry	880,610	913,690	665,696	473,235	455,021	345,537	226,754
Wigtown	1,679,438	1,560,142	942,000	518,551	280,180	163,769	0
Dunfermline	8,651,426	8,212,917	3,435,683	783,131	0	0	0
Kirkcaldy	10,114,780	8,781,603	3,775,684	798,201	0	0	0
North East Fife	2,545,214	2,248,206	1,201,893	950,601	339,730	17,722	0
Aberdeen	15,644,706	14,500,112	11,698,180	8,127,788	4,087,414	2,792,504	802,337
Banff and Buchan	7,968,884	7,424,750	5,329,626	3,790,117	2,674,541	1,873,399	1,018,374
Gordon	4,585,032	3,864,836	2,919,165	2,568,676	1,876,385	1,934,492	1,438,608
Kincardine and Deeside	2,093,570	1,855,603	1,145,267	937,658	1,066,866	841,259	735,248
Moray	6,799,827	5,947,058	4,358,617	2,638,809	2,180,660	1,730,212	982,844
Badenoch and Strathspey	662,878	635,260	534,410	579,381	565,776	490,266	418,972
Caithness	1,976,645	1,411,030	1,075,014	937,052	899,351	819,014	576,197
Inverness	3,949,795	3,138,959	2,001,521	1,576,555	1,362,187	1,273,615	1,144,809
Lochaber	2,985,055	2,465,883	2,224,993	1,586,134	1,464,398	1,231,940	1,186,463
Nairn	513,642	475,082	309,195	236,233	291,237	223,154	161,997
Ross and Cromarty	6,241,353	5,741,536	5,152,839	4,004,835	3,393,040	3,278,908	3,010,852

Area	Financial year 1979-80 £	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £
Skye and Lochalsh	549,972	464,453	388,649	362,620	354,810	398,465	402,094
Sutherland	1,083,039	985,078	637,201	547,918	489,549	466,121	422,693
East Lothian	7,580,476	6,839,300	3,871,866	2,384,374	1,152,827	270,686	0
Edinburgh	18,083,850	16,911,336	9,655,806	2,668,737	0	0	0
Midlothian	5,611,282	4,504,684	2,198,302	1,039,505	0	0	0
West Lothian	7,470,538	6,479,390	2,677,334	0	0	0	0
Argyll and Bute	5,473,436	4,817,489	3,449,947	3,172,600	2,803,273	2,297,156	1,702,897
Bearsden and Milngavie	745,981	619,265	237,534	0	0	0	0
Clydebank	5,694,470	5,448,176	4,030,945	2,524,179	2,036,088	1,745,590	1,357,181
Clydesdale	2,957,137	2,231,666	709,791	0	0	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,087,712	905,688	144,494	0	0	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	3,181,812	2,448,864	1,005,805	191,670	0	0	0
Cunninghame	7,703,565	6,291,332	3,367,502	854,349	0	0	0
Dumbarton	4,810,715	3,789,677	1,445,048	0	0	0	0
East Kilbride	525,252	459,714	120,320	0	0	0	0
Eastwood	453,328	410,457	18,972	0	0	0	0
Glasgow	66,588,265	66,856,826	54,110,336	42,753,063	35,506,666	31,763,902	24,814,275
Hamilton	7,959,655	6,775,705	3,979,941	1,770,046	131,484	0	0
Inverclyde	8,990,693	8,296,265	5,451,809	3,494,563	2,046,888	1,034,338	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5,752,507	5,631,644	2,314,064	342,015	0	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	7,096,440	5,879,136	3,445,169	1,044,885	491,574	0	0
Monklands	7,383,491	5,889,699	5,217,267	3,694,345	1,871,338	1,796,080	0
Motherwell	12,708,537	11,068,808	7,040,193	3,779,206	1,138,442	0	0
Renfrew	10,408,343	8,877,273	2,682,417	0	0	0	0
Strathkelvin	3,139,047	3,243,932	1,888,443	1,374,474	358,758	0	0
Angus	6,798,327	5,907,278	3,067,203	1,400,681	198,978	0	0
Dundee	12,421,385	11,621,075	6,485,775	2,086,663	0	0	0
Perth and Kinross	5,620,969	4,212,565	1,606,504	0	0	0	0
Orkney Islands	1,723,578	1,490,496	1,327,887	977,227	803,133	788,444	691,328
Shetland Islands	3,369,194	2,553,123	3,220,374	3,043,325	2,643,646	2,823,029	2,473,535
Western Isles	1,631,513	1,685,550	1,555,090	1,557,927	1,891,713	1,892,208	1,916,270
Scotland	342,439,870	308,291,557	198,651,355	119,952,385	79,160,038	65,745,600	48,237,407

* Using GDP deflators.

Individual entitlements to housing support grant—Price current at time of payment

Area	Financial year 1979-80 £	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £
Berwickshire	1,304,502	1,306,875	1,038,356	686,226	648,884	453,082	327,760
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,725,856	1,753,749	1,154,679	552,583	373,420	61,775	0
Roxburgh	1,734,338	1,971,598	1,537,295	1,165,695	1,260,321	1,177,575	966,507
Tweeddale	289,209	285,768	109,055	0	0	0	0
Clackmannan	1,850,234	1,818,745	1,283,981	689,627	45,021	0	0
Falkirk	7,957,349	7,479,143	4,428,554	1,494,309	0	0	0
Stirling	1,929,781	1,916,151	1,016,562	1,335,195	20,431	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,094,232	1,452,108	1,272,965	1,387,048	1,574,069	1,596,882	1,459,412
Nithsdale	1,147,826	905,200	100	0	0	0	0
Stewartry	548,774	676,321	542,539	412,797	414,643	329,082	226,754
Wigtown	1,046,584	1,154,830	767,726	452,325	255,317	155,970	0
Dunfermline	5,391,353	6,079,270	2,800,067	683,115	0	0	0
Kirkcaldy	6,303,279	6,500,216	3,077,166	696,260	0	0	0
North East Fife	1,586,114	1,664,141	797,538	829,197	309,583	16,878	0
Aberdeen	9,749,391	10,733,105	9,533,966	7,089,761	3,724,702	2,659,518	802,337
Banff and Buchan	4,966,010	5,495,862	4,343,622	3,306,069	2,437,206	1,784,183	1,018,374
Gordon	2,857,278	2,860,784	2,379,107	2,240,622	1,709,877	1,842,366	1,438,608
Kincardine and Deeside	1,304,661	1,373,533	933,388	817,907	972,194	801,196	735,248
Moray	4,237,483	4,402,062	3,552,254	2,301,798	1,987,151	1,647,815	982,844
Badenoch and Strathspey	413,089	470,225	435,542	505,386	515,570	466,918	418,972
Caithness	1,231,796	1,044,456	876,132	817,378	819,544	780,010	576,197
Inverness	2,461,414	2,323,484	1,631,231	1,375,208	1,241,308	1,212,962	1,144,809
Lochaber	1,860,212	1,825,267	1,813,360	1,383,564	1,334,449	1,173,272	1,186,463
Nairn	320,089	351,660	251,993	206,063	265,393	212,527	161,997
Ross and Cromarty	3,889,456	4,249,933	4,199,542	3,493,364	3,091,946	3,122,758	3,010,852
Skye and Lochalsh	342,729	343,792	316,747	316,309	323,325	379,489	402,094
Sutherland	674,923	729,163	519,316	477,942	446,107	443,923	422,693
East Lothian	4,723,964	5,062,507	3,155,554	2,079,858	1,050,527	257,795	0
Edinburgh	11,269,405	12,517,913	7,869,440	2,327,904	0	0	0
Midlothian	3,496,811	3,334,405	1,791,607	906,746	0	0	0
West Lothian	4,655,453	4,796,099	2,182,016	0	0	0	0

Area	Financial year 1979-80 £	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £
Argyll and Bute	3,410,909	3,565,946	2,811,692	2,767,417	2,554,514	2,187,759	1,702,897
Bearsden and Milngavie	464,877	458,385	193,589	0	0	0	0
Clydebank	3,548,652	4,032,786	3,285,203	2,201,808	1,855,408	1,662,460	1,357,181
Clydesdale	1,842,814	1,651,898	578,477	0	0	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	677,835	670,398	117,762	0	0	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,982,826	1,812,670	819,727	167,191	0	0	0
Cunninghame	4,800,670	4,656,897	2,744,500	745,237	0	0	0
Dumbarton	2,997,918	2,805,151	1,177,708	0	0	0	0
East Kilbride	327,324	340,284	98,060	0	0	0	0
Eastwood	282,503	303,824	15,462	0	0	0	0
Glasgow	41,496,149	49,487,984	44,099,691	37,292,928	32,355,851	30,251,222	24,814,275
Hamilton	4,960,259	5,015,434	3,243,635	1,543,988	199,816	0	0
Inverclyde	5,602,776	6,140,965	4,443,201	3,048,261	1,865,250	985,000	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,584,819	4,168,590	1,885,952	298,335	0	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	4,422,325	4,351,786	2,807,798	911,439	447,952	0	0
Monklands	4,601,208	4,359,605	4,252,050	3,222,528	1,705,278	1,710,546	0
Motherwell	7,919,644	8,193,225	5,737,727	3,296,551	1,037,418	0	0
Renfrew	6,486,220	6,571,032	2,186,158	0	0	0	0
Strathkelvin	1,956,176	2,401,186	1,539,073	1,198,935	326,922	0	0
Angus	4,236,548	4,372,617	2,499,757	1,221,795	181,321	0	0
Dundee	7,740,698	8,602,017	5,285,879	1,820,168	0	0	0
Perth and Kinross	3,502,848	3,118,176	1,309,294	0	0	0	0
Orkney Islands	1,074,091	1,103,278	1,082,222	852,422	731,864	750,896	691,328
Shetland Islands	2,099,598	1,889,843	2,624,591	2,654,652	2,409,052	2,688,589	2,473,535
Western Isles	1,016,718	1,247,658	1,267,392	1,358,959	1,723,845	1,802,096	1,916,270
Scotland	213,400,000	228,200,000	161,900,000	104,632,870	72,135,479	62,614,624	48,237,407

Sheriff Courts

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of, and how many, defendants who have pleaded not guilty to offences tried in the sheriff courts have been convicted in each of the past five years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is given in the table below:

Persons proceeded against for crimes and offences in sheriff courts, Scotland

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Persons pleading not guilty	25,365	24,899	26,389	25,823	24,934
Persons pleading not guilty but against whom a charge was proved	14,599	14,848	15,457	14,063	13,226
Percentage	58	60	59	54	53

Hotel and Catering Industries

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange to meet the chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board to discuss the opportunities for young people in the hotel and catering industries and how these can be promoted to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to meet the chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board. On the occasions when he or my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State meet the chairman they are heartened by the progress of the board in helping to increase visitor numbers and to improve the quality of service provided by hotel and catering businesses. The Government believe that the board's actions will further extend employment opportunities for young people in these industries.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will make a television film, or video, on the job opportunities for young people in the hotel and catering industries.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My Department has no plans to do so.

The careers and occupational information centre of the Manpower Services Commission, in conjunction with the hotel and catering industry training board, has produced two videos "Working in popular catering" and "Working in hotels" which are aimed at young people who are interested in a career in the hotel and catering industry.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are taken by his Department to alert careers officers in schools to the job opportunities for young people in the hotel and catering industries.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In the light of the report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs: The Business of Tourism" published in July by the Government's enterprise unit, my Department wrote to the heads of all careers services in Scotland to draw their attention to the scope for employment in the expanding field of tourism and leisure, of which the hotel and catering industry is a part. A representative of the hotel and catering industry training board subsequently made a presentation at one of the regular meetings which my officials have with the heads of all careers services in Scotland.

The hotel and catering industries are also covered in the annual guide to opportunities and trends in employment produced by the Manpower Services Commission's careers and occupational information centre. This guide is

available to all careers officers for use in the individual guidance and counselling work in schools and with unemployed young people.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people were employed in youth training schemes in the hotel and catering industries in Scotland during November.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not available. However, the latest statistics show that, during the six months ended 30 September 1985, there were 768 youth training scheme entrants in the hotel and catering industries in Scotland.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many vacancies were notified to the jobcentres in Scotland during the month of November in the hotel and catering industries; and how many of these vacancies remain unfilled.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Vacancy notification analyses by industry are not available monthly. The number of vacancies in the hotel and catering industries notified to jobcentres in Scotland during the quarter 5 August to 8 November 1985 was 10,021. The number of unfilled vacancies at 8 November in the hotel and catering industries was 1,541.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities which have, since 1 December 1983, received approvals for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining an emergency centre pursuant to regulation *5(c)* of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) (Scotland) Regulations 1983; and if he will state the nature of the scheme, its total cost and the total amount of civil defence grant paid or payable and whether the approval is in principle or final;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities which have, since 1 December 1983, received approvals for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining an emergency centre or centres pursuant to regulation *4(1)(b)* of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) (Scotland) Regulations 1983; and if he will state the nature of the scheme, its total cost and the total amount of civil defence grant paid or payable and whether the approval is in principle or final.

Mr. John MacKay: Approval in principle has been given since 1 December 1983 to proposals to adapt existing premises as emergency centres as follows:

Under regulation 5(c) of 1983 regulations

District councils	*Estimated cost* £
Berwickshire	104,000
Ettrick and Lauderdale	80,000
Roxburgh	98,000
Tweeddale	*72,000

* A joint regional council standby and district council emergency centre.

Under regulation 4(1)(b) of 1983 regulations

Regional councils	*Estimated cost* £
Borders	*72,000
Tayside	360,000

* A joint regional council standby and district council emergency centre.

Grant at the rate of 75 per cent. will be payable on the approved costs of these projects and also on the cost of any necessary feasibility studies for these and other projects being considered by local authorities.

NHS Management (Griffiths Proposals)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about his plans for the implementation of the Griffiths proposals for National Health Service management in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: In reply to my hon. Friend the member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) my right hon. Friend announced the issue of a circular about the implementation of the general management function in the Scottish Health Service. Since then, all 15 health boards have appointed general managers at board level. A study of unit management has been commissioned as the basis for decisions on how general management can best be developed in units and its results are expected in April 1986. The Health Service policy board has been established under my chairmanship and includes two members with extensive management experience in industry. Work is continuing on further aspects of developing general management.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid to each local authority area in Scotland in each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 December 1985, c. *202*]: The information has been placed in the Library.

School Closures

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish a table giving figures region by region of the schools which have been closed since 1979, as a result of the drop in the school rolls.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *435*]: The information set out in the table relates to gross figures of closures and not the balance of closures over new openings. The figures cover the period January 1979 — July 1984, the latest date for which information is currently available, and are based mainly on returns provided by individual education authorities. They do not include temporary closures or closures of nursery or special classes or departments within a school. I am unable to say which closures were effected as a result of falling rolls.

School Closures in Scotland January 1979 to July 1984

Authority	*Closures*
Borders	10
Central	7

Authority	Closures
Dumfries & Galloway	14
Fife	8
Grampian	23
Highland	5
Lothian	10
Orkney	—
Shetland	1
Strathclyde	75
Tayside	18
Western Isles	6
Total	177

THE ARTS

Film Industry

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister for the Arts how much money the British film industry has received from the Government over the last six years.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Advancement of Women

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to implement section 79 of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for women, which states that Governments should take all appropriate measures to ensure for women, on equal terms with men and without discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at all levels on delegations to sub-regional, regional and international meetings.

Mr. Luce: The appointment of representatives of Her Majesty's Government to overseas delegations and meetings is a matter for Ministers with responsibility for those delegations or the subject matter of the meetings in question. As far as my responsibilities go, the Government's equal opportunity policy toward civil servants applies as much to such appointments as to other public service appointments.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which amendments and modifications to the 1986 draft European Economic Community budget by the European Assembly involve increased expenditure.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to document 10444/85 which contains the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the draft budget for 1986. This document, together with an explanatory memorandum, has been deposited in the House in the usual way.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, why, in the light of the statement of 28 November, *Official Report*, column 666, that increased non-obligatory expenditure in connection with the accession to the European Economic Community of Spain and Portugal represented a threat to budget discipline, Her Majesty's Government did not use its veto to oppose the revised draft EEC budget for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Community budget procedure is governed by article 203 of the treaty of Rome, which provides for qualified majority voting by the Council at all stages. No single member state is therefore in a position to prevent adoption of the budget.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Consultant-Junior Doctor Ratio

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the consultants to junior doctors ratio in hospitals in each year since 1979; and what plans he has to bring about changes to the ratio.

Mr. Hayhoe: The consultant to junior ratios in hospitals for the years 1979 to 1984 in England are shown in the table:

*Ratio—consultant: junior doctors**

	Ratio
1979	1:1·78
1980	1:1·76
1981	1:1·76
1982	1:1·75
1983	1:1·74
1984	1:1·69

* Whole time equivalents, excluding locums.

I am considering what further action would be appropriate to achieve the object of providing a greater proportion of patient care by consultants.

Sickness Benefit (Hereford and Worcester)

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table showing how many recipients of long-term sickness benefit residing in Herefordshire were, in each of the years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985 to date, referred to the regional medical service for independent medical examinations; how many of these were declared fit for work in their usual occupations; how many were delcared fit for limited work in alternative and unspecified occupations; and how these figures compare with the other social security divisions in the county of Hereford and Worcester.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Nurses (Costs)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the average cost to the National Health Service of employing *(a)* a National Health Service nurse and *(b)* an agency nurse in terms of cost per hour worked;

(2) to what extent National Health Service hospitals rely on utilising the services of agency nurses, in terms of *(a)* the number of agency nurses employed and *(b)* expenditure by health authorities on employment of agency nurses, in total, and as a proportion of their staffing costs;

(3) what information he has about the number of agency nurses employed from time to time by the National Health Service who are also full-time National Health Service nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of agency nursing and midwifery staff employed in the National Health Service in England at 30 September 1984 was 3,750 in whole-time equivalent terms. The total expenditure by health authorities on such staff in 1984-85 was £40·2 million (provisional) representing 0·6 per cent. of their staffing costs.

In view of the many variable factors involved—such as the differing rates of commission paid to agencies—it is not possible to provide any accurate comparable figures. The indications are, however, that on average there is little difference between the cost of a directly-employed nurse in the National Health Service and an agency nurse.

We have no information about the number of agency nurses employed in the National Health Service who are also full-time NHS nurses.

Contraceptive Pill (Prescriptions)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be in a position to announce his new guidelines to doctors on the circumstances in which they can prescribe the contraceptive pill to girls under 16 years without informing their parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I hope to announce revised quidance shortly.

Drug Addiction

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has about the use of electro-acupuncture in the treatment of heroin, methadone and cocaine addiction; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what information he has as to when trials were conducted into the use of electro-acupuncture in the treatment of heroin, methadone and cocaine addiction; with what results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The results of a comparative trial on the use of neuro-electric therapy and oral methadone in managing opiate withdrawal conducted at the Bethlem Royal hospital were published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* in 1984. Electrostimulation was markedly inferior to methadone withdrawal treatment. However, the researchers suggested the need for further research. I am aware that a study is presently being undertaken by the National Institute for Mental Health in the United States of America.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* his Department's estimates of the number of *(a)* pensioner households, *(b)* families with children and *(c)* other households, who have (i) suffered a reduction in their housing benefit entitlement and (ii) lost all entitlement to housing benefit, as a result of changes to the tapers, minimum payment rules and high rent area authorisation formula, respectively, at April 1983, April 1984, November 1984, April 1985 and November 1985; and if he will also give his estimate of the cumulative savings made as a result of these changes.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his Department's latest estimate of the number of households receiving certificated housing benefit who are receiving assistance towards amenity charges from the local authority as part of the Housing benefit scheme; and what proportion of these are receiving *(a)* up to £1 a week, *(b)* £1 to £2 a week, *(c)* £2 to £3 a week and *(d)* over £3 a week towards amenity charges.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information necessary to make such an estimate is not currently available to the department.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his Department's latest estimate of the number of local authorities operating local schemes under the housing benefit scheme, the number of households receiving enhanced benefit under such local schemes, the average value of such enhancements and the total cost of such enhancements to the authorities.

Mr. Major: The latest information from authorities' subsidy claims for 1985-86, which updates that given in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 29 April at column *48*, indicates that 284 authorities are currently running local schemes at a total cost of just over £35 million. Information is not collected centrally on the number of households receiving enhanced benefit or the average value of the enhancement.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the gross income level at which *(a)* rent rebate or allowance and *(b)* rate rebate would cease to be payable at 1985-85 needs allowance levels to (i) a single pensioner, (ii) a pensioner couple, (iii) a family whose head of household is in employment, with one dependent child and (iv) a family whose head of household is in employment, with two dependent children, who in each case is paying (A) the average local authority rent and (B) the average local authority rate, given, respectively, rent tapers of 17 per cent., 21 per cent., 26 per cent. and 29 per cent., and rate tapers of 6 per cent., 7 per cent., 9 per cent., and 13 per cent.

Mr. Major: The gross income levels at which rent rebates or allowances and rate rebates would no longer be payable are as follows:

Table A Rent rebates of allowances

	Gross income (£'s) with a taper of			
	17 per cent.	*21 per cent.*	*26 per cent.*	*29 per cent.*
(i) a single pensioner	94·35	85·63	78·50	75·40
(ii) a pensioner couple	116·85	108·13	101·00	97·90
(iii) MC with 1 child (one earner)	153·45	143·65	135·64	132·16
(iv) MC with 2 children (one earner)	171·83	161·29	152·68	148·94

Table B Rate rebates

	Gross income (£'s) with a taper of			
	6 per cent.	*7 per cent.*	*9 per cent.*	*13 per cent.*
(i) a single pensioner	92·31	86·06	77·73	68·75
(ii) a pensioner couple	114·81	108·56	100·23	91·25
(iii) MC with 1 child (one earner)	155·76	148·08	137·84	126·82
(iv) MC with 2 children (one earner)	171·26	163·44	153·01	141·78

MC=Married couple.

Notes:

1. The following rent and rate levels respectively have been assumed for the various household types: £13·80 and £5·20 for (i) and (ii); £15·40 and £6·20 for (iii); £16·50 and £6·30 for (iv).
2. The current minimum benefit level of 50p for both rents and rates has been used throughout.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of households, respectively, receiving *(a)* certified and *(b)* standard housing benefit and containing non-dependant, in respect of whom deductions from housing benefit are made; and if he will estimate the proportion in each case who are subject to either the higher or the lower rate of non-dependant deduction.

Mr. Major: We estimate that there are between 400,000 and 500,000 householders receiving certificated housing benefit who have deductions made from their housing benefit in respect of non-dependants. A similar number receiving standard housing benefit has deductions made from that benefit for the same reason.

Information is not available regarding the level of non-dependant deductions made from housing benefit.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his Department's latest estimate of the proportion of *(a)* pensioner households, *(b)* households with dependent children and *(c)* other households who are taking up their entitlement to rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates under the housing benefit scheme, showing the division of these between standard and certificateded benefit.

Mr. Major: Reliable estimates of the take-up of standard housing benefit are not expected to be available until early next year when data from the 1984 family expenditure survey have been analysed. The 1983 family expenditure survey is not regarded as reliable in this respect as it was carried out in the same year as the changeover to the new scheme.

We expect take-up of certificated housing benefit to be close to 100 per cent. since entitlement is automatic on a householder successfully claiming supplementary benefit.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his Department's latest estimate of the number of households *(a)* eligible to receive and *(b)* receiving housing benefit supplement and the average amount of housing benefit supplement payments made.

Mr. Major: We estimate that about half a million people are eligible for housing benefit supplement.

Information from local authority subsidy claims for the 1983-84 financial year — the latest available date — indicated that there were 228,000 households receiving housing benefit supplement. The average weekly payment was £2·42 per week.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest estimates of the number of households receiving housing benefit in Great Britain, showing *(a)* the division between standard and certificated cases, *(b)* the division between home owners, council tenants and others, *(c)* the division between pensioner households, families with children and others, *(d)* the number receiving rent rebates or allowances only, *(e)* the number receiving both a rent rebate or allowance and a rate rebate and *(f)* the number receiving a rate rebate only.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his Department's latest available figures for 1985 on *(a)* the number of cases on which a review of housing benefit entitlement has been requested, *(b)* the number of cases referred to a review board hearing, *(c)* the number of such cases in which the authority's original decision was (i) altered and (ii) upheld and *(d)* the number of cases referred to review boards involving representations about (A) eligible rent and rates, (B) non-dependants or sub-tenants (C) overpayments and (D) other matters.

Mr. Major: The latest available figures are for the period 1 January 1985 to 30 September 1985 and are taken from returns from around 7 per cent. of all authorities.

Housing benefit reviews	*Great Britain 1985*
a. Number of reviews requested	1,340
b. Number of cases referred to review board	40*
c. Number of original decisions:	
i. revised	15
ii. upheld	20
d. Number of cases concerning	
i. eligible rent and rates	10
ii. non-dependants and sub-tenants	4
iii. overpayments	1
iv. other matters	20

Note: * includes 5 cases which have been adjourned

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of additional staff employed by local authorities as a result of the introduction of the housing benefit scheme.

Mr. Major: Local authorities have been asked to provide estimates of the number of additional staff required to administer the housing benefit scheme only in its first year of operation in 1983-84. Their 1983-84 subsidy claims indicate that about 3,750 additional staff were employed to administer the housing benefits scheme.

High Rent Area Scheme

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the authorities which have *(a)* requested and *(b)* received authorisations to operate a high rent area scheme (i) for public authority and private tenants, (ii) for public authority tenants alone, (iii) for private tenants alone and (iv) for class authorisations and to identify, in respect of class authorisations, the particular type of dwelling for which each authorisation was granted.

Mr. Major: (i) The following list shows those authorities which applied for general authorisations in both the public and private sector and the result of these applications:

Authority	
Harrow	public sector only authorised
Kingston-upon-Thames	public sector only authorised
Ealing	public sector only authorised
Hillingdon	public sector only authorised
Barnet	both authorised
Hammersmith and Fulham	public sector only authorised
Kensington and Chelsea	both authorised
Westminster	both authorised
Rushmoor	neither authorised
Wandsworth	public sector only authorised
Brighton	public sector only authorised

(ii) The following list shows those authorities which applied for general authorisations in the public sector only and the result of these applications:

Authority	
Southend-on-Sea	authorised
Sutton	authorised
Blaenau Gwent	authorised
Cardiff	authorised
Middlesbrough	authorised
Redbridge	authorised
Ogwr	authorised
Milton Keynes Development Corporation	authorised
Spelthorne	authorised
Richmond-upon-Thames	not authorised
Merton	authorised
Eastbourne	authorised
Wealden	authorised
Telford Development Corporation	authorised
Epsom and Ewell	authorised
Shepway	authorised

(iii) The following list shows those authorities which applied for general authorisations in the private sector only and the result of these applications:

Authority	
Camden	authorised
Bracknell	not authorised
Gravesham	not authorised

(iv) The following list shows those authorities which applied for class authorisations and if authorised for what type of accommodation:

Authority	
Bolsover	sheltered
Stewartry	sheltered
City of London	not authorised
West Lothian	sheltered
Wandsworth	sheltered
Argyll and Bute	sheltered
Kirkcaldy	not authorised
Thamesdown	sheltered
Moray	sheltered
Kerrier	sheltered
Milton Keynes (Borough of)	sheltered
Easington	sheltered
Roxburgh	sheltered
Merthyr Tydfil	sheltered
Ealing	sheltered
Lochaber	sheltered
Berwickshire	sheltered and disabled
Renfrew	sheltered
Richmond-upon-Thames	sheltered
Nottingham	sheltered
Gordon	sheltered
Dumbarton	sheltered and disabled
Wear Valley	sheltered
Staffordshire Moorlands	sheltered
Southwark	sheltered
Portsmouth	sheltered and disabled
North East Fife	not authorised
Bath	sheltered
City of Bristol	sheltered and disabled
Wokingham	sheltered
Western Isles	sheltered
Midlothian	sheltered
Gedling	sheltered
Skye and Lochalsh	sheltered
East Devon	sheltered
Coventry	sheltered and disabled
Stockton-on-Tees	sheltered
Banff and Buchan	sheltered
Wakefield	sheltered
Wrekin	sheltered
Manchester	sheltered
Leicester	sheltered
Trafford	not authorised
Middlesbrough	sheltered

Cancer

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were suffering from cancer in each of the last five years in the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health district.

Mr. Whitney: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys handles statistics of registrations of newly diagnosed cases of cancer; this provides the nearest available information on the number of people suffering from cancer.

The table shows these registrations for the latest available five years.

Number of registrations of malignant neoplasmas; Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district/district health authority 1978-1982

Area of usual residence	*Year*	*Number*
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district	1978	1,925
	1979	1,750
	1980	1,974
	1981	2,203
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority	1982	2,036

1978 ICD 8th revision 140—209
1979–1982 ICD 9th revision 140—208

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money has been specificaly allocated to cancer research in the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The main Government-funded body supporting cancer research is the Medical Research Council which receives an annual grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

During the last five years, the Department of Health and Social Security has provided support for research related to cancer amounting to £6·4 million.

I understand that the Scottish Home and Health Department has provided £1·3 million for research in this area during the same period.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have died from cancer in each of the last five years in the Portsmouth and South Hampshire health district.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the number of deaths from malignant neoplasms (ICD 9th revision 140-208) occurring to residents of the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district in each of the last five years.

Deaths from Cancer (ICD 140-208) in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Health District /District Health Authority, 1980-84

Area of usual residence	*Year*	*Males*	*Females*	*Persons*
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district	1980	628	566	1,194
	1981	722	598	1,320
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority	1982	713	589	1,302
	1983	729	603	1,332
	1984	767	593	1,360

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of those of working age receiving supplementary benefit in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the West Midlands region and *(c)* the Walsall area, the numbers in May 1979 and the percentage difference in the three groups.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

(thousands)

	May 1979	*Latest available date*	*Percentage increase*
United Kingdom	1,215	3,155 (February 1985)	160
Midlands region*	204	584 (July 1985)	186
Local offices situated in Walsall	6·4	21·5 (July 1985)	236

Source: United Kingdom figures: Quarterly statistical inquiries. Midland region and Walsall figures: 100 per cent. count of cases in action at local offices.

* Figures are for whole Midlands region, since the West Midland social security region no longer exists.

Heating Additions

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis heating additions are calculated.

Mr. Newton: Supplementary benefit claimants who need to spend extra on heating may receive additional weekly payments known as heating additions. Details of eligibility and of the amounts payable are contained in regulations 11-12 and schedule 4 (part I) of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983, (S.I. 1983 No. 1399).

Crown Immunity

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has now received about the effects of Crown immunity on standards of health and safety in hospital buildings.

Mr. Hayhoe: A small number.

Disabled Persons (Access)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date he laid a report before Parliament on improving access for disabled persons under section 7 of the Disabled Persons Act 1981; and if he will make a statement on the progress made subsequent to that report.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply.

No such report has been made. Instead, as an alternative to implementing section 6 of the Disabled Persons Act 1981, new building regulations were laid before Parliament on 2 April 1985 and became operational on 1 August. These require that new offices, shops, single-storey factories, educational and public buildings should be accessible to disabled people.

We propose to recast these requirements into the functional form of the new simplified building regulations 1985. A draft approved document is being prepared, giving practical solutions for meeting the access requirements and there will be public consultation in due course.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Court of Human Rights

Ms Harman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to reach a settlement on the substantive issue in the case of Harman *v.* The United Kingdom in the European Court of Human Rights; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps the Treasury solicitors are taking to reach a settlement on the question of costs in the case of Harman *v.* The United Kingdom in the European Court of Human Rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Proceedings before the European Commission of Human Rights are confidential and it would not be appropriate to make a statement. The hon. Member's solicitors are well aware of the progress of discussions. We hope that these will lead to the friendly settlement of her application to the Commission.

Plutonium

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that all plutonium exported from the United Kingdom since 1979 has been transferred in accordance with article III of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Renton: As my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) said on 18 February to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas):

"Before an export licence is issued, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible for obtaining appropriate assurances from the Government of a receiving state regarding peaceful and non-explosive use, application of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, standards of physical protection and conditions for retransfer. British Nuclear Fuels plc is responsible to the Department of Energy for the storage and accountancy of all safeguards material in its possession."

These guidelines still appley.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the countries from whose Governments his Department has received the appropriate assurances referred to by the then Minister of State, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) on 18 February, *Official Report*, column *360*, in respect of transfers of plutonium for civil use in each year since 1970;

(2) if he will list the countries to which plutonium intended for civil purposes has been transferred from the United Kingdom in each year since 1970.

Mr. Renton: Since 1970, plutonium (in consignments larger than gramme quantities) intended for civil purposes has been exported to the following countries:

Belgium
Canada
France
Federal Republic of Germany
Italy
Japan
Switzerland
United States of America

All the material involved is subject to bilateral and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreements which provide for the plutonium to be used for peaceful purposes.

Peace Organisations

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which organisations claiming to be working for peace have been refused grants-in-aid from his Department.

Mr. Eggar: In awarding grants-in-aid to non-governmental organisations we have regard to whether their purposes are in accordance with our foreign policy objective, including the preservation of international peace with freedom and justice. Many organisations would claim to be working for peace to a greater or lesser extent. Some applicants have been refused, but we do not maintain a comprehensive list of such refusals. I should be happy to write to the hon. Member about any specific organisation he has in mind.

Advancement of Women

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many senior diplomatic figures have been appointed from outside the Foreign Office in each of the last five years; and how many of these were women.

Mr. Eggar: There has been one such appointment during the period: Sir Oliver Wright, a former member of the Diplomatic Service, was appointed ambassador to Washington in 1982.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants of each grade are in the Diplomatic Service; and how many of these are women.

Mr. Eggar: The required figures are tabulated as follows:

Diplomatic Service grade	*Total officers in grade*	*Of whom women*
10	545	289
9	773	250
8	50	7
7E	474	75
7D	79	14
6	294	21
5	439	29
4	288	12
Senior grade	154	1

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many diplomats Britain has sent to the United Nations in the current year; and how many of these are women.

Mr. Renton: In 1985 four United Kingdom-based staff with diplomatic status have been posted to the United Kingdom mission to the United Nations in New York and eight to the mission in Geneva, including one woman to each.

There are currently 22 diplomatic staff in New York, of whom three are women, and 20 in Geneva, of whom one is a woman. Figures for all United Kingdom-based staff are: 46 in New York (18 women) and 37 in Geneva (12 women).

Dame Ann Warburton was the permanent representative in Geneva until her retirement from the Diplomatic Service in October.

MBFR Talks

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any progress has been made in the 37th round of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The head of the United Kingdom delegation to the mutual and balanced force reduction talks (MBFR) in Vienna has today presented a new Western proposal to the East. Britain has played a key role in

formulating this proposal which takes up the concept of a time-limited agreement involving modest reductions of US and Soviet troops put forward by the East in its proposal of 14 February, and builds upon the areas of agreement which already exist between the two sides. The main features of the new Western proposals are as follows:

(i) initial reductions of 5,000 US and 11,500 Soviet troops;

(ii) a subsequent collective commitment by NATO and the Warsaw pact and by the USSR and the United States not to increase their forces within the reductions area for three years;

(iii) a package of associated measures to allow for the monitoring of overall compliance with the agreement and to verify force levels of the participating countries as exchanged following initial reductions.

For many years, prior data agreement has been the principal stumbling block to progress in Vienna. By offering to accept reductions and a subsequent no-increase commitment without insistence upon prior agreement on data between the two sides, the West is making a major effort to take the Vienna negotiations forward. I hope that the East will now respond in a similar vein.

NATO (Barrier Defence)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any proposals within the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation for the provision of a barrier defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has made no proposals to NATO for a physical barrier defence. I also refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 18 March, at column 407.

Equipment Losses

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list all operational equipment losses including helicopters and aircraft for each year since 1980 and for each of the three services.

Mr. Stanley: The figures for operational equipment losses for all three services during the years 1980-85, but excluding losses in the Falklands conflict, are as follows. These include losses during training.

	Royal Navy	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1980			
Fixed wing aircraft	1	2	21
Helicopter	3	4	2
1981			
Fixed wing aircraft	1	—	20
Helicopter	5	—	1
*1982**			
Fixed wing aircraft	1	—	23
Helicopter	3	5	—
1983			
Fixed wing aircraft	4	1	24
Helicopter	3	1	1
1984			
Fixed wing aircraft	3	—	17
Helicopter	2	2	1
1985†			
Fixed wing aircraft	1	—	15
Helicopter	3	2	1

* Excluding losses in the Falklands conflict.
† Interim figures.

According to available records, one Saracen armoured personnel carrier, two FV432 armed personnel carriers, and one Ferret scout car have also been lost in 1981, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list all operational equipment losses during the period 3 April 1982 to the date of ceasefire in the Falklands in June 1982.

Mr. Stanley: During the period 3 April 1982 to the cessation of hostilities in the Falklands, the following major equipments were lost:

	Equipment losses
Royal Navy	
(a) Ships	HMS Sheffield, HMS Ardent, HMS Antelope, HMS Coventry and RFA Sir Galahad
(b) Aircraft	6 Sea Harriers
(c) Helicopters	3 Lynx
	9 Wessex
	5 Sea Kings
Royal Marines	2 Gazelles
	1 Scout
Army	1 Gazelle
Royal Air Force	3 harriers
	3 Chinooks

The SS Atlantic Conveyor was also lost, as was a combat engineer tractor. One additional RAF Harrier, originally counted as lost, has since been repaired.

RAF Personnel

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of training a fast jet navigator for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The average cost to the Ministry of Defence of training a student navigator to the point when he joins an operational fast jet squadron is approximately £1 million (at 1984-85 prices).

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many navigators serving with the Royal Air Force have left the Royal Air Force since January 1985 in each month and in total, or have expressed a desire to leave the service;

(2) how many navigators in the current year have expressed a desire to leave the Royal Air Force without completing their engagements;

(3) how many navigators have left the Royal Air Force since January without completing their engagement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Sixty-nine navigators have left the service during the current year, 30 of whom have left on premature voluntary retirement. During the same period, 46 navigators have indicated a desire to leave on PVR at some future date.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many pilots have left the Royal Air Force since January, in each month and in total, or have expressed a desire to leave the service;

(2) how many pilots have expressed a desire to leave the Royal Air Force without completing their engagement;

(3) how many pilots have left the Royal Air Force since January without completing their engagement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: 147 pilots have left the service during the current year, 58 of whom have left on premature voluntary retirement. During the same period, 89 pilots have indicated a desire to leave on PVR at some future date.

Leukaemia and Lymphatic Cancer

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has made any assessment of the relative incidence of leukaemia and lymphatic cancer in children living near the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston and the Royal Ordnance Factory, Burghfield, compared with the incidence of those diseases in other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My Department is aware of suggestions that there is a higher than expected incidence of such illnesses in these areas. The Ministry of Defence is of course interested in any soundly based scientific research into the incidence of radiation related illnesses in the vicinity of its establishments. So far we have seen no evidence to suggest that there are any links between our establishments and cancer of any kind. Furthermore, the amounts of radioactivity originating from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston and the Royal Ordnance Factory, Burghfield are very low indeed and the maximum radiological doses associated with them would not exceed one thousandth of the annual limit recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection for members of the public, including children. The ICRP's recommendations are endorsed internationally and have been confirmed as acceptable for the UK by the National Radiological Protection Board, which is advised by the Medical Research Council.

Departmental Staff (Payments)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the payment of his Department's civil servants during emergency situations.

Mr. Heseltine: A study of payments to Ministry of Defence civilians in emergency situations has been carried out by Mr. J. Hansford. His report has been received and studied, and his conclusions are being followed up. A copy of his report has been placed in the Library, and it is published as an open government document.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish (Mercury Levels)

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are the levels of mercury found in the fish in Liverpool bay; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what are the levels of mercury found in fish in the Irish sea; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) if his Department has undertaken any studies into the effects of human consumption of fish with unacceptable levels of mercury found in them; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he is satisfied that the official environmental quality standard of 0·3 mg. of mercury per kilo is a safe level;

(5) if he intends to renew the licence granted to the North West water authority for the sea dumping of mercury under the Dumping at Sea Act 1974 when that licence expires.

Mr. Gummer: As part of its comprehensive programme for the protection of the marine environment, my Department regularly undertakes studies to monitor the level of mercury in fish landed from Liverpool bay and the Irish sea. These studies indicate that in 1984 the average mercury level in fish from Liverpool bay was 0·27mg/kg, whilst in fish from the Irish sea it was between 0·27 and 0·1mg/kg. These levels are lower than the environmental quality standard of 0·3mg/kg laid down by EC directives 82/176 and 84/156 on mercury discharges, which is designed to set a safe level for the protection of the marine environment. My Department has also conducted three studies of the relationship between high intakes of mercury from fish and blood concentrations of mercury in man. The conclusion of these studies was that we should follow the WHO advice on the intake of mercury. The situation in Liverpool bay is under close surveillance and no further licence for the disposal of sewage sludge to sea will be issued to the North-West water authority until the relevant information has been fully evaluated.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department, were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Jopling: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. Existing staff in personnel units have been designated as equal opportunity officers on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. Equal opportunity matters are not their sole responsibility.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 December 1985

NORTHERN IRELAND

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Dr. Boyson: The information as requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. However, total figures for all forms of advertising for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments are as follows:

	£
Expenditure 1984-85	2,090,000
Budget 1985-86	2,689,188
Expenditure 1985-86 (to date)	1,595,318

WALES

Library Status

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has yet received the report of the panel investigating library status under section 207(5) of the Local Government Act 1972; and when he expects to make a decision on the matter.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The panel has completed its inquiries and is now finalising its report which I expect to be submitted for consideration early in 1986.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

	£
1984-85 Expenditure	66,300
1985-86 Budget	171,000
Expenditure to date	117,000

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Distress for Rent Rules

Mr. Conway asked the Attorney-General if he will amend the distress for rent rules 1983 so as to require certificated bailiffs to issue a detailed inventory when levying a notice of distress; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The prescribed notice of distress, in form 5, already requires the goods seized, distrained or impounded by a certificated bailiff to be specified in an inventory, which is part of the form, when the form is issued to a tenant by the bailiff on levying a distress, in accordance with rule 12(2) of the distress for rent rules 1983. Further amendments to the rules are under consideration.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about the proposed building society legislation referred to in the Gracious Speech.

The Solicitor-General [*further to the answer given by the Minister of State, Treasury, on 7 November 1985, c. 3*]: I can provide the following information.

The Government issued a consultation paper last year seeking views on the way in which conflicts of interest and anti-competitive practices could be avoided if building societies and other financial institutions were to offer conveyancing services to the public. Following that consultation, the Government have concluded that there is no difficulty in principle in such institutions providing conveyancing to persons to whom they are not also offering a loan. However, the Government are not satisfied that lending institutions could safely be permitted to offer both conveyancing and a loan in the same transaction. It is therefore proposed to prohibit lending institutions from providing conveyancing, either directly or through a subsidiary company in which they hold a majority stake, to those who are also borrowing from them.

The Government are also examining the possibility of estate agents providing a combined service of sale and conveyancing to vendors, and of lending institutions providing conveyancing to borrowers from them through associated companies in which the lender holds only a minority shareholding. Consultation on those matters is not yet complete.

It is also proposed to set a number of other conditions to ensure proper consumer protection. In particular, institutions will be required to ensure that their conveyancing work is supervised by a qualified person; and adequate arrangements will have to be made to protect the consumer against negligence or fraud on the part of those providing the service. Details will be announced in due course, after further consultations with the interests concerned.

Mr. Lester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the provision to be made in the Building Societies Bill for the conversion of building societies to company status.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have made it clear that the new building society legislation should allow building societies to become companies, subject to the approval of their members. In view of the complexity of the issues, however, we have decided to publish a consultative paper setting out proposals, on which comments are invited by the end of January.

General provision for the conversion of building societies into companies is made in the Bill as published

today and, in the light of the consultation, detailed provisions will be brought forward during the passage of the Bill. Copies of the consultative paper have been placed in the Library.

Investment (GDP)

Mr. Skinner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of investment per person as a share of real gross domestic product in the following countries at the latest available date: *(a)* Japan, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The figures requested are as follows:

	1984	Current prices		
		Investment (gross fixed capital formation)	Investment as a per-centage of GDP	Population (million)
(a)	Japan (yen billion)	82,049	28·0	120·0
(b)	West Germany (DM million)	354,580	20·2	61·2
(c)	France (Franc billion)	810·1	18·9	54·9
(d)	United Kingdom (Sterling million)	55,319	17·3	56·5

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Sims asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any safeguards have been included in European Community proposals on the respective treatment for tax purposes of different types of spirit to ensure that Scotch whisky is not placed at a competitive disadvantage as a result of subsidies granted to other imported spirits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The EC proposals for harmonising the structure of the taxation of spirits would provide for the same rate of VAT to be charged on home-produced and imported spirits and for a single specific rate of excise duty. France would be permitted to retain for a limited period a reduced rate of excise duty on a quota of rum from the French Overseas Departments, and Denmark would be allowed a transitional period to abolish the ad valorem element in their excise duty on spirits.

The question of unfair competition by subsidies is outside the scope of these harmonisation proposals.

Taxes Act 1979

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many applications have been made to the Board of Inland Revenue for the out of time admission of an election under the provisions of section 154(2) of the Taxes Act 1979; in how many cases the late election was accepted; and in what circumstances such late elections are accepted;

(2) how many applications have been made to the Board of Inland Revenue for the out of time admission of a claim under the provisions of section 264 of the Taxes Act 1970; in how many cases the late claim was accepted; and in what circumstances such late claims are accepted.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the cost of introducing an income tax rate of 15 per cent. to apply to half the present 30 per cent. tax rate band, leaving other tax rates undisturbed;

(2) what changes would be necessary to higher rate bands to ensure that no tax benefit accrues to higher rate taxpayers if a lower rate band is introduced at 15 per cent. to apply to half the present 30 per cent. tax-rate band.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Public Works Loan Board

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of interest is currently charged by the Public Works Loan Board on loans to local authorities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Public Works Loan Board lends to local authorities at both fixed and variable rates of interest. Fixed rates are published regularly in the London and Edinburgh *Gazettes*, copies of which are available in the Library. Variable rates are quoted to borrowers on application to the board.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Precautions Act 1971

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had, as part of his review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971, on the effects of extending designations to include hostels and houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The current review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971, which was the subject of a consultative document published on 23 July 1985, is primarily concerned with the statutory arrangements for securing reasonable standards of fire safety in occupied buildings. No detailed consideration has yet been given to what new occupancies might be designated if the new system proposed in the consultative document were to be adopted. However, there would be full consultation with all the interested organisations before any such designation orders were made. From time to time representations have been made that some types of hostels and other houses in multiple occupation should be designated under the 1971 Act as requiring a fire certificate, but it has been so far decided that it would be wrong to contemplate any new designations while the Act is being reviewed.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or (d) females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Hurd: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. The heads of two personnel management divisions have been designated as equal opportunity officers on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. Equal opportunity matters are not their sole responsibility.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from Pakistan were refused entry in August, September and October; how many in each month were granted temporary admission pending consideration of representations by hon. Members; and what are the comparable figures for 1984.

Mr. Waddington: Information about persons seeking leave to enter the country as visitors who are refused leave to enter at United Kingdom ports and those whose removal is deferred pending representations, is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The numbers of citizens of Pakistan who were refused leave to enter and subsequently removed in August, September and October in 1984 and 1985 are as follows:

Month of removal	*1984*	*1985*
August	155	155
September	138	153
October	149	151

South West Africa People's Organisation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation have been detained or arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Hurd: No one has been detained or arrested by virtue of his or her connection with SWAPO. One of the hundreds of people briefly examined by the police at the ports this year is known to have been a representative of SWAPO.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what terms Mr. Shapua Kaukungua of the South West Africa People's Organisation has been allowed to enter and work in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Kaukungua was appointed as the London and Western European representative of the South West Africa People's Organisation in 1976. In November of that year he was admitted to the United Kingdom for 12 months on condition that he took no employment other than with the organisation and he has since been granted further leave to remain on that condition.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Hurd: The information requested is not readily available. I will reply as soon as possible.

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters have been sent out to local authorities by Mr. Eric Alley, civil defence adviser to the Home Office, since 1 October; with which authorities Mr. Alley has engaged in correspondence; and if he will publish the text of all correspondence in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *275*]: Between 1 October and 20 November the civil defence advisee wrote to Avon, Greater Manchester, Kent, Mid-Glamorgan (two letters), North Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, Warwickshire and West Glamorgan (two letters) county councils; and Carmarthen district council. Whilst it would not be appropriate to publish the correspondence in the *Official Report*, I have placed copies in the Library.

Fraud

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to the number of new investigations started by the City of London police company fraud squad for each year since 1979; how many of those investigations have been completed since 1979; how many of these investigations have led to prosecutions; and how many of these investigations have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *29*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police for the City of London that from 1 January 1979 to 31 October 1985, 450 fraud investigations were commenced; of these 321 cases have been completed, 112 cases have resulted in prosecutions, and 133 cases have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to how many of the investigations commenced by the City of London's police company fraud department have been referred to the Department of Trade and Industry or to the City solicitor for assistance; of these how many have been completed; and how many led to prosecution.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *29*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police for the City of London that from 1 January 1979 and to 31 October 1985, 110 cases were referred to the Department of Trade and Industry or the City solicitor or both, and of these 78 cases have been completed, resulting in 47 prosecutions.

ENERGY

Euratom Treaty

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if there is any disagreement within the European Economic Community on the interpretation of articles 81 and 84 of the Euratom treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no disagreement between the United Kingdom and the European Commission over the interpretation of articles 81 and 84 of the Euratom treaty.

Civil Nuclear Facilities

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to reach agreement with the European

Commission over article 36 of regulation 3227/76 about the safeguarding of civil nuclear facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the written question of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 25 July 1985.

Nuclear Reactors (Safety)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the specific time periods in which the radioactive material produced in *(a)* Calder Hall and *(b)* Chapel Cross nuclear reactors has been subject to the full safeguards procedures as set out in the 1977 tripartite safeguards agreement between the United Kingdom, Euratom, and the International Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Goodlad: The safeguards procedures set out in the 1977 tripartite safeguards agreement between the United Kingdom, Euratom and the International Atomic Energy Agency are not applicable to material in facilities which are excluded for national security reasons. The Calder Hall and Chapel Cross nuclear reactors fall into this category and the material produced in them is not subject to the terms of the agreement.

Fast Reactor Programme

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future plans for the fast reactor programme beyond 1990.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy announced on 16 January 1984, at columns 47-48 that the United Kingdom had joined a European collaboration for the joint and long-term development of fast reactors through signature of an intergovernmental memorandum of understanding with France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Belgium.

I subsequently reported on 24 May this year, at columns 586-87, that the Government's general policies on the United Kingdom's participation in the collaboration had been set out in a letter from the Secretary of State for Energy to the chairman of the UKAEA, copies of which are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much public dividend capital has been allocated to each of the nationalised industries for which he is responsible in each of the past five years.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: None.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Walker: In 1984-85 my Department budgeted and spent the following on advertising:

Press £1,572,000
TV £1,302,000

In 1985-86, £75,347 has been spent on press advertising to date. The main advertising spend will occur in January to March 1986 with press and television advertising to support Energy Efficiency Year. I anticipate total advertising expenditure to be approximately

Press £2 million
TV £1·9 million

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 25 November, column *412*, to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) if he will specify which Magnox reactors were the origin of the spent fuel and plutonium to which he referred.

Mr. Goodlad: the information is as follows:

Civil Reactors:
Berkeley
Bradwell
Dungeness A
Hinkley Point A
Hunterston A
Latina
Oldbury
Sizewell A
Tokai Mura
Trawsfynydd
Wylfa

Military Reactors:
Calder Hall
Chapelcross

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Budget

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the United Kingdom's overseas aid budget for the last five years to each recipient country in terms of per capita in each such country.

Mr. Raison: This information is contained in the 1981 to 1985 editions of "British Aid Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The relevant tables are numbered 15 in the 1981 and 1982 editions and 26 in the 1983, 1984 and 1985 editions.

Relief Agencies

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the Government's contribution to relief agencies in *(a)* Honduras, *(b)* Nicaragua, *(c)* El Salvador and *(d)* Guatemala, both in terms of gifts in kind and funding of programmes; which organisations received such aid, giving amounts in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The British Government's response to appeals for assistance to Central America from international relief organisations for the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 (to date) was:

Financial year	Organisation	Amount (£)	Principal beneficiary
1983-84	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	200,000	El Salvador
1983-84	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	100,000	El Salvador Nicaragua
1983-84	UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	100,000	Central America
1983-84	UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	100,000	Nicaragua El Salvador Guatemala
1983-84	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)	100,000	El Salvador
1984-85	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	100,000	El Salvador Nicaragua
1984-85	UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	65,000	Honduras
1984-85	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)	200,000	El Salvador
1984-85	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)	100,000	Nicaragua
1985-86	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	200,000	El Salvador Nicaragua
1985-86	UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	165,000	Honduras Nicaragua

£100,000 was provided in 1985-86 for Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico.

Britain also supported small development projects co-financed with British voluntary agencies as follows:

Financial year	Agency	Amount (£)	Number of projects	Country
1983-84	Help the Aged	4,065	1	El Salvador
1983-84	Oxfam	6,814	2	Nicaragua
1983-84	Christian Aid	13,334	1	Nicaragua
1983-84	CAFOD	4,106	2	Nicaragua
1984-85	Oxfam	5,197	2	Honduras
1984-85	Christian Aid	12,675	2	Honduras
1984-85	Oxfam	3,584	2	Nicaragua
1984-85	CAFOD	13,893	3	Nicaragua
1985-86	Oxfam	19,341	7	Honduras
1985-86	Christian Aid	4,000	1	Honduras
1985-86	Oxfam	11,781	2	Nicaragua
1985-86	Christian Aid	12,710	2	Nicaragua
1985-86	CAFOD	49,798	5	Nicaragua

International Planned Parenthood Federation

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what purpose funds paid by his Department to the International Planned Parenthood Federation are intended.

Mr. Raison IPPF provides family planning information and services in poor countries. ODA's grant is a contribution to the federation's work programme.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied that none of the funds made available through his Department to the International Planned Parenthood Federation are used to finance programmes involving elements of compulsory abortion and sterilisation and that none of the funds are used to substitute staff and resources which are used in such programmes.

Mr. Raison: The International Planned Parenthood Federation provides support for family planning associations, which are bound by the federation's overall policies. These clearly state that abortion is not a method of family planning and that individuals should not be coerced into practising family planning. I know of no evidence that any family planning association runs a compulsory abortion or sterilisation programme. The question of substitute staff and resources does not therefore arise.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the International Planned Parenthood Federation concerning compulsory sterilisation programmes in El Salvador.

Mr. Raison: I saw the federation's secretary general and other officials in February. The federation's programme in El Salvador was one of the issues raised, and I was assured that it had no element of coercion.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will cease the funding of the International Planned Parenthood Federation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The Government intend to continue their support for the International Planned Parenthood Federation. They remain convinced that population issues are an important aspect of economic and social development, and that the fund has a significant role to play.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Head Teachers (Secondary Schools)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if financial assistance would be granted to head teachers of secondary schools for additional responsibilities resulting from his proposed system of teacher appraisal; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The offer tabled in the Burnham committee on 12 September and constructed on the Government's conditional willingness to see an extra £1,250 million spent on teachers' pay would have provided for the introduction of systematic arrangements for appraisal of performance and would have given head teachers substantial pay increases of about 18 per cent. The unions rejected this offer after just 20 minutes' consideration.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the University Grants Committee; and what subjects were discussed.

Sir Keith Joseph: I last met the University Grants Committee on 1 November 1984 when a number of issues were discussed, including the committee's advice,

published in September 1984, on "A Strategy for Higher Education into the 1990s". Since that date I have had several meetings with the chairman of the University Grants Committee.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. Existing staff in personnel units have been designated as equal opportunity officers on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. Equal opportunity matters are not their sole responsibility.

Primary and Secondary Schools

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a table showing for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in England and Wales expenditure per pupil in constant price terms for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will publish a table setting out expenditure per pupil for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in Hertfordshire in constant price terms for each year since 1979;

(3) if he will publish a table setting out expenditure per pupil in constant price terms for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in Buckinghamshire in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The net institutional expenditure per pupil in primary and in secondary schools in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and in England as a whole in each year since 1979 is set out in the table:

Net Institutional Expenditure per pupil

(1985-86 Real Terms)*

	Primary			Secondary		
Financial year	*Hertfordshire LEA* £	*Buckingham-shire LEA* £	*England‡* £	*Hertfordshire LEA* £	*Buckingham-shire LEA* £	*England‡* £
1979-80	705	660	690	1,045	1,010	980
1980-81	745	700	740	1,095	1,050	1,040
1981-82	760	715	760	1,095	1,070	1,065
1982-83	760	730	780	1,080	1,105	1,085
1983-84†	765	730	800	1,120	1,110	1,115

* Real terms are the cash expenditure for each year repriced using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.
† 1983-84 is the latest year for which actual figures are available.
‡ Since 1979-80 responsibility for primary and secondary education in Wales has rested with the Secretary of State for Wales.

Vocational Education

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has issued any guidance to professional bodies in order to help them improve their contributions to vocational education.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has not issued any formal guidance, and would not expect to do so unless the final report of the review of vocational qualifications (expected in April 1986) indicates that such guidance might be desirable. However, my right hon. Friend does on occasion address gatherings organised by professional bodies, at which he may raise issues relating to their contribution to vocational education. In particular, he raised several such issues in his Rivers lecture on 14 November last, a copy of which I am sending to the hon. Member. In addition, officials of the Department and Her Majesty's inspectors have regular contact with the major professional bodies concerned with vocational education, in the course of which they may give guidance on my right hon. Friend's views and policies.

Remuneration of Teachers Act

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he is currently giving to seeking the repeal of the Remuneration of Teachers Act; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The local authority association expressed to me last March their dissatisfaction with the present pay machinery. I have made it clear that I am prepared to consider the case for change but that before coming to a firm view on the matter I would want to be satisfied that any new arrangements would offer the prospect of being a real improvement on the existing ones. I still await the detailed submission of such a case by the local authorities.

Pupil Achievement (In-school Factors)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals are currently being considered by his Department to initiate research intended to throw further light on in-school factors that affect the performance and achievement of pupils.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received a number of proposals in this area, in particular as a result of his statement of 14 November 1984, at columns 696-97, in which he expressed his willingness to consider such proposals in detail.

Handicapped Children

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to

assess the extent to which the provisions of the Education Act 1981 relating to special educational needs for handicapped children have been complied with.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is already monitoring implementation of the provisions of the Education Act 1981 through routine statistical returns, reports from Her Majesty's inspectors, contacts between officers of the Department and local education authorities and voluntary bodies and by means of a major research project based at the University of London Institute of Education. The report on this project is due to be presented in September 1986.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department spent £18,544 on press advertising and nothing on television advertising in 1984-85. Budgeted expenditure to date in 1985-86 is £26,049 on press advertising and nothing on television advertising.

Special Education Needs

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *13*, whether the figures referred to are derived from form 7; whether this form distinguishes between children already in receipt of a statement and those for whom a statement could be considered appropriate by the school; and whether he will place a copy of the relevant form from which the figures are compiled in the Library.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs in mainstream and special schools given in the answer of 13 June at columns *514-18*, were derived from form 7 and form 7M, respectively, for January 1984.

Before 1984 pupils were not classified as having special education needs but were ascertained as handicapped under the provisions of the Education Act 1944. The returns for January 1984 fell during the period when transitional arrangements under the 1981 Act applied, because authorities were not legally required to have completed their issue of statements until 31 March 1984. Accordingly, form 7 in January 1984 required schools to include in their returns, pupils already in receipt of statements and those who were previously ascertained as handicapped but had not yet received statements. These two categories of pupils were not distinguished in the return: to do so would have increased the complexity of the form to an unacceptable degree.

The form 7M returns for special schools (other than hospital schools) for both 1984 and 1985 did not ask schools to distinguish pupils with statements from others. All pupils in these schools are assumed to have statements. Copies of the relevant forms and notes for guidance have been placed in the Library.

Engineering and Technology Programme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures to illustrate the equipment costs of the engineering and technology programme for 1985-86 and 1986-87 broken down between the university and public sectors, respectively.

Mr. Chris Patten: The current estimate of institutional expenditure on equipment for phases 1 and 2 of the engineering and technology programme in 1985-86 and 1986-87 is as follows:

Financial Year	*Universities*	*£m Public Sector*
1985-86	*3.95	—
1986-87	2.74	1.93

* Including £0.43m for the Open University

Grant for 1986-87 is subject to parliamentary approval. Allocations under phase 2 of the programme are provisional pending the receipt of information from institutions concerning additional industrial support made available to them.

The above figures do not include provision made in 1985-86 for equipment expenditure in later years of the programme.

Further Education

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the sum of money available for capital spending on advanced further education, other than for the advanced further education major building programme, in 1986-87.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has not yet decided the allocation of the total available for capital expenditure on advanced further education in 1986-87 between major building and other items.

Architectural Schools

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from individuals and organisations regarding the future of the architectural schools in higher education establishments in the regions; what decisions have been made on any closures which may result; and what criteria will govern such a decision.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have received some 350 representations from hon. Members, organisations and individuals regarding the future of the schools of architecture. As yet, no advice has been submitted by the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education (NAB). Consideration of provision in the Northern Ireland region is a matter for the University Grants Committee (UGC). No decisions have been taken.

I will consider the NAB's advice against the criteria determined by the transbinary architecture group and the recommendations made by the architecture intakes working party. I will, of course, give full consideration to the views expressed in the representations against the possible closure of individual schools.

THE ARTS

English National Opera

Mr. Favell asked the Minister for the Arts what assistance he is giving to the English National Opera to cover the deficit incurred in its 1984 tour of the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The English National Opera Company's tour of the USA in 1984 was an artistic success and increased American interest in British arts. However, it incurred a financial loss of some £750,000 because promises of local support did not materialise.

Like my predecessor, I have been impressed by the company's efforts to eliminate its tour deficit during the last year. I am happy to say that it has now raised over £421,000 towards this, and in recognition of its fund-raising effort and of the special circumstances the Government are making an exceptinal contribution to the company of £200,000 in the current financial year towards the balance. This contribution is being found from within the existing 1985-86 Supply Estimates provision for Class V, Vote 10, subhead B4 (research, surveys and other assistance). With these sums, the company should be able to eliminate the remaining deficit at an early stage.

PRIME MINISTER

Soviet Union (Jews)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Prime Minister whether the President of the United States of America was able to report progress over the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union when he briefed her in Brussels following his summit with Mr. Gorbachev.

The Prime Minister: No progress in this area has been reported as a result of the Geneva summit. President Reagan raised the issue with Mr. Gorbachev and started a dialogue on Soviet Jewry and other human rights issues which will be continued at subsequent United States/Soviet meetings. There is no doubt about the importance the United States Administration attach to progress on human rights. I am sure, however, that the approach which the President has adopted is the right way to generate the mutual trust without which little progress can be made on matters of such sensitivity to both sides.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Golding asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to develop the current job release scheme so that voluntary early retirement could commence at 60 years for men and 58 for women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Measures such as the job release scheme are kept under review, but we have no plans at present to change its current scope.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what has been the effect on employment of the changes in national insurance contributions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) on 25 April 1985 at column *980*.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A total of £6,670 was spent by the Department on advertising in 1984-85. This was for announcements of a routine nature in local newspapers.

The amount spent to date in 1985-86 is £18,102.

Training Allowance

Mr. Welsh asked the Paymaster General what was the training allowance for individuals on training opportunities schemes at skillcentres in November 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The weekly personal allowance paid by the Manpower Services Commission for full-time trainees aged 19 and over, including skillcentre trainees, on the training opportunities scheme and its main successor the job training scheme for each of these years is shown in the table. In addition to the personal allowance, trainees receive a credit of national insurance contributions, a midday meal allowance (or free meal) and assistance towards travel costs over and above the first £4 per week. Further allowances for an adult dependant and a contribution towards the cost of living away from home may be available depending on individual circumstances.

Weekly personal allowance

November	£
1982	36·70
1983	38·00
1984	38·00
1985	38·00

Business Closures

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how many business closures have been reported to him since May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the five-year period between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1982 there have been 690,000 business closures and 830,000 business openings in the United Kingdom. These figures are derived from registrations and deregistrations for VAT.

Detailed figures were published in the 23 August 1985 edition of *British Business*, a copy of which is in the Library. As the article explains, the estimates are subject to revision as more information is received.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General if he will list all the changes which have occurred in the method of compiling employment, unemployment and vacancy statistics since 1979; and if he will estimate the quantitative change in those statistics which has occurred as a result.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. 77]: Employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces are estimated separately, and together comprise the employed labour force. Since 1979 there have been changes in the methodology for estimating the first two elements of the employed labour force. In 1979 the estimates for employees in employment were based on the census of employment, updated by applying proportionate changes in the numbers of employees as estimated from sample surveys of employers. Estimates for the self-employed were obtained from the census of population, updated to 1975 by applying proportionate changes in self-employment from counts of national insurance cards; self-employment was assumed unchanged since 1975.

The first change in methodology since 1979 was the use of labour force survey (LFS) results to produce new estimates of self-employment for 1975 to 1979. These were published in the Janurary 1982 *Employment Gazette*. The LFS data were used in place of the discontinued information from the national insurance card count.

When provisional results from the 1981 census of employment became available at the end of 1982, they showed that the application of changes estimated from sample survey data to the previous, 1978, census figure was producing substantial underestimates of the number of employees in employment. The methodology was reviewed and a supplementary set of estimates, which included an undercounting allownace based on the average rate of shortfall which had developed between 1978 and 1981, was introduced. At the same time the conventional assumption that the level of self-employment had remained constant since the date of the latest LFS data were reviewed. As there were reasons for expecting some continuation of the upward movement in self-employment, a supplementary series which assumed a continuation of the rate of growth observed between the latest two surveys, was introduced. The reasons for, and full details of, these changes in methodology were set out in the June 1983 *Employment Gazette*.

Data from the 1983 labour force survey confirmed that the supplementary figures provided more accurate estimates than the basic series. The estimates for employees in employment were revised, using LFS data for 1981 and 1983 to assess the current extent of underestimation from the sample survey of employers. The self-employment series was updated at the same time. As the Department could now produce estimates in industrial and regional detail incorporating the adjustment for underestimation, estimates not incorporating the adjustment were no longer published and the term "supplementary" was no longer used. An article explaining the basis of the new estimates was published in the July 1984 *Employment Gazette*.

When the estimates of both employees in employment and the self-employed were updated to take account of results from the 1984 LFS and revised data from the 1983 LFS the figures for self-employment showed exceptional growth between 1983 and 1984 and the Department's statisticians considered it inappropriate to assume that this rate had continued. The estimates of self-employment for dates after June 1984, which will be reviewed when the 1985 LFS data become available next year, now incorporate the assumption that average rate of increase between 1981 and 1984 is continuing. An article describing these estimates was published in the March 1985 *Employment Gazette*.

The estimates of the numbers in the employed labour force following each of these changes in methodology are compared with those published immediately prior to the change in the following table. Some of the differences shown in that table result from the changes in the data available as well as methodological changes.

Employed labour force (at June) in Great Britain

Seasonally adjusted *Thousand*

Employment Gazette issue	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
December 1981	24,522	24,131	22,862	—	—	—
January 1982	24,492	24,101	22,832	—	—	—
May 1983	24,730	24,600	23,597	22,988	—	—
June 1983	24,730	24,600	23,597	23,208	—	—
(Supplementary series)						
June 1984	24,775	24,709	23,751	23,398	23,167	—
July 1984	24,775	24,709	23,751	23,425	23,238	—
January 1985	24,775	24,709	23,752	23,425	23,238	23,481
February 1985	24,775	24,709	23,752	23,333	23,040	23,429

Monthly unemployment count

The unemployment count is based on administrative records and is inevitably subject to occasional changes in coverage as a result of changes in the way benefits are paid or in "signing on" arrangements. The following five such changes since 1979 have had a discernible effect on the figures for adult unemployment and have been taken into account in a consistent series of seasonally adjusted estimates according to the coverage of the current count of benefit claimants. This series was introduced in the July 1985 *Employment Gazette*.

(1) In October 1979, fortnightly attendance at unemployment benefit offices was introduced and the estimated effect was to add about 20,000, both to the unemployment count used at the time, based on registrations at jobcentres, and the claimant figures introduced later.

(2) In November 1981 the higher long-term rate of supplementary benefit was introduced for men over 60 who had been on supplementary benefit for over one year. Over the following 12-month period, this removed an estimated 37,000 men, again from both the registrant and claimant series.

(3) In October 1982 registration at jobcentres became voluntary, saving administrative costs and eliminating the need for unemployed people to attend both a jobcentre and

an unemployment benefit office in order to get their benefits. The previous count of registrants at jobcentres became incomplete and it was necessary to move to counting claimants at unemployment benefit offices. This reduced the count by 190,000 on average as a result of three factors: (i) computerisation of count and improved accuracy with more up-to-date record keeping of those becoming and ceasing to be unemployed (estimated effect 78,000); (ii) exclusion of registrants not claiming benefits (−135,000); (iii) inclusion of severely disabled (+23,000). Details of the change were published in the September and December 1982 issues of *Employment Gazette* and figures on the new claimant basis back to 1971 were then published.

(4) The 1983 Budget provisions enabled 162,000 men, mainly aged 60 and over, to receive national insurance credits or the higher long-term rate of supplementary benefit without attending an unemployment benefit office. The effect accumulated between April and August 1983.

(5) In July 1985, a reconciliation between the Department of Health and Social Security's records and the Department of Economic Development's computer records of claimants showed discrepancies in the figures for Northern Ireland. The corrective action resulted in the unadjusted figures for July and August 1985 being 5,700 and 5,150 lower respectively than would otherwise have been the case.

In addition, the change in school leaving regulations in November 1980 affected the total claimant series later introduced, but not the seasonally adjusted series of adult claimants nor the registrant series in use at the time.

Young people leaving school are now assumed to be in full-time education until the beginning of the following school term and not entitled to benefit. From 1982 a separate count of non-claimant school leavers registered at careers offices has been conducted in June, July and August when the numbers are significant.

There have also been a few other minor changes and some temporary distortions, for example as a result of industrial action in the local offices. It was also thought that the introduction of taxation of unemployment benefits in July 1982 may have had some effect on the unemployment figures but none was evident. Similarly, the introduction of payment of unemployment benefit wholly in arrears from July this year has so far had no discernible effect.

Vacancies at jobcentres

Since 1979 there has been one change in the way statistics of vacancies at jobcentres are compiled. From October 1985 the published vacancy series was brought into line with the data the Manpower Services Commission use for operational purposes. The main change in coverage was the inclusion of "self-employed" vacancies. These vacancies are not opportunities created by an individual for his or herself—they are open to the general public, and reflect the change towards contracting out work that would previously have been carried out by employees. The new definition excludes vacancies handled by professional and executive recruitment, and separately identifies community programme vacancies which are now excluded from the seasonally adjusted series. The overall effect of these changes was to increase the total unfilled vacancies by about 6,000 and to reduce the seasonally adjusted series by some 15,000. Details of the changes were published in the October 1985 *Employment Gazette*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Monklands, East

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the total amounts offered to firms in the Monklands, East constituency under regional industrial grants for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Brittan: Because information about payments under the old RDG scheme is not computerised, it cannot be provided on a constituency basis. However, information about RSA offers in previous years can be provided on a constituency basis, and the details for RSA in the Monklands, East constituency are as follows:

	Value of offers £'000
1975/76	90
1976/77	396
1977/78	nil
1978/79	20
1979/80	263
1980/81	568
1981/82	230
1982/83	120
1983/84	158
1984/85	299

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the amount of £1,328,000 stated to have been offered to firms in Monklands, East constituency referred to in his letter to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East dated 27 November.

Mr. Brittan: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, publication of the details of assistance to individual firms is limited in accordance with the arrangements announced by the then Secretary of State for Industry on 31 July 1974. But I am able to say that the amount of £1,328,000 referred to breaks down as follows:

	No. of offers	*Value £'000*
RDG II	24	1,048
RSA	3	280

Grants (Paisley)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the money offered to firms in Paisley, North under the assisted areas scheme has been taken up.

Mr. Peter Morrison: So far £161,370 has been paid to companies on offers totalling some £1,687,700 made between 29 November 1984 and 31 October 1985 under regional selective assistance and the new regional development grant scheme in the constituency of Paisley, North. Payments are normally spread over a number of years, and further payments can be expected.

Regional Industrial Policy (Copeland)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will itemise the £252,700 offered under the new regional industrial policy to firms in the constituency of Copeland.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Two offers were made under the transitional arrangements as part of the new regional policy changes introduced on 29 November 1984. I would have difficulty in supplying itemised information to the hon. Member. All offers of grant above £5,000 are published in due course in *British Business*, but it would undermine the commercial confidentiality on which the scheme is based to make this information available in advance of publication.

Nationalised Industries (Public Dividend Capital)

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much public dividend capital has been allocated to each of the nationalised industries for which he is responsible, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Pattie: The information requested is as follows:

	British Shipbuilders £ *million*	*Post Office* £ *million*
1980-81	110	—
1981-82	107	5
1982-83	70	—
1983-84	274·9	—
1984-85	189	—

British Steel does not receive public dividend capital.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

United States Export Controls

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the arrangements relating to United States export controls referred to in the reply of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 332, takes the form of a written agreement; and what degree of detail is involved.

Mr. Howard: The arrangements which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade announced on 23 November 1984 were confirmed in writing in a confidential exchange between the United Kingdom and United States authorities. They are principally procedural, intended to reduce the scope for major disputes through consultation.

ENVIRONMENT

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them.

The posts of equal opportunities officer in my Department are held, ex officio, by the head of the personnel management (central policy) division for central DOE, who is white female, and by the head of staff resources division of the Property Services Agency, who is white male.

Derelict Land

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the amount of derelict industrial land now available for reclamation; and what plans exist to reclaim it.

Sir George Young: The 1982 survey of derelict land showed that there were 45,700 hectares of derelict land in England, of which 34,300 were considered by local authorities to justify reclamation. This year £82 million is available to reclaim derelict land compared with £23·5 million in 1979-80. Priority is given to schemes designed to reclaim urban land for an industrial, commercial or private housing end use.

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to encourage private firms to reclaim derelict industrial land; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Grant is available to private firms to reclaim derelict land. In assisted areas and derelict land clearance areas derelict land grant is paid at the rate of 80 per cent. of the net loss incurred; in other areas it is 50 per cent. Demand from the private sector remains high and the resources made available have more than doubled in the last two years to £5 million in 1985-86.

Urban Development Grants

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on urban development grants in each year since 1982; how much it is proposed to spend in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Up to the end of 1983-84, 44 projects assisted with urban development grant (UDG) had started on site. These projects involved public expenditure estimated at £16 million and private sector investment of £73 million. In 1984-85 a further 56 projects, involving public expenditure of £28 million and private investment of £100 million, started. In 1985-86 so far, 33 projects have started involving public expenditure of £17 million and private investment of £109 million. Thirtysix other projects have been approved for grant but have not yet started; these would involve public expenditure of £16 million and private investment of £57 million. Spend in future years will depend on the quality and number of projects submitted and the extent to which they address the objectives of UDG.

These figures demonstrate that UDG is levering into inner urban areas significant private investment which would not otherwise have taken place there.

Housing Investment Programme (Lambeth)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what housing investment programme allocation he intends to make to Lambeth for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: Housing investment programme allocations for individual authorities for 1986-87 have not yet been decided.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: During the financial year 1984-85, my Department, including the PSA, spent £1,207,000. For the financial year 1985-86, the budget is £995,000. Expenditure to date is £395,000.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, with reference to appendix 1 of the London Docklands Development Corporation's five-year operational plan published in January, whether the projections shown were made within the constraints imposed by the Government's external financing limit; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will state the expenditure at the London Docklands Development Corporation on *(a)* the acquisition of the land and *(b)* on reclamation carried out on the land by 31 March, referred to in the 1984-85 annual report and accounts in the category being reclaimed;

(2) if he will state the expenditure on acquiring and reclaiming the land referred to in the 1984-85 London Docklands Development Corporation annual report and accounts in the categories awaiting development, being developed, in use-released to developers and in use-environment and community.

Sir George Young: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the London Docklands Development Corporation in the second question. LDDC's expenditure on acquiring and reclaiming the land referred to in its 1984-85 annual report is as follows:

	Acquisition £ million	*Reclamation £ million*	*Total £ million*
Awaiting development	12·645	13·688	26·333
Being developed	8·340	8·579	16·919
In use/released to developers	4·248	3·185	7·433
In use/environment and community	3·463	6·051	9·514
Being reclaimed	17·112	11·691	28·803

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) of the total land acquired by the London Docklands Development Corporation since the initial vesting, on how much reclamation had not been completed by 31 March;

(2) of the land which was initially vested in the London Docklands Development Corporation in the orders of 1981, on how much reclamation had not been completed by 31 March.

Mr. Waldegrave: Reclamation of 67 hectares of the 237 hectares of land initially vested in 1981 had not been completed by 31 March 1985. Of the 199 hectares of land acquired by LDDC since initial vesting, reclamation was not complete on 158 hectares by 31 March 1985. The 225 hectares of land in question is the same as the total of 556 acres of land in the categories "awaiting reclamation" and "being reclaimed" in the LDDC's 1984-85 annual report and accounts.

GLC and Metropolitan County Councils (Staff)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the responses received to his Department's proposals in the consultation paper arising from the Local Government Act 1985 regarding early retirement arrangements for staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 November at column *23*.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department intends to review the operation of waste disposal in London after the new arrangements have been in operation for 18 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 10(1) of the Local Government Act 1985 places a continuing duty on my right hon. Friend to ensure that the arrangements for waste disposal are satisfactory.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department intends to lay the statutory order referred to in his Department's recent press release on waste regulation and disposal.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Waste Regulation and Disposal (Authorities) Order 1985 (S.I. 1985/1884) has been laid before Parliament today.

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what use he intends to make of his powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985 to establish single authorities for waste regulation and disposal where they consider that there would be advantage in joint arrangements between boroughs or districts but no satisfactory arrangements were made before 15 November 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *255*]: I said that I would be prepared to consider alternative arrangements for waste disposal operations in the London boroughs of Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark if the two reasons which made it advantageous to have joint arrangements between all four boroughs ceased to apply.

The first reason concerned the arrangements for the existing contract for waste disposal serving Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham. These boroughs and the contractor have now reached agreement on the future of the contract so that joint arrangements are no longer needed.

The second reason was the need to ensure adequate future waste disposal arrangements in the longer term for Bexley, which would not on its own be a sensible unit. The

London borough of Bexley and Kent county council have now reached an agreement whereby Kent will act as agent for Bexley.

Since the advantages to be secured by joint arrangements between Bexley and the other three boroughs have thus been achieved in other ways, it is only necessary to consider the need for joint arrangements between these three boroughs. The agreement made by them on 14 November 1985 for their own waste disposal operations meets this need satisfactorily.

In these circumstances it is no longer necessary to set up a single authority for waste disposal operations for all four boroughs. The Waste Regulation and Disposal (Authorities) Order 1985 (S.I. 1985/1884) which has been laid before the House today, accordingly makes no provision for an authority for these four boroughs. All four boroughs, however, form part of the area of the London Waste Regulation Authority.

GLC (Seaside and Country Homes)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the responses received in support of his Department's proposals for future arrangements for the Greater London council's seaside and country homes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No. It is for those making responses to decide whether or not to make them more widely available.

GLC (Housing Renovation)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the Greater London council's renovation programme to its transferred housing stock will be maintained at its current level after 31 March; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: It will be for the boroughs to decide the level of their renovation programmes to the transferred housing stock.

Liverpool City Council

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what talks he or his officials have had with Philips and Drew concerning Liverpool city council's financial arrangements; what was the substance of the exchanges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 29 November, at column *720*, and on 4 December at column *242*.

Local Authorities (Loan Interest)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the average rate of interest paid by local authorities on loans raised by them in the first half of the current financial year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government do not collect information on the average rate of interest paid by local authorities on loans until after the end of the financial year. Moreover, such information as is then collected does not distinguish between loans according to the period in which they were raised.

Housing and Planning (Legislation Proposals)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a list of all outstanding legislative proposals relating to housing and planning, giving the date and form of announcement of each proposal.

Mr. John Patten: The proposals which have been announced are set out in the table. The Bill will not necessarily include all proposals which have been the subject of consultation. It is always open to the Government to include in a Bill proposals which have not been the subject of consultation.

Legislative proposals relating to housing and planning

Proposal	*Date and form of announcement*
HOUSING PROPOSALS	
1. Disposal of public sector housing for renovation	17 July: consultation letter to interested bodies, anticipated in Written Answer of 19 June
2. The right to buy: service charges	22 October: consultation paper and Written Answer
3. The right to buy: changes in discount provisions	28 November: Written Answer
4. Innovative approaches to management and ownership of local authority housing stock	29 November: consultation letter anticipated in Written Answer of 28 November
PLANNING PROPOSALS	
5. Simplified planning zones	9 May 1984: consultation paper and Written Answer. 13 September 1985: consultation paper on revised proposals
6. Planning control over hazardous substances	30 July 1984: consultation paper and Written Answer
7. Improvements and amendments to the planning system	30 July 1984: consultation paper and Written Answer
8. Development plans	21 December 1984: addendum to consultation paper on improvements and amendments to the planning system
9. The ecclesiastical exemption from listed building controls	30 January 1984: consultation paper and Written Answer

Note: In addition, consultation papers were issued by the Scottish Office on 17 May and 31 July 1984 on simplified planning zones, planning control over hazardous development and improvements and amendments to the planning system.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations which have received the letter from his Department dated 29 November relating to innovative approaches to the management and ownership of local authority housing stock—proposals for legislation; and if he will place copies of the responses in the Library.

Mr. John Patten: The letter of 29 November relating to innovative approaches to the management and ownership of local authority housing stock—proposals for legislation, was sent to the following bodies:

Association of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Greater London Council
London Boroughs Association
Housing Corporation
Institute of Housing
National Consumer Council
National Federation of Building Trade Employers
National Federation of Housing Associations
National Federation of Housing Co-operatives
National Tenants Organisation
New Towns Association
SHAC
SHELTER

I do not propose to put copies of the responses in the Library.

Housing (Debt Charges)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the procedure by which a local authority is or can be relieved by him of debt charges on housing which is demolished.

Mr. John Patten: This procedure applies only to local authorities receiving housing subsidy. If an authority can show, from a full consideration of the alternatives, that demolition is the best course on housing and financial grounds, it can apply to the regional office of my Department for a determination that subsidy should continue to be paid on the outstanding loan debt on the demolished housing and that subsidy should be paid on the costs of demolition. Such an application should normally be made before the decision to demolish is taken. Among the alternatives all local authorities are expected to consider is disposal of the housing or of the cleared site to the private sector. In some cases this will realise enough money to pay off the whole of the loan debt.

Widdicombe Inquiry

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to submit evidence to the Widdicombe inquiry on the roles of officers and members in local government.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have today placed in the Library copies of a joint submission made by my Department, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office on the respective roles of elected members and officers in local government.

SCOTLAND

Selective Financial Assistance

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts offered under the various selective financial assistance schemes at 1984 prices to companies in Scotland for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Younger: The total amounts of selective financial assistance at 1984 prices offered to companies in Scotland for each of the past 10 financial years are shown in the table below:

	Value of offers (£ million)
1975-76	70·3
1976-77	67·8
1977-78	47·9
1978-79	75·8
1979-80	64·9
1980-81	50·4
1981-82	50·7
1982-83	63·8
1983-84	67·0
1984-85	81·7

Notes (1) The figures include assistance under Section 7 and Section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and its predecessors.
(2) Current price values were converted to 1984 prices using a gross domestic product market prices deflator.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts offered, at 1984 prices, of selective financial assistance to firms in the Rutherglen constituency for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Younger: The total amounts of regional selective assistance at 1984 prices offered to firms in the Rutherglen constituency for each of the past 10 financial years are shown in the table below.

	Value of Offers (£ thousand)
1975-76	19
1976-77	—
1977-78	23
1978-79	91
1979-80	21
1980-81	—
1981-82	2,772
1982-83	583
1983-84	78
1984-85	

Notes: (1) The figures include assistance under Secion 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and its predecessors. Figures for Section 8 assistance on a constituency basis are not available.
(2) Current price values were converted to 1984 prices using a gross domestic product market prices deflator.
(3) Figures for the years 1976-77, 1980-81 and 1984-85 cannot be released as to do so would disclose confidential information relating to individual establishments.

Government Funding

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all the voluntary bodies in Scotland which have received direct Government funding over the past five years and the total amount of such funding.

Mr. Younger: The total amount of the grants paid by the Scottish Office to voluntary bodies in each of the last four years is as follows:

	£
1981-82	104,436,456
1982-83	123,353,973
1983-84	131,359,441
1984-85	145,567,067

Comparable information is not readily available for 1980-81. Lists of the bodies in receipt of grant are voluminous so I am sending them to the hon. Member and placing copies in the Library.

Liquidators

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small firms in Scotland have gone into liquidation since May 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. It is not possible to separately identify those company liquidations involving small firms.

Between 1 April 1979 and 31 October 1985 there were 3,001 company liquidations in Scotland. This figure includes both compulsory liquidations and also creditors' voluntary liquidations.

Stobhill Hospital

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of all categories of staff currently employed at Stobhill hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: In 1984-85 the equivalent of 2,138 whole-time staff were employed at Stobhill hospital. Details in respect of the current year are not available centrally.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many gynaecological patients were admitted to Stobhill hospital maternity unit from Kilsyth in each year for the past five years.

Mr. John MacKay: Gynaecological patients are not generally admitted to maternity units. On the basis of the latest available information, however, the total number of patients from Kilsyth who were discharged from the Stobhill maternity unit in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1980	181
1981	188
1982	172
1983	176
1984	142

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many gynaecological patients were admitted to Stobhill hospital maternity unit from Cumbernauld in each year for the past five years.

Mr. John MacKay: Gynaecological patients are not generally admitted to maternity units. On the basis of the latest available information, however, the number of patients from Cumbernauld who were discharged from the Stobhill maternity unit in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1980	461
1981	620
1982	532
1983	518
1984	510

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which hospitals will provide maternity services for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth in the event of the maternity unit at Stobhill hospital closing.

Mr. John MacKay: This would be for the Greater Glasgow health board to consider, in consultation as appropriate with the Lanarkshire health board, and to explain in any submission to my right hon. Friend for approval to close the unit.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Younger: The total spent by the Scottish Office on advertising in national and local newspapers and other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85 amounted to £516,505. The amount spent on television advertising during the same period was £187,950.

The amount budgeted for advertising in newspapers and printed journals in 1985-86 is £496,800 of which £324,662 has been spent to date. The budget for television advertising is £140,000 of which £97,919 has been spent.

Leukaemia

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will conduct an inquiry into the incidence of leukaemia deaths in the Rosyth dockyard area.

Mr. John MacKay: I am considering how best the necessarily complex statistical and epidemiological analysis of claims made about the incidence of leukaemia near Rosyth dockyard and other defence establishments in Scotland can be undertaken.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of deaths caused by leukaemia in the Dunfermline district, the Fife region and Scotland for each year since 1970.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of deaths in which the underlying cause of death was recorded as leukaemia are given in the table. Figures for Dunfermline district are not readily available on a comparable basis prior to 1974. The change in international classification (ICD) codes noted below the table relates entirely to the revision of the ICD introduced in 1979 and does not affect the comparability of the figures.

Deaths with leukaemia as underlying cause, 1970-1984*

Year	*Dunfermline district*	*Fife region*	*Scotland*
1970	NA	19	241
1971	NA	20	306
1972	NA	25	303
1973	NA	20	266
1974	2	15	278
1975	12	19	304
1976	5	23	324
1977	7	18	313
1978	5	18	321
1979	10	20	304
1980	9	26	312
1981	8	27	285
1982	11	21	302
1983	1	15	307
1984	7	21	306

* ICD codes 204-207, 1970-1978, 204-208, 1979-1984
NA = not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers unemployed in each postal code district.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The old postcode sector system of providing unemployment statistics for small areas was discontinued in September 1985. Although such information is still held for specialist use, as described in the *Employment Gazette* of July 1985, it could be made available in this instance only at disproportionate cost.

Information on the number of unemployed claimants by individual electoral ward can be obtained from the House of Commons Library.

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing health service expenditure in Scotland for each year since 1979 in real terms, adjusted for *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* the medical price index.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Glyphosate (Aerial Spraying)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the extent, geographical location and ownership of sites in Scotland on which there has been aerial application of the herbicide glyphosate (Nphosphonomethyl glycine) during 1985 and the litre per hectare concentration applied on each occasion.

Mr. John MacKay: Only one application for limited clearance under the pesticides safety precaution scheme for aerial spraying wih glyphosate has been granted in Scotland during 1985. It was in respect of a small area of forest and in the event the approved spraying has not been undertaken.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Eggar: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. Existing staff in personnel departments have been designated as equal opportunities officers on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of their sex or ethnic origin. Equal opportunities matters are not their sole responsibility.

EC (Technology and the Environment)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposals for an amendment to the treaty of Rome in relation to the European Economic Community's role in technology and the environment.

Mr. Rifkind: We agreed at the European Council on the text of new articles on technology and the environment to be added to the treaty of Rome. These allow for framework programmes for action on technology and their financing and all environmental programmes to remain subject to unanimity.

South West Africa People's Organisation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has asked the South West Africa People's Organisation to make a declaration renouncing the use of violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The South West Africa People's Organisation is well aware that we condemn all acts of violence in Namibia, whether committeed by it, the South African security forces, or by others. My right hon. and learned Friend made our position on this absolutely clear when he met Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of SWAPO, earlier this year.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis he decided to hold meetings in London with Sam Nujoma, President of the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mr. Rifkind: We are willing to have contact with representatives of all the political parties involved in the Namibia negotiations.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government recognise the South West Africa People's Organisation as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people at the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We do not accept the United Nations General Assembly's recognition of the South West Africa People's Organisation as the "sole authentic" representative of the Namibian people; that can only be demonstrated in free and fair elections in Namibia under the United Nations plan.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government will support moves by the Namibian transitional Government to represent the views of Namibians in the United Nations on the same basis as the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mr. Rifkind: We do not recognise the so-called "Transitional Government of National Unity" in Namibia. We consider that only free and fair elections, as provided for in the United Nations plan, will determine who has the right to represent the views of Namibians.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Eggar: In the financial year 1984-85 the foreign and Commonwealth Office spent £245,374 on advertising. In 1985-86 its estimated expenditure on advertising is £261,000 and its actual expenditure to date is £214,715.

British Nationals (Libya)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps have been taken to seek to secure the release of Robert Maxwell and Michael King, two British citizens held in Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Maxwell was convicted and sentenced by a revolutionary court and Mr. King by a civil court. Both men are currently serving prison sentences. The legal process has not been exhausted in either case and it would therefore be improper for us to intervene.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to complete their programme for testing warheads for Trident before resuming negotiations with the United States and the Soviet Union on a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: It would be premature to resume negotiations on a comprehensive test ban while the outstanding problems of verification remain unresolved.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to Mr. Gorbachev's invitation of 27 November for the United Kingdom to join the Soviet Union in a moratorium on nuclear testing, as a prelude to a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: We are aware that when addressing the USSR Supreme Soviet on 27 November Mr. Gorbachev expressed the hope that the USA and other nuclear powers would observe a moratorium on nuclear testing. This did not amount to an invitation. We remain committed to seeking balanced, effective and verifiable measures of disarmament. Our experience since the 1950s suggests that moratoria on nuclear testing do not meet those criteria.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further consideration he has given to the introduction of a 200-mile fishing limit around the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are continuing to support the FAO's efforts directed towards the establishment of a multilaterally-based fisheries conservation and management regime in the south-west Atlantic. The Food and Agricultural Organisation announced on 21 November its intention to carry out a study of fish stocks in the area and the impact of fishing. This is an encouraging first step, which we hope will lead to agreement on a conservation and management regime.

DEFENCE

Johannesburg Airport

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances British military personnel used Johannesburg airport whilst on official duties; and what were the numbers involved in 1984 and in the current year.

Mr. Stanley: The numbers of British military personnel who used Johannesburg airport on official duties during 1984 and 1985 are given in the tables. Apart from United Kingdom service attaches and their staffs taking up and leaving their posts in Pretoria, all personnel were in transit to neighbouring African states where they were engaged in training activities.

	In	*Out*
1984		
Service attaches and support staff	2	2
Training activities	7	7
1985		
Service attaches and support staff	1	5
Training activities	28	23

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to stipulate in the contracts awarded to companies to manage the royal dockyards after April 1987 that no work may be carried out in the dockyards for the Argentinian navy, the South African navy or the Chilean navy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not planned to place on contractors a blanket restriction on carrying out work in the dockyards for other navies. However, it is intended that, under the contracts, the prior approval of the Ministry of Defence would be required before the contractors could agree to undertake any such work in the dockyards. Decisions would be taken in the light of Government policy towards particular countries at the time.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of foreign shareholdings will be permitted in the company or companies which are awarded the contracts for commercial management of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As I indicated in the House of 2 December, at columns 98-99, the precise proportion of foreign shareholdings to be permitted in the companies awarded the contracts for the commercial management of the dockyards has yet to be determined.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the proportion of foreign shareholdings held in the companies which have expressed interest in securing the contracts for commercial management of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: When companies are invited to tender for the contracts to manage the dockyards from 1 April 1987 they will be asked formally to state the proportion of their shares which is foreign-owned. Such information relating to the companies which have expressed an interest in the scheme to introduce

commercial management and to which I referred in the House on 2 December, at column 35, is available in the records of registered companies at Companies House.

Plutonium

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans Her Majesty's Government have to replace the military plutonium production reactors at British Nuclear Fuels Limited, Calderhall and Chapel Cross when they reach the end of their safe operating lives.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There is no early requirement to replace the military reactors at British Nucelar Fuels plc Calder Hall and Chapel Cross and the Government have no current plans to do so.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many scientific staff are currently engaged in research to ensure that a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty could be properly verified.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It would not be in the public interest to reveal details of the manpower effort engaged on research into verification of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about British participation in the United States strategic defence initiative research programme.

Mr. Heseltine: In his letter of 26 March 1985 to NATO (and certain other) Defence Ministers, the United States Defence Secretary, Mr. Weinberger, said that the United States, consistent with her existing international obligations including the ABM treaty, wished to proceed with co-operative research with her allies in areas of technology that could contribute to the strategic defence initiative (SDI) research programme.

There have since been detailed discussions between the British and American Governments on areas of research in which it would be in our joint interest to co-operate, and on the arrangements to facilitate such co-operation. Agreement has been reached on an information exchange programme and on areas where United Kingdom companies and institutions have expertise which might form part of United States-funded SDI research.

A memorandum of understanding has been agreed which sets out the mechanisms for British participation in SDI research and which will be signed later this morning by the United States Defence Secretary and myself on behalf of our Governments.

To act as a focal point for British participation and to liaise with the United States strategic defence initiative office, an SDI participation office is being established within the Ministry of Defence immediately. This office will work in the closest concert with British companies and institutions interested in participating in SDI research.

TRANSPORT

London Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *565*, concerning the docklands light railway, he will state the conditions he proposes to impose on any private owner or operator in respect of fare levels and structure, ticketing arrangements and their compatibility with comparable arrangements of London Regional Transport and British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: These matters are now under consideration. It would not be appropriate to deal with them by imposing conditions on the new owner but they might be the subject of an agreement between the owner and London Regional Transport.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Ridley: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. The post of equal opportunity officer in my Department is held, ex officio, by the head of the personnel management (central policy) division.

Motorways (Traffic Delays)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he keeps concerning major traffic delays, that is, over 30 minutes delay, on the motorway system; and in what form it is published or available on request.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department does not collect such information on a routine basis.

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the incidence of traffic jams on the M1 near the junction with the A405.

Mrs. Chalker: Some congestion is occurring on the southbound carriageway of the M1 at juncton 6 (with A405) because of the difficulty of joining the A405 westbound, which is heavily loaded. The A405, with the A6, is serving as link between sections of the M25 already open. Traffic signals have been installed on the A405, which have eased the situation, but the volume of traffic is such that especially at peak periods there are tailbacks on to the motorway. Preparatory work is in hand to erect variable-message signs on the M1 early in the new year to warn of delays ahead. When the M25 is completed traffic wishing to join it will have direct access from the M1 at junction 6A. After a period of monitoring we shall consider whether more permanent alterations are necessary at junction 6.

Coach Drivers

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce a new testing system for coach drivers using motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I am reviewing the content and duration of the public service vehicle test, but at present I have no plans to introduce an element of motorway driving into the test for coach drivers. The priority must be to ensure that

coaches comply with the speed limit on motorways and, as I informed the House on 15 November, we are proceeding with plans to introduce speed governors accordingly.

CAA (Efficiency Audits)

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport what efficiency audits have been undertaken in recent years of the flight crew licensing division of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Although the CAA keeps the operations of its flight crew licensing directorate under regular review, there have not recently been any formal efficiency audits. At my Department's request, however, the authority has recently conducted a special review of the directorate's operations to see if it can reduce costs and so reduce prospective increases in charges. The results of the review have been made available to representative organisations, which have been invited to put forward their own proposals for cutting costs.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions his Department has had discussions with the consortium which proposes to develop Canary wharf; and what has been the subject of those discussions.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has met the consortium on five occasions to discuss the docklands light railway. Following these meetings, I was able to announce on 27 November, at column *565*, that an understanding had been reached on means of funding the extension of the railway to the Bank, and on proposals for private ownership and operation of the railway as a whole.

Remedial Engineering Works

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of remedial engineering works at sites following accident investigations in the last 12 months for which figures are available in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the Greater Manchester area; and how many sites were involved, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: This information is not collected centrally. Accident investigation and remedial works in Greater Manchester are the statutory responsibility of Greater Manchester county council as local highway authority.

Spray Suppressors

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has of spray suppressors falling from heavy goods vehicles on main roads.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no evidence that properly fitted and maintained spray suppressors are prone to fall off heavy goods vehicles.

International Flights (Heathrow and Gatwick)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the proportion of international flights from *(a)* Heathrow and *(b)* Gatwick, which comprises departures for (i) Paris, (ii) Amsterdam, (iii) Brussels and (iv) other continental destinations within 400 miles of London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The following table shows, for the 12-month period from 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985, the total number and percentage of all international flights from Heathrow and Gatwick (excluding those to the Irish Republic) to the following destinations:

	(a) from Heathrow		*(b) from Gatwick*	
	Number of flights	*Percentage*	*Number of flights*	*Percentage*
i) to Paris	5,358	5·9	2,344	4·3
ii) to Amsterdam	3,979	4·4	1,516	2·8
iii) to Brussels	4,045	4·4	1,423	2·6
iv) to other continental destinations within 400 miles of London (including Frankfurt which is exactly 400 miles distant)	11,999	13·2	3,786	7·0
Total number of international flights	90,944		54,278	

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Ridley: During 1984-85, my Department spent £475,788 on press advertising and £1,726,810 on television advertising. For 1985-86, the amount spent up to 4 December 1985 was £134,289 on press advertising. There was no expenditure on television.

Transport Grant (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Welsh asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from South Yorkshire passenger transport executive about the effect of the 1986-87 transport grant on fares, jobs, services and concessionary fares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am considering an application from the South Yorkshire passenger transport authority for redetermination of its expenditure level for 1986-87.

Motorway Maintenance Workers (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Welsh asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been made for employees on motorway maintenance work to be transferred from South Yorkshire metropolitan council to the consultants who are going to be responsible for this function after April 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: There are no staff transfer arrangements; but the consultants, and the contractors who will be working with the consultants, are free to recruit staff presently with the county council if they wish. I shall write to the hon. Member with further details.

M1-A1 (Kirkhamgate-Dishforth Link)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to make a statement regarding the proposed Kirkhamgate-Dishforth M1-A1 link.

Mrs. Chalker: I have announced the decision today and a copy of the decision letter is available in the Library.

Used Tyre Dealers

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to licence used car tyre dealers and to monitor dealers who are selling tyres with defects; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: No. I do not believe the scale of the problem is such that we should consider seriously a statutory licensing system for dealers in used tyres. Trading standards officers are already empowered to examine tyres offered for sale, and I have recently advised motorists to check tyres for obvious defects before purchase.

Bus Services (Unlicensed Persons)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any complaints have been received by the Traffic Commissioner for the metropolitan area regarding unlicensed persons driving tendered bus services for London Regional Transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the metropolitan traffic commissioners have no record of any complaints relating to the drivers of bus services tendered by London Regional Transport.

Airport Company (Manchester)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proposals submitted to him by the Greater Manchester district council co-ordinating committee for the establishment of an airport company at Manchester.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government recognise the immense value of Manchester international airport to the region and the nation. For this reason they are anxious to ensure that the airport's management continues to be financially sound and commercially orientated. However, the Government do not believe that the Greater Manchester district council's proposals, as recently

submitted, would provide an appropriate management framework. The proposals are un-satisfactory in a number of ways, notably the following:

Services

Under the current proposals the airport company might look exclusively to Manchester city council for the supply of specialist services. The Government attach great importance to the principle that there should be a fully arm's length relationship between airport companies and local authorities. Airports should be free to seek professional and technical services from whatever source they wish.

Composition of Board

Under the current proposals the airport board might consist wholly of councillors. The Government think that the management of the airport should be represented on the board.

Private Capital

The current proposals include tight restrictions on the sale of shares. The Government wish to encourage the introduction of private capital into major local authority airports, which would be effectively debarred under the current proposals.

Asset Transfer

MCC proposes to lease airport land and buildings to the proposed company, rather than transfer the freehold. The transfer of the freehold to the airport company would strengthen the company's balance sheet and so facilitate the introduction of private capital. It would also help establish the arm's length relationship that we believe there should be between airport companies and their owner authorities.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the funding of the Elstree blood products laboratory; and what has been its ability to supply blood products in volume terms and as a percentage of United Kingdom needs, for each year since the laboratory was founded.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the form requested. Elstree blood products laboratory (BPL) has been funded as part of the Central Blood Laboratories Authority since 1 December 1982. Prior to that it was funded from the overall allocations to the central blood laboratories administered by North-West Thames regional health authority. The following table shows the overall allocations to the Central Blood Laboratories of which BPL forms part:

	Gross Revenue £ thousands	*Capital £ thousands*
1981-82	3,407	1,817
1982-83	4,284	945
1983-84	5,297	*5,433
1984-85	6,148	*17,100
1985-86	7,504	*13,711

* Includes special provision for the building of the new Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree which is expected to be completed in 1986-87

The BPL output of factor VIII, (the dominant blood product), has been as follows:

	Units of Factor VIII (rounded to nearest million)
1981-82	21
1982-83	22
1983-84	30
1984-85	28

The plant at ELstree is intended to meet the needs of England and Wales only. It is estimated that at present it supplies about 40 per cent. of the factor VIII used in England and Wales.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received in 1985 concerning the restrictions on general practitioners preventing them from prescribing certain items required by people suffering from bladder and bowel disfunctions; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 27 November at columns *605-606*.

Severe Weather Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column 96, when he now intends to review the exceptionally severe weather payments made in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the chief adjudication officer is issuing today his revised guidance to adjudication officers on dealing with claims to single payments of supplementary benefit for extra fuel costs arising from exceptionally severe weather. A copy is being placed in the Library.

We have no plans to seek reviews of cases which arose last winter; but people who are dissatisfied with decisions on their claims at that time may apply for them to be reviewed by adjudication officers, and the chief adjudication officer's guidance covers the handling of such requests.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the example of the promotion of the sale of cigarettes published in a newspaper, a copy of which has been sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South, contravenes the voluntary code agreed with the tobacco industry; if the print should have included a health warning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The photograph to which the hon. Member refers does not come within the terms of the voluntary agreements on cigarette advertising and sports sponsorship. Accordingly, a health warning is not required.

Tuberculosis

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the rate of notification of tuberculosis among the population of the United Kingdom over the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available information is shown in the table. The systems of notification of tuberculosis differ slightly in the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, and the figures are not exactly comparable year by year.

Notification of Tuberculosis: Numbers and rates per 100,000 population—United Kingdom 1980-84

Year	Number	Rate
1980	10,485	18·62
1981	9,290	16·48
1982	8,448	15·00
1983	7,792	13·82
1984	7,043	12·47

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish the costs of following up contacts of those who have developed tuberculosis during outbreaks over the last five years;

(2) if he will publish the total cost of routine vaccinations of children against tuberculosis in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if any studies have been made on the effect of discontinuing the current tuberculosis vaccination programme on populations at risk in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will deposit in the Library the evidence presented to him on vaccination against tuberculosis by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation;

(3) what assessment he has made of the implications for the future incidence of tuberculosis of his decision to phase out the current vaccination programme.

Mr. Whitney: In April of this year the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation considered a report on the value of the school BCG immunisation programme. This report contained evidence from other countries and information drawn from earlier studies in the United Kingdom. It included an assessment of the future incidence of tuberculosis if the present programme were to be terminated. As a result of its consideration of the report, the joint committee advised that the routine immunisation of school children should continue unchanged for the time being. The report is being prepared for publication. I will arrange for a copy of it to be placed in the Library as soon as it is available.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of cases of tuberculosis which have been reported to his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The information is shown in the table. Figures from 1982 exclude notifications associated with chemoprophylaxis. Other changes mean that the figures are not strictly comparable year by year, but the effect is minimal.

Corrected notifications of tuberculosis (all forms) England and Wales 1979-1984

	Number
1979	9,266
1980	9,142
1981	8,128
1982	7,406
1983	6,800
1984	6,141

Smoking (Health Risks)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that the funding of both Action on Smoking and Health and the Health Education Council campaign against smoking represents the most effective use of resources available to advertise the health risks of smoking.

Mr. Whitney: The work of the Health Education Council and ASH is an essential part of the Government's overall effort to alert the public to the health risks of smoking. The purposes of their campaigns are different but reinforce one another and have together undoubtedly contributed to the marked decline in smoking which this country has experienced in recent years.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the number of non-urgent cases who have been on hospital waiting lists for more than one year has risen from 397 to 427.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Member refers to waiting lists in Brent district health authority and he may, therefore, wish to contact the chairman of the health authority directly about this. I note, however, that the number of urgent cases on the inpatient waiting list for Brent fell from 224 to 30 over the same period, from September 1984 to March 1985.

London Area Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure in each of the area health authorities that cover London in each of the last six years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of district health authorities and their predecessor area health authorities.

£ million

Area Health Authorities	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*
Barnet	42·1	55·0	60·2
Brent and Harrow	54·4	70·3	80·4
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	92·2	118·3	135·6

District Health Authorities	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	**1984-85*
Barnet	62·5	64·6	66·6
Harrow	35·2	36·8	37·4
Brent	47·2	49·4	52·2
Hounslow and Spelthorne	47·2	49·4	52·9
Ealing	35·6	38·9	42·2
Hammersmith and Fulham	47·1	49·1	51·7

Area Health Authorities	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*District Health Authorities*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	**1984-85*
Hillingdon	33·2	42·3	46·8	Hillingdon	47·8	49·6	54·3
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	109·6	143·3	160·4	Paddington	59·4	65·1	69·3
				Victoria	71·2	73·9	76·3
Barking and Havering	42·2	56·6	62·3	Barking/Havering/Brentwood	65·6	68·5	74·4
Camden and Islington	101·2	131·7	146·1	Hampstead	59·4	61·8	66·1
				Bloomsbury	115·4	118·0	123·1
				Islington	43·6	45·2	46·5
City and East London	116·5	154·7	170·9	City and Hackney	75·5	84·1	89·2
				Newham	37·5	37·2	37·3
				Tower Hamlets	64·0	67·3	67·4
Enfield and Haringey	48·2	64·4	66·7	Enfield	31·3	33·8	34·9
				Haringey	38·1	39·6	40·4
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	60·3	79·0	86·4	Redbridge	32·8	34·7	36·8
				Waltham Forest	57·7	58·3	60·2
Greenwich and Bexley	62·2	76·8	81·3	Bexley	32·1	34·5	36·4
				Greenwich	55·6	58·6	60·4
Bromley	34·2	45·8	52·2	Bromley	52·5	52·4	53·3
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	154·0	197·0	219·3	West Lambeth	73·8	77·0	81·2
				Camberwell	59·8	62·4	64·0
				Lewisham and North Southwark	99·8	109·7	110·3
Croydon	35·5	48·0	55·8	Croydon	56·2	57·9	61·0
Kingston and Richmond	30·6	38·7	41·7	Kingston and Esher	36·7	38·4	40·7
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	115·1	146·0	164·2	Richmond/Twickenham/Roehampton	34·6	35·7	34·1
				Wandsworth	85·4	89·5	93·9
				Sutton and Merton	60·8	63·0	65·4

Notes:

1. The expenditure shown is the total of revenue and capital expenditure by each district and area health authority, together with regional health authority capital expenditure on services for that particular district or area. Other expenditure by regional health authorities cannot be attributed to individual districts and is therefore excluded.

2. Total revenue expenditure on the London ambulance service, which is met by the four Thames regional health authorities, was:

	£ million
1979-80	23·0
1980-81	29·9
1981-82	33·7
1982-83	34·8
1983-84	35·2
1984-85*	35·7

3. The table excludes payments to doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians and others contracted to provide family practitioner services. Only a limited number of authorities account for this expenditure and it is not attributed to individual districts. The total of these payments for the Greater London area was:

	£ million
1979-80	239·1
1980-81	297·9
1981-82	342·8
1982-83	389·8
1983-84	410·4
1984-85*	453·1

4. The table groups the former area health authorities with the district health authorities which succeeded them in 1982. For some inner London authorities this does not give an exact match because of the boundary changes made at the time, and the figures are therefore not fully comparable over the whole period.

* Provisional figures.

Hampshire

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the population of the county of Hampshire in each year since 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the following table. The latest year for which the figures are available is 1984.

Year	*Estimated Resident Population of Hampshire at 30 June*
1965	1,269,000
1970	1,374,000
1975	1,446,200
1980	1,475,300
1984	1,509,500

Action Plans

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take against those district health authorities which fail to submit action plans.

Mr. Whitney: I have no reason to suppose that any health authority will fail to submit its action plan.

NHS Tenants

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the unavailability to National Health Service tenants of a statutory right to buy self-contained property owned by health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: None. Although the Housing Act 1980 does not apply to Crown property, it is the Department's general policy to offer tenants the opportunity to buy the accommodation they occupy if it is surplus to National Health Service requirements. Where tenants accept the offer, a discount calculated in accordance with the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 is allowed. I am not aware of any dissatisfaction with these arrangements.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation providing for security of tenure for National Health Service employees in self-contained accommodation rented from their employing authority.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to do so. Accommodation for National Health Service employees is to aid the efficient operation of the National Health Service and is not intended to be a means of providing permanent homes for staff.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has issued guidance to district health authorities and regional health authorities on the probable alternatives to the removal of National Health Service staff by district health authorities from National Health Service property as part of Her Majesty's Government's proposals to dispose of certain National Health Service assets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: A circular was issued in July this year which made it clear that surplus National Health Service accommodation will, wherever possible, be offered to tenants for purchase. Where it is not possible to make this offer, or where tenants are unwilling to purchase the accommodation, they will be given at least one year to make alternative arrangements. This clearly includes seeking to purchase accommodation or to rent local authority or private accommodation.

Community Care

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress by district health authorities on their proposals for community care; and if he will take steps to collate the relevant returns from district health authorities.

Mr. Whitney: Much has been done to develop community care but much remains to be done. More information is given in the Government's response (Cmnd. 9674) to the report of the Social Services Committee on community care, in relation to services for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people. The collection of information on community health services provided by district health authorities is undertaken by regional health authorities. Detailed information on individual district health authorities is not collected centrally and there are no plans to do so.

Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government intend to introduce new supplementary benefit regulations relating to extra heating payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The main forms of help for supplementary benefit claimants in meeting their heating costs are the weekly scale rates, which are intended to cover normal living expenses generally, and an extensive range of regular weekly "heating additions" giving substantial extra help to claimants, including all supplementary pensioner householders over 65, whose circumstances may be expected to give rise to a need for extra expenditure on heating.

Both the scale rates and the heating additions have been increased in the recent uprating; for example, a supplementary pensioner householder over 65 now qualifies for a heating addition of at least £2·20 a week, and a supplementary pensioner householder over 85 for a heating addition of at least £5·45 a week. We have no other immediate proposals to change these amounts or the regulations governing them. My hon. Friend will, however, be aware of the social security Green Paper proposals under which expenditure on heating additions would be included in the resources available for the proposed income support scheme, and the pattern of heating additions would be taken into account in setting the income support premiums for pensioners and other groups.

Alongside these major provisions, the supplementary benefit regulations also provide for single payments to claimants who experience extra fuel costs arising from exceptionally severe weather. I understand that the chief adjudication officer is today issuing revised guidance to adjudication officers on the operation of this regulation, following a recent ruling by the social security

commissioners. We are continuing to consider the provision very carefully in the light of the commissioner's decision and the chief adjudication officer's guidance. A copy of the guidance is being placed in the Library.

Consultant-Junior Doctor Ratio

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will, in collaboration with the National Association of Health Authorities, identify the districts or hospitals where significant shifts in the consultant to junior doctor ratio have taken or are taking place.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am considering the relevant recommendation of the Select Committee on Social Services and the Government response will be published soon.

Patients (Waiting Times)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has issued any guidelines to local health authorities on acceptable waiting times for patients seeking a first referral to a specialist.

Mr. Whitney: No guidelines have been issued. It is for the clinicians responsible for the care of each patient to judge the urgency of the need for referral to a specialist in the light of their knowledge of all the relevant factors of the case.

Over-80s Pension

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of those receiving the over-80s pension.

Mr. Major: At March 1985 there were some 37,200 recipients of the over-80s non-contributory retirement pension.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's estimate of the number of women who died of cervical cancer in the last year.

Mr. Whitney: The number of women who died with an underlying cause of death of malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri (ICD 9th revision 180) in 1984 in England and Wales was 1,899.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many health authorities now run fully computerised systems for identifying women in the high risk category for cervical cancer;

(2) if he will estimate when all health authorities will have a fully computerised system for identifying women in the high risk category for cervical cancer;

(3) what percentage of women who have received cervical cancer screening are under 35 years of age;

(4) if he will make a further statement on the financing arrangements between his Department and the health authorities with regard to the cervical cancer screening programme, with particular reference to the proportionate contribution made by health authorities.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the number of women who will not die next year as a result of the introduction of computerised systems of call and recall for cervical cancer covering all women in the age group at risk in every area;

(2) if he will list all the health authorities and family practitioner committees which have issued instructions to doctors in clinics or family doctors or both to suspend, delay or reduce the taking of cervical smears because of a backlog in pathology laboratories.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a drug called Fetoprotein is used in National Health Service hospitals in the United Kingdom as a monitor for the effectiveness of cancer treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend and the hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

NHS (Supplies)

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he will make to improve the effectiveness of the supplies function in the National Health Service.

Mr. Fowler: The Health Service Supply Council, under the chairmanship of Mr. B. E. Cotton CBE, and latterly of Mr. W. M. Darling OBE, has done much to stimulate improvements in this field, but its effectiveness has been limited by the advisory nature of its powers. Having already established new management arrangements in the National Health Service, I have decided to wind up the council. We shall now provide a clear line of management and accountability from my Department direct to health authorities in supplies as in other matters. I am accordingly appointing a director of procurement and distribution, at under-secretary level, in the Department to support the NHS management board in ensuring that the NHS operates an efficient supply function.

The order and regulations needed to wind up the council will be laid before Parliament shortly.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: The amount spent by the Department of Health and Social Security on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85 is as follows:

Television,	nil
All press,	£2,448,571

The amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86 up to and including 4 December 1985 is as follows:

Television,	nil
All press,	£648,086

The figures are the amounts that have actually been spent, which equal the amount budgeted to date.

Note: Advertising campaigns are paid for only when they are completed so figures for current campaigns, for example, drug abuse, are not included.

NHS Staff (Residential Places)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's estimate of the number of residential places for National Health Service staff which will be lost as a result of the selling of National Health Service property in 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Whitney: It will not be possible to make a useful estimate until proposals are received later this month from the regional and special health authorities.

Old People's Nursing Homes

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many old people's nursing homes, with how many residents, are registered in each of the district health authorities in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Whitney: At 31 December 1983, the latest date for which information is available centrally, the numbers of nursing homes with general specialty beds designated for the elderly registered with district health authorities in West Yorkshire and the number of these beds was as shown in the following table. Excluded are mental nursing homes, and beds not designated for the elderly in the nursing homes concerned.

District Health Authority	*Number of registered homes with general specialty beds designated for the elderly*	*Number of general specialty beds for the elderly*
Bradford	5	123
Leeds Eastern	1	16
Leeds Western	3	80
Pontefract	—	—
Wakefield	—	—
Huddersfield	1	16
Calderdale	7	145
Dewsbury	—	—

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private old people's homes, with how many residents, there are in the areas of each of the five metropolitan boroughs of West Yorkshire.

Mr. Whitney: Provisional information on the number of private homes for the elderly and disabled and the number of residents in such homes, as at 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available, is given in the table.

Metropolitan Districts	*Number of Homes*	*Number of Residents*		
		Under 65	*65+*	*Total*
Bradford	74	27	1,051	1,078
Calderdale	20	17	258	275
Kirklees	22	3	363	366
Leeds	36	5	461	466
Wakefield	7	2	140	142

Housing Benefit

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the amount of housing benefit paid to students in each of the past 10 years; what the projected figure is for the current and coming years; how many students received such payments in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985, c. *603-604*]: I regret that the following information was omitted from my previous reply. Figures for the past 10 years are not available. However, estimates for the last academic year suggest that about £50 million may have been paid in housing benefit to some 200,000 students and the position is expected to be little changed this year.

Road Accidents (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* injuries and *(b)* deaths from road accidents have been dealt with in each of the last five years in the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health district.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *133-34*]: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The numbers of road accident deaths registered in the registration districts most closely approximating to Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire district health authority are given in the table.

Droxford, Petersfield, Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire sub-districts of the registrars of births and deaths.

Year	*Number of road acccident deaths registered*
1980	41
1981	*14
1982	36
1983	32
1984	36

* The statistics for 1981 were affected by industrial action taken by Registrars.

Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospital development schemes costing over £5 million *(a)* completed since May 1979 and *(b)* started since May 1979, giving for each the district, the number of beds involved, completion date and the cost.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *141-42*.]: Following are lists of hospital development schemes costing £5 million or over recorded centrally: (i) completed since May 1979; (ii) started since May 1979.

Major capital schemes completed since May 1979

Region	*Scheme*	*District health authority*	*beds*	*Cost (£000)*	*Completion date*
Northern	North Tyneside Phase 1	North Tyneside	334	10·4	December 1983
	Furness (Barrow) DGH Phase 1	South Cumbria	382	9·9	January 1984
	South Cleveland General Phase 1	South Tees	—	9·1	January 1981
	Queen Elizabeth Phase 1 (Gateshead)	Gateshead	200	6·1	June 1985
Yorkshire	Grimsby DGH Phase 1	Grimsby	472	12·0	December 1982

Region	Scheme	District health authority	beds	Cost (£000)	Completion date
	Leeds General Infirmary	Leeds Western	291	11·7	September 1982
Trent	Queens Medical Centre Phase 2	Nottingham	1,003	18·5	August 1980
	Chesterfield DGH Phase 1	North Derby	448	12·1	August 1983
	Glenfield DGH Phase 2	Leicester	200	12·3	April 1983
	Rotherham DGH Phase 2	Rotherham	178	6·3	May 1983
	Lincoln County Phase 1	North Lincolnshire	112	9·0	July 1984
	North General Phase 1c	Sheffield	236	6·1	May 1985
East Anglian	Hinchinbrooke Hospital Phase 3	Huntingdon	227	10·6	January 1983
	Ipswich Phase 1 (Heath Road) Nucleus	East Suffolk	308	6·2	April 1983
	Kings Lynn DGH Phase 2	West Norfolk	481	8·0	August 1979
	Great Yarmouth DGH Phase 1	Waveney	248	6·9	August 1981
North West Thames	Watford (Shrodells) Wings Phase 3	South West Herts	368	13·5	February 1984
North East Thames	Broomfield Phase 5	Mid Essex	—	7·5	November 1984
South East Thames	Maidstone DGH Phase 1 Nucleus	Maidstone	262	10·8	April 1983
	Orpington DGH Phase 1	Bromley	308	6·2	December 1983
	Kent and Sussex Hospital Phase 1	Tunbridge Wells	20	5·1	January 1985
South West Thames	Croydon (Mayday) DGH	Croydon	330	8·5	December 1982
	Redhill DGH (Nucleus)	East Surrey	224	7·6	November 1982
	St George's Block G2&F Phase 2	Wandsworth	—	10·2	May 1985
Wessex	Southampton General Phase 5 (Maternity)	South West Hants	220	5·3	December 1979
Oxford	Milton Keynes DGH Phase 1	Milton Keynes	265	12·6	September 1983
South Western	Derriford DGH Phase 1	Plymouth	355	9·2	February 1980
West Midlands	Stafford DGH Phase 4	Mid Staffordshire	297	11·4	November 1982
	Dudley DGH (Russells Hall) (Phase 3a)	Dudley	414	10·8	August 1983
Mersey	Macclesfield (Nucleus) DEV	Macclesfield	208	8·8	June 1983
	Halton DGH (Nucleus) Phase 2	Halton	232	6·0	August 1984
	Arrowe Park DGH	Wirral	1,007	8·0	April 1981
	West Cheshire (Nucleus) Phase 1	Chester	160	6·8	January 1982
	Royal Liverpool Hospital Phase 2/3	Liverpool	820	11·8	December 1979
North Western	Preston New Hospital Phase 1	Preston	—	6·7	June 1980
	Preston New Hospital Phase 2	Preston	700	7·0	August 1980
	Hope Hospital (Salford) Phase 1	Salford	83	11·7	May 1983
Non RHA	Central Public Health Laboratory		—	14·6	January 1985
Northern	North Tyneside Scheme 1 Phase 1	North Tyneside	334	10·4	December 1983
Northern	Queen Elizabeth Gateshead Scheme 3 Phase 1	Gateshead	200	6·1	June 1985
Northern	South Cleveland General Scheme 2 Phase 1B	South Tees	150	9·1	November 1987*
Yorkshire	Bridlington New Community Hospitals	East Yorkshire	219	11·2	January 1988*
Yorkshire	Goole New Community Hospital	Scunthorpe	166	9·7	May 1988*
Yorkshire	Scarborough DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)	Scarborough	161	6·5	November 1986*
Yorkshire	Staincliffe DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)	Dewsbury	298	13·4	July 1988*
Trent	Derby City Phase 1	Southern Derbyshire	242	12·1	March 1986*
Trent	Derby Royal Infirmary Phase 2	Southern Derbyshire	316	10·7	February 1987*
Trent	Glenfield DGH Phase 1	Leicestershire	200	12·3	April 1983
Trent	Lincoln County Phase 1	North Lincolnshire	112	9·0	July 1984
Trent	Northern General Phase 1c	Sheffield	236	6·1	April 1985
Trent	Rotherham DGH Phase 2	Rotherham	178	6·5	May 1983
East Anglian	Hinchinbrooke Hospital Huntingdon Phase 3	Huntingdon	227	10·6	January 1983
East Anglian	Ipswich Heath Road Wing Phase 1 (Nucleus)	East Suffolk	308	6·2	April 1983
East Anglian	Peterborough 2nd DGH Phase 1	Peterborough	284	13·7	July 1987*
North West Thames	Hemel Hempstead Phase 1	North West Hertfordshire	84	6·0	September 1986*
North West Thames	St. Mary's W2 Phase 1b	Paddington and North Kensington	338	20·4	February 1987*
North West Thames	Watford (Shrodells Wing) Phase 3	South West Hertfordshire	368	13·5	February 1984
North East Thames	Broomfield Phase 5	Mid Essex	—	7·5	November 1984
North East Thames	Colchester DGH Phase 2	North East Essex	286	11·0	October 1984
North East Thames	Harold Wood Hospital Phase 1	Barking, Havering and Brentwood	112	8·3	December 1986*
North East Thames	Homerton (Eastern) Phase 1	City and Hackney	428	14·2	December 1985*
North East Thames	Newham Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)	Newham	293	9·1	September 1982
South East Thames	Kent and Sussex—Tunbridge Wells Phase 1	Tunbridge Wells	20	5·1	January 1985
South East Thames	Lewisham DGH Phase 1a	Lewisham and North Southwark	—	6·2	December 1985*
South East Thames	Maidstone DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)	Maidstone	262	10·8	April 1983
South East Thames	Orpington Phase 1	Bromley	308	6·2	December 1983
South East Thames	Croydon/Mayday DGH (Nucleus)	Croydon	330	8·5	December 1982
South West Thames	St. George's—Block H Phase 2a	Wandsworth	360	18·0	November 1987*
South West Thames	St. George's—Blocks G2 & F Phase 2	Wandsworth	—	10·2	May 1985
Wessex	Bournemouth DGH Phase 1	East Dorset	289	14·1	June 1987*
Wessex	Royal Hants County Winchester Phase 4 (Nucleus)	Winchester	278	10·8	February 1986*
Wessex	Royal South Hants Southampton Phase 3	Southampton and South West Hampshire	20	11·0	October 1986*
Wessex	West Dorset DGH Phase 1	West Dorset	134	10·8	January 1987*
Oxford	Milton Keynes DGH Phase 1	Milton Keynes	265	12·6	September 1983
South Western	Cheltenham General Phase 1b	Cheltenham and District	120	6·2	May 1988*

Region	Scheme	District health authority	beds	Cost (£000)	Completion date
South Western	West Somerset (Musgrove Park) DGH Phase 1	Somerset	150	6·5	June 1986*
South Western	Weston-Super-Mare—New Hospital	Bristol and Weston	252	11·0	April 1986*
West Midlands	Bromsgrove Redditch DGH Phase 1 Contract 2—(Nucleus)	Bromsgrove and Redditch	393	15·8	March 1986*
West Midlands	City General Stoke Surgical Accommodation (Nucleus)	North Staffordshire	278	13·8	September 1988*
West Midlands	Telford DGH Phase 1	Shropshire	338	18·5	May 1988*
West Midlands	Walsall Phases 4a/4b (Nucleus)	Walsall	297	14·7	July 1988*
Mersey	Halton DGH Phase 2 (Nucleus)	Halton	232	6·1	August 1984
Mersey	Macclesfield Development (Nucleus)	Macclesfield	208	8·8	June 1983
Mersey	North Sefton DGH Southport Phase 1 (Nucleus)	Southport and Formby	301	16·4	August 1987*
North Western	Hope Hospital Salford Phase 1	Salford	83	11·6	May 1983
North Western	Oldham DGH Phase 1	Oldham	308	12·5	February 1988*
North Western	Tameside General Phase 2	Tameside and Glossop	139	12·0	April 1987*
Non RHA	Blood Products MFG Unit		—	13·8	November 1985
	Central Public Health Laboratory		—	14·6	January 1985
	Clare Hall Project		—	12·4	August 1986*
	Hammersmith Hospital Re-Development Phase 1		60	12·4	May 1988*

* = Estimated

Special Health Authorities

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the full membership of all the special health authorities, giving in each case the date of first appointment of members, the date on which each appointment is due to expire, and the nominating body or bodies.

Mr. Whitney: There are 14 special health authorities; eight for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and six which serve specific specialists functions. Where appointments are made on the nomination of a body as provided for in sections 11, 22(4)*(e)* and 92(1) of the National Health Service Act 1977, the name of that body has been listed. All the other members of authorities are appointed by the Secretary of State for their personal qualities, taking account of recommendations by various bodies and individuals. The information requested is as follows.

	Date of First Appointment	Date Appointment due to Expire	Nominating Body
1. The Special Health Authorities for the London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals			
THE HOSPITALS FOR SICK CHILDREN (Established as SHA April 1982)			
Chairman			
Mrs. Caroline Bond	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Other Members			
Mr. K. B. Castle	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Trade Union Congress
Mr. W. M. Clarke CBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Dr. W. J. Glover	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Professor P. J. Graham	July 1985	31 March 1988	Institute of Child Health
Professor O. P. Gray	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. B. Hill	October 1985	31 March 1988	
Dr. T. P. Linehan	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mrs. L. H. Lipson	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	North East Thames RHA
Mr. E. A. R. Lonsdale JP	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. R. F. Morgan	1 September 1983	31 March 1986	
Mr. A. L. Price QC	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Institute of Child Health
Miss E. Raybould	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Lady Rhys-Williams	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Lady Riches	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	City and Hackney DHA
Mr. Stephen Scott JP	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	London Borough of Hackney
Mr. A. G. Stanton	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Dr. Carlyle Steen	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Bloomsbury DHA
Dr. J. F. N. Taylor	1 July 1983	31 March 1986	
Sir David Innes Williams	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	University of London
MOORFIELDS EYE HOSPITAL (Established as SHA April 1982)			
Chairman			
Mr. F. M. Cumberlege CBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	

	Date of First Appointment	Date Appointment due to Expire	Nominating Body
Other Members			
The Lady Ashdown CBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. T. Bach	July 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. R. K. Blanch	27 August 1985	31 March 1986	Institute of Ophthalmology
Mr. A. Bosi	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	London Borough of Islington
Dr. J. Carne	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Cllr. C. Coulson-Thomas	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Miss M. A. Day OBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. J. Fenwick	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Professor A. Garner	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Institute of Ophthalmology
Mr. D. Gowan	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	Trade Union Congress
Mr. L. G. Green	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. A. D. Hyman	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. N. S. C. Rice MD FRCS	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. R. Roebuck	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	London Borough of Islington
Mr. M. J. Roper-Hall FRCS	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Lady Sherman OBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	North East Thames RHA
Mrs. Jean Smith	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. E. Wright	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	

THE NATIONAL HOSPITALS FOR NERVOUS DISEASES (Established as SHA April 1982)

Chairman			
Mr. J. A. Young CBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Other Members			
Mr. R. M. Brew OBE	1 April 1983	31 March 1988	North East Thames RHA
Mr. I. Clarke	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Westminster City Council
Mr. D. Corsan	August 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. E. L. Dutnow	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Dr. P. C. Gautier-Smith	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Professor R. Gilliatt	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Institute of Neurology
Cllr S. E. Govier	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Westminster City Council
Sir Philip Charles Harris	19 February 1985	31 March 1986	
Dr. C. Leonard	1 April 1985	31 March 1988	
Professor J. Marshall	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Institute of Neurology
Professor W. I. McDonald	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Professor W. B. Matthews	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. T. H. Oakman OBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Miss M. Rice	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. H. Salmon	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Dr. G. M. Stern	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Bloomsbury DHA
Professor L. T. D. Symon	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	University of London
Mr. S. J. Wilks	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Trade Union Congress

THE BETHLEM ROYAL HOSPITAL AND MAUDSLEY HOSPITAL AUTHORITY (Established as SHA April 1982)

Chairman			
Dr. Ivan Clout OBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Other Members			
Mr. J. A. Barker	1 April 1983	31 March 1988	Common Council of the City of London
Mrs. C. A. Bett	July 1985	31 March 1988	
Dr. J. R. W. Christie Brown	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Dr. A. Clark-Jones	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. D. Coleman	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Mrs. P. Cooper	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Camberwell DHA
Dr. A. J. Coppen	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mrs. M. Croft	6 March 1985	31 March 1988	
Mrs. B. Humphreys	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Trade Union Congress
Mrs. D. Kaufman	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Mr. D. H. Maitland	June 1982	31 March 1988	
Dr. R. M. Murray	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Institute of Psychiatry
Dr. P. Noble	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Cllr S. J. C. Randall	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	London borough of Bromley
Professor G. F. M. Russell	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Institute of Psychiatry
Professor M. Rutter	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	University of London
Professor N. J. D. Smith	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. Toulmin QC	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Lady Willis	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	South East Thames RHA

	Date of First Appointment	Date Appointment due to Expire	Nominating Body
THE NATIONAL HEART AND CHEST HOSPITALS (Established as SHA April 1982)			
Chairman			
Mr. T. M. Meyer	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Other Members			
Mr. L. D. Abrams FRCS	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. R. M. Brodtman OBE JP	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Cllr. Miss E. M. Christmas	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Mr. R. G. Fox	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Baroness Gardner of Parkes JP	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Dr. A. Glyn MP	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. P. Grimes	May 1982	31 March 1988	Trade Union Congress
Dr. E. E. Keal	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	University of London
Dr. G. A. H. Miller	June 1985	31 March 1986	Cardiothoracic Institute
Cllr. Mrs. L. Peltz	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Westminster City Council
Mr. D. C. Rennie	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	North West Thames RHA
Dr. G. J. Samson	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Miss G. F. Schofield			
Sir Louis Sherman OBE	1 March 1985	31 March 1988	
Professor M. Turner-Warwick	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Cardiothoracic Institute
Mr. D. B. Vaughan	May 1985	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. D. Woodthorpe	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. E. C. Wright	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	
THE ROYAL MARSDEN HOSPITAL (Established at SHA April 1982)			
Chairman			
Mr. M. J. Hussey	1 April 1985	31 March 1989	
Other Members			
Mr. C. N. Beard	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	South West Thames RHA
Professor N. M. Bleehen	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Cllr. Miss E. M. Christmas	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Dr. T. A. Connors	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	University of London
Mr. G. B. Inglis	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Mr. R. King	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. A. Lemkin	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mr. D. Levinson	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Dr. T. J. McElwain	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. B. W. Mills	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Professor A. Munro Neville	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Institute of Cancer Research
Mrs. J. Partridge	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	North West Thames RHA
Mr. P. H. Ryan	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mrs. J. Ryder	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	London Borough of Sutton
Mr. D. M. Selous Hodges	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	NALGO
Dr. E. D. M. Todd JP	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Dr. R. A. Weiss	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Institute of Cancer Research
Ms. J. Wilson-Barnet	June 1984	31 March 1988	
Dr. Eve Wiltshaw	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
THE HAMMERSMITH AND QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S AUTHORITY (Established as SHA April 1982)			
Chairman			
Mr. F. C. B. Bland	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Other Members			
Mrs. P. K. Ashley	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. W. Aspinall	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Managerial, Professional & Staff Liaison Group
Sir Douglas Black	July 1985	31 March 1988	University of London
Miss I. C. S. Brown OBE	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Mrs. S. Edwards	21 December 1983	31 March 1988	
Professor M. G. Elder	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	
Cllr. W. J. Hammett JP	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	London Borough of Ealing
Cllr. R. Hetherington	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	Ealing DHA
Mr. G. T. Howd	July 1985	31 March 1988	Riverside DHA
Dr. D. M. S. Kerr	20 February 1984	31 March 1986	Royal Postgraduate Medical School
Cllr. S. Knott	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

	Date of First Appointment	Date Appointment due to Expire	Nominating Body
Mrs. M. Legg	21 December 1983	31 March 1988	
Professor I. MacIntyre	1 April 1982	31 March 1988	Royal Postgraduate Medical School
Mrs. M. Moss	21 December 1983	31 March 1986	
Professor D. K. Peters			
Dr. M. H. Rosen	1 April 1982	31 March 1986	North West Thames RHA
Mrs. A. Singh	11 March 1985	31 March 1988	
Dr. J. A. G. Taylor	1 September 1983	31 March 1986	

THE EASTMAN DENTAL HOSPITAL (Established as SHA April 1984)

Chairman			
Mr. J. M. Edwards QC	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Others Members			
Mr. R. B. Allen BCLD RCS	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	Managerial, Professional and Staff Liaison Group
Mr. J. Catlow	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Cllr. K. Gardner	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	Westminster City Council
Mr. M. S. S. Gould	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	
Mr. N. H. Green	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Mr. J. D. E. Hall	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	North West Thames RHA
Professor M. Harris	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	Institute of Dental Surgery
Dr. R. Jeffreys	1 August 1984	31 March 1988	
Mr. D. Joines CBE	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	North East Thames RHA
Miss J. M. Pinder	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	
Professor D. E. Powrie	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	
Mr. J. D. Strahan FDS RCS	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	
Mrs. D. M. Thomson	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	
Sir David Innes Williams	1 April 1984	31 March 1986	University of London
Professor G. E. Winter	1 April 1984	31 March 1988	Institute of Dental Surgery

II. Other Special Health Authorities

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE TRAINING AUTHORITY (Established as SHA October 1983)

Chairman			
Sir John Donne	1 October 1983	31 July 1986	
Other Members			
Mr. G. Best	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	Norths East Thames RHA
Mr. M. Brodie (co-opted)	17 October 1985	1 October 1986	National Staff Committee (Accommodation, Catering and other support staff)
Mr. R. W. Buchanan	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	Wessex RHA
Mr. J. Button	7 December 1984	1 October 1987	Welsh Health Authorities
Mr. G. Coghlan	21 June 1985	1 October 1986	National Staff Committee (Works)
Miss A. Cox	2 April 1984	1 October 1986	National Staff Committee (Nurses and Midwives)
Mr. D. Eva	24 October 1985	1 October 1989	Mersey RHA
Mr. S. Fletcher	7 October 1985	1 October 1989	West Midlands RHA
Mr. J. George	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	Trent RHA
Mr. R. Gibson	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	Northern RHA
Ms. B. E. Harrison	1 October 1983	1 October 1989	General Whitley Council
Mr. K. Jarrold	8 March 1984	1 October 1986	National Staff Committee (Administrative and Clerical Staff)
Dr. J. Knibbs	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	Oxford RHA
Mrs. E. Lanchbery	24 October 1985	1 October 1989	South East Thames RHA
Dr. A. H. MacLaren MBE	1 October 1983	1 October 1989	Society of Family Practitioner Committees
Mr. N. Parkinson	24 October 1985	1 October 1989	North Western RHA
Mr. R. Poole	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	General Whitley Council for the Health Services (GB)
Mr. M. Roberts	12 September 1984	1 October 1989	South West Thames RHA
Mr. R. Stokoe	1 October 1983	1 October 1987	North West Thames RHA
Mr. M. Upcroft	24 October 1985	1 October 1989	East Anglian RHA
Mr. D. K. Warlow	15 May 1984	1 October 1986	National Staff Committee (Ambulance Staff)
Mr. R. W. J. Wood CBE	1 October 1983	1 October 1989	Yorkshire RHA
Mrs. B. Young	1 October 1983	1 October 1989	South Western RHA

	Date of First Appointment	Date Appointment due to Expire	Nominating Body
The Central Blood Laboratories Authority (Established as SHA December 1982)			
Chairman			
Mr. R. D. Smart CBE	1 December 1982	30 November 1986	
Other Members			
Dr. H. H. Gunson	1 December 1982	30 November 1988	
Mr. A. Jerwood	1 December 1982	30 November 1986	
Mr. V. Seccombe	15 May 1985	30 May 1989	
Mr. M. G. Storey	1 December 1982	30 November 1986	
Mr. D. Thomas	1 December 1982	30 November 1986	
Mr. C. J. S. Walker	15 May 1985	30 May 1989	
Mr. G. A. Wilson	15 May 1985	30 May 1989	
Mr. R. Wing	15 May 1985	30 May 1989	
Supply Council (Established as SHA July 1980)			
Chairman			
Mr. W. M. Darling OBE	14 July 1980	30 June 1988	
Other Members			
Mr. G. R. Higson	7 June 1984	30 June 1986	
Mr. W. A. Johnson	6 April 1982	31 March 1988	
Mr. P. H. Le Fleming	1 July 1982	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Dr. E. B. Lewis	14 July 1980	30 June 1986	
Mr. R. F. Mellor	1 July 1982	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Mr. J. B. Mowson	1 July 1982	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Mr. J. Oldham	2 August 1983	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Sir John Page OBE	18 October 1982	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Mr. J. Park	30 June 1984	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Mr. P. R. Style MBE	3 February 1981	30 June 1986	
Mr. J. Taylor	2 August 1983	30 June 1986	NHS RHA Chairman
Mr. D. F. J. Webb	30 June 1984	30 June 1986	
Mr. B. Wilson	30 June 1984	30 June 1986	
The Prescription Pricing Authority (Established as SHA April 1978)			
Chairman			
Mr. G. M. Dinsley OBE	1 April 1978	31 March 1987	
Other Members			
Mr. S. R. Axon	1 April 1978	31 March 1987	Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC)
Mrs. C. M. Caley	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Society of Family Practitioner Committees (FPCs)
Professor V. W. M. Drury OBE	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Royal College of General Practioners
Dr. D. L. D. Farrow	1 April 1984	31 March 1987	British Medical Association (BMA)
Mr. E. A. Hebron	1 April 1982	31 March 1987	Association of Community Health Councils
Mr. G. S. Knowles JP	1 April 1978	31 March 1986	PSNC
Mr. J. E. Langley	1 April 1979	31 March 1988	FPCs
Miss M. Moodie	1 April 1984	31 March 1987	DHSS
Mr. L. Priest	1 April 1978	31 March 1988	PSNC
Dr. S. J. Richards	1 April 1980	31 March 1986	BMA
Mr. B. Silverman	1 April 1978	31 March 1988	PSNC
Mr. N. B. Thomas	1 April 1985	31 March 1988	FPCs
Dr. R. J. Walshaw	1 April 1983	31 March 1987	BMA
Mr. J. Williams	1 April 1985	31 March 1988	FPCs
Rampton Hospital Review Board (Established as SHA July 1981)			
Chairman			
Mr. L. Teeman OBE	15 July 1981	30 June 1986	
Other Members			
Mr. G. L. Hemsley	30 July 1981	30 June 1986	
Mrs. A. Noskwith JP	30 July 1981	30 June 1986	
Mr. W. Rawcliffe MBE JP	30 July 1981	30 June 1986	

	Date of First Appointment	Date Appointment due to Expire	Nominating Body
Mr. D. G. Redhead	15 July 1981	30 June 1986	
Dr. J. M. Roberts	15 July 1981	30 June 1986	
Miss M. F. Robertson	October 1982	30 June 1986	
THE RURAL DISPENSING COMMITTEE (Established as SHA April 1983)			
Chairman			
Sir Alan Marre	1 April 1983	31 March 1987	
Other Members			
Dr. G. Cormack	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	General Medical Services Committee
Dr. D. J. D. Farrow	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	General Medical Services Committee
Dr. E. C. Bramwell	1 January 1985	1 April 1986	General Medical Services Committee
Mr. D. L. Coleman	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Mr. A. J. Smith	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Mr. C. C. B. Stevens OBE	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Mrs. M. Tudor	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	
D. M. Clark	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	National Association of Health Authorities
G. C. Waterer MBE	1 April 1983	31 March 1986	

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 9 December 1985

PRIME MINISTER

European Parliament

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will make it her policy not to agree to any increase in the powers of the European Parliament;

(2) whether she will give particulars of the proposals which the Government are considering for increasing the powers of the European Assembly.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement that I made to the House on Thursday 5 December at columns 429-30 on the outcome of the European Council Meeting held on 2-3 December.

Crime Prevention (Downing Street Seminar)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister whom she intends to invite to participate in the seminar which she intends to hold at Downing street early in the new year on crime prevention schemes.

The Prime Minister: Invitations to the seminar on crime prevention which I shall chair on 8 January are being issued this week to a wide range of organisations including representatives from industry, including certain nationalised industries, local authorities, the health and education services, the CBI, the TUC and the police.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement setting out the areas of Community decision-making which will now be subject to majority voting in consequence of the decisions made at Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December; and if she will provide some representative examples of the kind of directives or regulations which will no longer require unanimous consent.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 5 December at columns 429-30. Examples of measures which could be adopted by majority voting under article 100 include:

—common technical standards intended to remove barriers to trade: these are frequently held up by objections from one or two member states;

—certain consumer protection measures, eg the doorstep selling directive which has been blocked for some time by one member state;

—certain proposals in the agricultural field related to the achievement of the internal market, subject to safeguards for human, animal and plant health.

Economic and Monetary Union (Luxembourg Summit)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister whether there was any agreement at the summit meeting in Luxembourg on economic and monetary union; and if the agreed text of the outcome contains a reference to economic and monetary union.

The Prime Minister: The European Council agreed that the preamble to the text amending the Treaty of Rome should refer to the decision of the Heads of State or Government, at their conference in Paris in October 1972, to approve the objective of the progressive achievement of economic and monetary union. The Council also agreed that the Treaty of Rome should be amended to provide that any developments in the field of economic or monetary policy which necessitate institutional changes must be subject to the procedures of article 236 of the treaty, ie further amendment of the treaty and ratification according to national procedures. Like the Council's other decisions, these agreements are subject to reserves on the part of Denmark and Italy.

Small and Medium-Sized Undertakings

Mr. Grylls asked the Prime Minister if she will give further details of the European Council's decisions at Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December on the reduction of administrative and legal constraints on the growth of small and medium-sized undertakings.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 5 December at columns 429-30. The conclusions of the European Council have been placed in the Library of the House.

Illiteracy

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Employment and other Departments on the implementation of Her Majesty's Government's policy to combat illiteracy.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policies for raising performance in schools in all areas of the curriculum, including the improvement of standards of literacy, are set out in the white paper "Better Schools". The Department of Education and Science works closely with other interested department's wherever appropriate on the initiative outlined in "Better Schools". At the adult level, the membership of the management committee of the adult literacy and basic skills unit provides for co-ordination between the Department of Education and Science, the Home Office and the Manpower Services Commission, and there is also informal day-to-day contact between the unit, the Department of Education and Science and other Government Departments. The unit is engaged in development projects in the literacy field in partnership with the Manpower Services Commission and other relevant agencies.

Energy Policy

Mr. Mason asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of all Government Departments in implementing the Government's energy policy objective of reducing the United Kingdom's longer-term dependence on oil; what part the coal firing scheme has to play in fulfilling this objective; and with what results so far.

The Prime Minister: In line with the Government's objective of ensuring that all economic forms of energy are produced, supplied and used as efficiently as possible, the coal firing scheme encourages industry to reduce energy costs by converting to coal from more expensive fuels such as oil.

By the end of November 1985 the scheme had created over 2·5 million tonnes of annual coalburn, mainly at the expense of oil. In the light of the success of the scheme the Government have decided to extend the deadline for receipt of applications to the end of June 1987.

Bishops

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will review the basis on which bishops are entitled to sit in the Upper House; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The entitlement of Lords Spiritual to sit and vote in the Upper House has been established by long tradition, confirmed by statute. I have no plans to review the basis on which bishops take their seats in the Upper House.

Pensioners' Charter

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the latest estimate of the cost of implementing the pensioners' charter of the National Pensioners' Convention, in the manner of the answer of 22 March 1983, *Official Report*, columns *384-86*.

The Prime Minister: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Television (Obscenity)

Mr. Murphy asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to introduce legislation to extend to television the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and to provide a new definition of obscenity to include the portrayal of acts of gross violence; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has introduced a Bill to amend section 1 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and we shall be considering his proposals very carefully.

UNESCO

Mr. Spearing asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply of Thursday 5 December, she will state those national interests which would be prejudiced by continued United Kingdom membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and the interests enhanced by forthcoming withdrawal.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development on 5 December at columns 448-57.

European Charter of Self-Government

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government intend to sign the European charter of local self-government; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The Government subscribe to the general principles underlying the charter but we do not accept that the content is appropriate for a binding international agreement.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *236*, if she will list each of the public bodies to which she has appointed members in each of the past five years.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows.

Body	*Year in which appointment(s) made*				
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Museums and Galleries Commission	*	*	*	*	*
British Museum	*	*	*	*	*
British Museum (NH)	*	*	*	*	
Imperial War Museum	*		*	*	*
Museum of London	*	*	*	*	
National Maritime Museum	*	*	*	*	
National Gallery	*	*	*	*	*
National Portrait Gallery	*	*	*	*	*
Tate Gallery	*	*		*	*
Wallace Collection		*	*	*	
Science Museum			*		*
Victoria and Albert Museum			*		*
British School at Rome	*			*	
Kennedy Memorial Trust		*	*	*	*
City Parochial Foundation	*		*		*
Security Commission	*	*	*	*	*
Three Advisers (CS Security Appeal Body)		*			*
Review Bodies in Top Salaries,	*	*	*	*	*
Armed Forces Pay,	*	*	*	*	*
Doctors and Dentists Remuneration,	*	*	*	*	*
Nursing and Midwives			*	*	*
Advisory Committee on Acceptance of appointments by Crown Servants	*	*	*		*
Political Honours Scrutiny Committee			*		
Women's National Commission: co-Chairman			*		
Police Arbitration Tribunal		*			
Police Complaints Board	*	*	*	*	

Body	Year in which appointment(s) made				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Police Negotiating Board	*	*			
National Heritage Memorial Fund		*		*	*
	18	20	22	19	18

ENERGY

Hinckley Point (Gas Leakage)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide the details of the leakage of coolant gas which occurred at Hinckley Point nuclear installation on 21 November, specifically indicating *(a)* what the estimated temperature of the gas was when it leaked, *(b)* whether the gas had been at any time in contact with the reactor, and *(c)* whether the gas had been, or came into contact with any of the concrete structure at Hinckley Point.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the CEGB that, during the evening of 20 November, a crack in a pump cylinder housing led to a pipe failure in the CO2 plant room which is outside the reactor building. This led to a leakage of clean, unused CO2 which had never been in the reactor cooling circuits. There was no radiation hazard. I am asking the CEGB to write to the Hon. Member on his other points.

Plutonium

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what weight and what proportion of spent nuclear fuel returned to the United Kingdom from magnox reactors in Italy and Japan has been reprocessed; and what safeguards apply to the reprocessed plutonium.

Mr. Goodlad: As my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) said in his reply to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on 5 March 1984 at column *393*, the quantities of spent fuel received from individual countries are commercial-in-confidence. At October 1985 approximately 80 per cent. of the receipts of spent magnox fuel from the reactors at Latine (Italy) and Tokai Mura (Japan) has been reprocessed.

Whilst in the United Kingdom the plutonium produced by reprocessing this spent fuel is subject to Euratom safeguards and inspection and to appropriate IAEA safeguards. In respect of returned plutonium I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 16 April 1985 at column *123*.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the plutonium produced by the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel from electricity board reactors by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd at Sellafield, for each of the last five years, have been subsequently *(a)* allocated for defence purposes, *(b)* stored for future civil use, *(c)* supplied to Dounreay for use in the prototype fast-breeder programme and *(d)* allocated to other users.

Mr. Goodlad: None of the plutonium produced over the last five years has been used for defence purposes. All of the plutonium produced from reprocessing the board's spent fuel has been stored on their behalf by BNFL.

Coal Mining Subsidence

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has now concluded his study of the Waddilove committee's recommendations on coal mining subsidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The committee's recommendations are being considered. The Government's response will be published as soon as possible.

National Coal Board

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to provide a quick local arbitration process to deal with disputed claims against the National Coal Board.

Mr. David Hunt: Arbitration is already available in disputes about mining subsidence compensation which arises under the National Coal Board's voluntary code of practice. The possibility of making this option more widely available is one of the many points raised in the Waddilove report, which is presently under consideration.

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total amount of Government aid including grants, deficit grants, loans and social grants, provided to the National Coal Board between 1 July 1971 and 1 July 1982.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is compiled on a financial year basis. For the financial years 1971-72 to 1981-82 inclusive, the figures are as follows:

	£ million
Government grants, payments under the RMPS to redundant mineworkers, and writing-off of loans under the Coal Industry Act 1973	2,374
Net lending to National Coal Board	2,296

Coal Mining Subsidence

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation providing notification by the National Coal Board of undermining operations affecting property owners.

Mr. David Hunt: Provision for this is made under the Coal Industry Act 1975.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation requiring the National Coal Board to make good subsidence damage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Provision for this is made under the Coal Mining (Subsidence) Act 1957 and the Coal Industry Act 1975.

Coal Firing Scheme

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what approaches he has made to local authorities to assist in the development of the coal firing scheme; what responses he has received; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the coal firing scheme applies in the public sector.

Mr. David Hunt: The coal firing scheme is operated under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, which provides powers for the Government to make available selective assistance for purposes connected with the development of industry. Public sector bodies are therefore not in general eligible to receive such support.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those bodies that have to date taken advantage of the coal firing scheme, giving the actual or estimated coal tonnage taken up.

Mr. David Hunt: Details of companies given assistance under the coal firing scheme are published quarterly in the Department of Trade and Industry's journal *British Business*, copies of which are held in the Library of the House. By the end of November 1985 total annual coalburn for projects receiving coal firing grant exceeded 2.5 million tonnes.

British National Oil Corporation

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the value of assets transferred to the British National Oil Corporation on its formation on 1 January 1976; and if he will detail what assistance, direct or indirect, was provided by Her Majesty's Government to the corporation *(a)* between then and 31 October 1979 and *(b)* subsequently.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Under section 13 of the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975, the whole of the issued share capital of National Coal Board (Exploration) Limited (subsequently re-named BNOC (Exploration) Limited) was transferred to the British National Oil Corporation on 1 January 1976 for consideration equal to its face value of £50,000. This transaction, and all subsequent operations of the corporation until 31 December 1982, when its link with the account was severed, were financed through the national oil account.

Details of the amounts received by the corporation from the account, including loans from the national loans fund made via the account, and of payments made by the corporation to the account, are given in the corporation's annual reports and statements of account for each of the years to 31 December 1982 and in the published accounts of the national oil account for each of the financial years up to 31 March 1983, when the account was abolished. In the period up to 1 November 1982, when Britoil ceased to be a subsidiary of the corporation, the corporation received various investment and similar grants for which it was eligible in respect of its former oil exploration and development operations.

At 1 January 1983, after its link with the national oil account ceased, the corporation was provided with capital reserves of £30 million free of interest. In the financial year ended 31 March 1985 net grants totalling £66,520,000 were paid to the corporation under section 6 of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982.

Gas and Electricity (Disconnections)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the total number of gas and electricity disconnections for each year since 1979, and the number of pensioner households who have had their supplies disconnected.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have asked the chairmen of the British Gas Corporation and the Electricity Council to provide the information direct to the hon. Member.

Coal Industry (Redundancies)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to compensate or make retrospective payments to persons made redundant in the financial year 1983-84 from National Coal Board premises which were not shut down until after 1 April 1984; and if he will seek to amend the provisions of the Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme Order 1984 to the same effect.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

British Gas

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a draft of the proposed licence to be given to British Gas under the Gas Bill.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have today made copies of the proposed draft licence available in the Vote Office.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Contempt of Court (Sequestration)

Mr. Mason asked the Attorney-General if he will introduce legislation to restrict the power of courts to sequestrate the assets of organisations such as trade unions in contempt cases and to place a duty on the courts to make available to such organisations, on application, any proportion of the sequestrated assets which is necessary to cover the reasonable day-to-day running costs of the organisation concerned; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: No. The remedy in such cases is for these organisations to obey the lawful orders of the court in the first place, and if they do not, to purge their contempt.

Fraud

Mr. Dobson asked the Attorney-General how many reports on fraud were submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions by the City of London and Metropolitan police and how many resulted in prosecutions in each year since 1979; what was the average length of time taken to consider such reports in each year; and what were the longest and shortest times taken, respectively, in each year.

The Solicitor-General: It has not been possible to collate the information requested within the time available. I will write to the hon. Member.

Fraud Investigation Group

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if he will name the members of the fraud investigation group dealing with the Peter Cameron Webb and Alexander Howden case.

The Solicitor-General: It is the policy of the director not to name the official, police officers and other persons who comprise a particular fraud investigation group. The fraud investigation group dealing with the Peter Cameron Webb and Howden case comprises the deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, an assistant director of public prosecutions, one professional officer, two detective superintendents, two detective chief inspectors, and five counsel (including two leading counsel) together with appropriate support staff.

TRANSPORT

British Railways Board (Property)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the response from the British Railways Board to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the board's property activities, published on 5 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board (the board) has considered the report and prepared a response, copies of which I am placing in the Library of the House. The response shows that the board is ready to accept the great majority of the commission's recommendations, and describes the action that the board will be taking for implementation. I welcome the board's initial response to the report. My Department is monitoring progress on this and I will make a further statement next year on the board's implementation of the commission's recommendations.

It is the Government's general policy that all land surplus to the requirements of public authorities should be offered for sale as soon as practicable. While the commission saw no reason to criticise the board's decision to sell surplus property, it did suggest that the implementation of this decision was deficient in some respects. I am pleased to note from the board's response that it is confident that no sales have taken place in ill-considered ways or with unnecessary loss.

The main business of the board is running the railway and the Government wish to see the board continue with its very successful programme of property disposals as vigorously as possible. Accordingly, we have restated to the chairman of the board the objectives which the Government wish the board to pursue towards its property. In particular these call for the board to continue to manage its operational property in accordance with best commercial practice, and to identify and divest itself of all its underused or surplus land and property as rapidly as possible, avoiding distress sales. Judgments on timing and relative priorities are to be based on discounted cash flow appraisal using a rate of discount not less than the required rate of return.

The commission drew attention to the need for improvements in the organisation and management structure within the board in order to secure the best return from the estate. I welcome the action which the board is proposing to improve its handling of property matters, including strengthening the role of the managing director of the British Rail Property Board and setting up a BR property review group. The board believes that this will achieve the aims identified by the commission in a manner more compatible with the overall management structure of the board.

The commission was critical of the board's procedures for releasing land no longer needed for operational use, which it saw as "cumbersome and expensive". I welcome the study which the board has set in hand to identify improvements that can be made in this important area.

The commission acknowledged the board's success in developing and exploiting its operational estate, but made a number of recommendations for improvements. I look forward to effective implementation of the steps that the board is taking, including those to improve the procedures for reviewing development opportunities and for appraising property investments. I am encouraged by the progress being made in improving the marketing of railway arches and station trading facilities, and I look to the board to exploit to the full the opportunities for extending competition and involving the private sector in these areas.

The commission also recommended that my Department should undertake a thorough review to determine how far current liabilities in respect of property no longer needed for the railway should be removed from the board or separately funded. My Department immediately sought from the board the factual information necessary to conduct this review, and is giving it careful consideration.

We are grateful to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for this wide-ranging report which I am confident will provide the stimulus for a variety of significant improvements in the manner and efficiency with which the board conducts its property activities.

Vehicle Testing

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many VT12 forms, garage monthly returns of Department of Transport tests performed, are printed each year; and at what cost.

Mrs. Chalker: Precise annual figures are not available as VT12 forms are ordered at irregular intervals. However, based on the last three years, the average yearly usage is approximately 35,000 pads of 30 forms at a yearly cost of approximately £14,000.

M25

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position with regard to payments by his Department to the Birse Farr joint venture for remedial works carried out to joints on the M25 Reigate-Leatherhead section; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: No payments for remedial work to joints have been made. Our consulting engineers have not yet received full and detailed particulars of any claim in this respect.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths there have been as a result of motor accidents on the M25; and if he will list their location.

Mrs. Chalker: Up to and including June 1985, there were 26 fatalities on the M25 as a result of road accidents. I regret that identifying the locations of each of these would involve disproportionate cost.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made into the effects of providing lighting on motorways; and if any research has been carried out into the effectiveness of motorway lighting in the prevention of accidents.

Mrs. Chalker: Research from a number of countries has indicated extremely variable reductions in accidents due to motorway lighting and the transport and road research laboratory is currently undertaking a study which should be completed early in 1986.

Drink Drive Campaign

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the full details of the drink drive campaign for the Christmas period.

Mrs. Chalker: I announced details of the campaign at a press conference earlier today. A copy of the campaign guide and supporting material has been placed in the Library. I am sending a copy to my hon. Friend.

Ribblehead Viaduct

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of Ribblehead viaduct, on the Settle to Carlisle railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Ribblehead viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle railway line is a scheduled monument and as such may not be altered or demolished without scheduled monument consent. The Railways Board's proposal to withdraw rail services from the line does not affect this position.

Channel Fixed Link

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has made any study into the effects of a Channel fixed rail link on the average travel time, city centre to city centre, from London to *(a)* Paris, *(b)* Brussels and *(c)* Amsterdam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This matter is being covered in the Government's assessment of fixed link proposals that is at present under way.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in negotiating an agreement on the fixed link with the French Government, he will seek to make arrangements enabling French permits for commercial vehicles to be more readily available.

Mr. David Mitchell: This point has been covered in discussions between my right hon. Friend and his French counterpart.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the implications of the ban on commercial vehicle movements during Sundays and bank holidays in France for the projected level of use of such a link by heavy goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport when and in what form he expects to publish the joint British and French Governments' assessment of the proposals for a fixed Channel link; and if he will make it his policy to include in it an assessment of the relative economic impact of such a link on different regions of the United Kingdom and on north-eastern France in so far as it affects those regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government intend, as soon as possible after announcing their decision as to which, if any, scheme is to go ahead, to publish a White Paper giving the full reasons behind their decision. This will include an economic assessment of the effects of the chosen scheme on Kent and on other parts of the United Kingdom, bearing in mind all relevant factors. The Government are not responsible for north-eastern France.

Nationalised Transport Companies (Purchasing Policies)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make it his policy that nationalised transport industries should develop sources of supply from United Kingdom companies rather than looking to overseas manufacturing companies to provide their requirements for equipment.

Mr. Ridley: Nationalised industries are expected to follow the Government's purchasing policy, which encourages them to buy British goods provided that the products and prices are right.

Civil Aviation Authority (Meteorological Services)

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 4 December, what method the Civil Aviation Authority uses to bill airlines for meteorological services; what records are kept as to the payment of such bills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The costs of services supplied by the Meteorological Office to civil aviation are added to the costs incurred by the authority in providing en-route navigation services, and these are recovered through a single charge for each en-route flight. For chargeable flights in the two flight information regions which cover the United Kingdom, charges (which are calculated on the basis of distance flown and taking into account the weight of the aircraft) are billed on behalf of the CAA by the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL).

The CAA itself levies charges (which are calculated on a simple per flight basis) for aircraft flights through the SHANWICK (North East Atlantic) flight information region, for which the United Kingdom is by international agreement responsible, and for helicopter flights over the North sea. Records are kept by EUROCONTROL and the CAA respectively in respect of the bills which they issue.

Driving Instruction

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place a copy of the most recently completed driving instructors' written examination in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: No. A series of examination papers are compiled from a bank of multi-choice format questions devised by my Department. They are designed to ensure that a successful candidate must demonstrate a high standard of knowledge over a wide range of relevant subjects and we believe that publishing individual papers could help potential candidates to learn the answers, rather than the knowledge. The whole range of subjects on which questions may be asked is set out in the Department's pamphlet ADI 14 "The Registration of Approved Driving Instructors". Most of the information needed to pass the examination may be found in the highway code, the Department's manual "Driving" and the Department's pamphlet DL68 "Your Driving Test". Copies of all these publications are held in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Durham, North (Grants)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the total amounts offered to firms in the Durham, North constituency under regional industrial grants for each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is as follows:

	29 November 1982 to 28 November 1983 £'000	*29 November 1983 to 28 November 1984* £'000	*29 November 1984 to 31 October 1985* £'000
1. Regional selective assistance (value of offers made)	382	128	15
2. Regional development grant II (value of offers made)	—	—	352

Note: The value of RSA offers accepted in each of the three years was the same as for those made. In the case of RDG II, the offers accepted in the period totalled £324,000.

Garscadden (Grants and Loans)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the total amounts offered to firms in the Garscadden constituency under regional and industrial grants for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Butcher: I regret the information is not available for all regional and industrial grants because it would be too costly to transfer the historic records to the computer data base. For the same reason a manual search to match addresses is also ruled out. However, the new regional development grants are being recorded and regional selective assistance (RSA) under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act is available for past years. The details for RSA in the Glasgow, Garscadden constituency are as follows:

	Value of offers £'000
1975-76	—
1976-77	24
1977-78	—
1978-79	—
1979-80	701
1980-81	—
1981-82	—
1982-83	195
1983-84	85
1984-85	2,350

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the grants and loans under the regional and industrial policy in the last year within the Garscadden constituency referred to in his letter to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden dated 27 November.

Mr. Butcher: It is not the practice to disclose details of financial assistance given to individual companies other than in accordance with the arrangements announced by the then Secretary of State for Industry on 31 July 1974. Details are also withheld where it is thought that an individual company could be identified prior to publication in *British Business*. However, the value of offers of regional selective assistance and of new regional development grant in the Glasgow, Garscadden constituency were as follows in the period 29 November 1984 to 31 October 1985.

	Value £'000
RDG II	102
RSA	2,350

Hull (Regional Aid)

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial assistance under regional aid was given to Hull in each year since 1975 at 1984 prices.

Mr. Butcher: Government regional assistance to Hull since 1975 at 1984 prices is as follows:

Expenditure at 1984 prices†*

	£000's
1975-76	n.a.‡
1976-77	7,369
1977-78	2,754
1978-79	12,067
1979-80	6,625
1980-81	7,636
1981-82	13,758
1982-83	9,197
1983-84	6,432
1984-85	7,012

Notes:

* The above figures are for expenditure within Hull travel-to-work area (TTWA). All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries. The items included in the expenditure are regional development grants and regional selective financial assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982. The regional development grants included in the expenditure relate to payments of £25,000 or more. Expenditure on land and factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation has not been included since it can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

† Current price expenditure has been converted to 1984 prices by use of the GDP deflator.

‡ Figures are not available for 1975-76 in respect of regional development grants. Expenditure in respect of regional selective financial assistance for 1975-76 amounted to £1,009,000.

Regional Grants (Scotland)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts offered under the regional grant schemes at 1984 prices to companies in Scotland for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details relating to offers of regional selective assistance (RSA) and to payments of regional development grants (RDG I) for the last 10 years in Scotland at 1984 prices are as follows:

	Value of RSA offers (1984 prices) £000	*Value of RDG payments (1984 prices) £000*
1975-76	61,783	247,169
1976-77	53,969	240,069
1977-78	36,091	204,731
1978-79	28,664	189,651
1979-80	61,358	106,057
1980-81	49,330	144,096
1981-82	49,370	164,882
1982-83	58,734	310,134
1983-84	53,224	147,787
1984-85	77,540	107,727

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts offered under the regional grants schemes, at 1984 prices, to companies in the Rutherglen constituency, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I regret the information is not available for all regional and industrial grants because it would be too costly to transfer the historic records to the computer data base. For the same reason a manual search to match addresses is also ruled out. However, the new regional development grants are being recorded and regional selective assistance (RSA) under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act is available for past years. The details for RSA in the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency are as set out at 1984 prices.

	Value of offers (1984 prices) £000
1975-76	20
1976-77	3,459
1977-78	23
1978-79	292
1979-80	21
1980-81	132
1981-82	1,236
1982-83	583
1983-84	77
1984-85	2,285

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Butcher: It is not the practice to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. Existing staff in personnel units have been designated as equal opportunities officers on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. Equal opportunity matters are not their sole responsibility.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to write to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, as indicated in his reply of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *480*, regarding firms participating in the Alvey programme.

Mr. Butcher: I wrote to the hon. Member on 30 November.

Life Assurance and Unit Trusts

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account he proposes to take before reaching a decision on the form of a licensing scheme for life assurance and unit trust salesmen of the representations he has received from the Office of Fair Trading, the National Consumer Council and the Consumers' Association regarding the case for any such general scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am currently awaiting detailed proposals from the marketing of investments board organising committee, and shall consider all the views that have been expressed on this matter before reaching any decision.

Insurance Claims

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints the Office of Fair Trading has received in the past year relating to the time taken by insurance companies in settling claims.

Mr. Howard: This is a matter for the director general and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Pharmaceutical Products (Patents)

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to extend the patent life for pharmaceutical products.

Mr. Pattie: Community members resolved in 1975 to bring their national patent laws into conformity, as far as practicable, with the provisions of the European Patent Convention. This was done by the Patents Act 1977 which provided inter alia for the extension of the patent term from 16 to 20 years in line with the European Patent Convention. There are no immediate plans for common action with the other Community states to extend the term further. My right hon. and learned Friend has however received representations on the subject from the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry and is considering whether a United Kingdom initiative would be appropriate.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to convey to the

European Economic Community Commission and other member states Her Majesty's Government's policy that the multi-fibre arrangement should be renewed on more liberal terms.

Mr. Channon: In discussions in the European Community on the multi-fibre arrangement we have been pressing for the policy I outlined to the House on 9 May.

Textiles and Clothing (Imports)

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards the phasingout of European Economic Community restrictions on textile imports from Hong Kong on account of its open market.

Mr. Channon: As I told the House during the debate on the multi-fibre arrangement, restrictions on textile and clothing imports from Hong Kong, which is a major supplier to the Community, cannot be ended at this stage. But I also made clear that in the forthcoming negotiations I would seek above average improvements in access levels for countries such as Hong Kong which have low barriers to the Community's own exports.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the import figures for textiles and clothing in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom imports

	£ million (cif)
1975	1,207
1976	1,618
1977	1,908
1978	2,387
1979	2,885
1980	2,762
1981	3,163
1982	3,414
1983	3,918
1984	4,705

Source:

SITC/R2 Divisions 65 and 84 (less Group 848), Groups 266 and 267 and Sub-group 268.7 (part), in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics; and corresponding headings under SITC/R1.

Trendhart Limited and Odestage Limited

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will institute a formal investigation under the Companies Acts into the affairs of Trendhart Limited and Odestage Limited and those who have acted as directors of those companies.

Mr. Howard: I know of no reason for doing so but shall consider any information my hon. Friend may have about these companies.

Grants (Northern Region)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the grants offered to firms in each parliamentary constituency in the Northern region in the last 12 months under *(a)* the new regional grants scheme and *(b)* the old régime.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Offers of new regional development grant to firms in parliamentary constituencies in the Northern region in the period 29 November 1984 to 30 November 1985 are listed as follows:

Constituency	*Total amount offered to firms £'000*
Bishop Auckland	3,209
Blaydon	266
Blyth Valley	469
Durham, North	422
Durham, North-West	1,039
Easington	1,196
Gateshead, East	737
Hartlepool	789
Hexham	9
Houghton and Washington	1,706
Jarrow	241
Langbaurgh	69
Middlesbrough	1,417
Newcastle upon Tyne, Central	122
Newcastle upon Tyne, East	235
Newcastle upon Tyne, North	269
Penrith and the Border	21
Redcar	121
Sedgefield	107
South Shields	190
Stockton, North	707
Stockton, South	351
Sunderland, North	342
Sunderland, South	321
Tyne Bridge	743
Tynemouth	641
Wallsend	587
Workington	607
Total	16,933

Apart from the quarterly publication in *British Business* of new regional development grant payments to individuals which cumulatively amount to more than £25,000, the Department of Trade and Industry does not give detailed information about individual applications for project approval, claims for grant or the decisions reached, as this information is confidential between the applicant and the Department.

In the case of old-style regional development grants, details of individual payments over £25,000 only are recorded. These are maintained manually by reference to travel to work areas (TTWAs) (as defined under the pre-29 November 1984 assisted area map) and their constituent employment office areas (EOAs). As neither TTWAs nor EOAs under the old map are coterminous with parliamentary constituencies, it is not possible to attribute accurately to constituencies payments of old style regional development grants.

Carpets

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the import figures for carpet and carpet fibres in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information relating to carpets and the available information relating to yarn for carpets is as follows:.

Value £ million (cif)

Year	*Carpets, carpeting and rugs*	*Carpet yarn of polyamide fibres*
1975	50	15
1976	69	23
1977	86	23
1978	113	26
1979	139	29

Year	Carpets, carpeting and rugs	Carpet yarn of polyamide fibres
1980	162	29
1981	179	30
1982	181	28
1983	219	37
1984	256	55

Source: Carpets—SITC/R2 Group 659 (less Sub-groups 659.1 and 651.7 and Item 651.63), *Yarn*—SITC/R2 Item 651.41 (part) (textured carpet yarn of continuous polyamide fibres); and corresponding headings under SITC/R1.

Note: Figures for carpet yarn for 1982 onwards refer only to the heavier duty yarns (over 50 tex).

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has presented proposals within the framework of negotiations on multi-fibre arrangements to safeguard specialist carpet manufacturers in areas where the industry is socially and economically necessary for the well-being of the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: With very little United Kingdom production of knotted carpets, and most United Kingdom imports of other carpets coming from non-multi-fibre arrangement supplier countries, I consider that there is no case for any such proposals.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the number of persons employed in carpet manufacturing in each of the travel-to-work areas in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following information is based on 1981 census of employment data.

	Number
Barnsley TTWA	686
Bradford TTWA	1,059
Huddersfield TTWA	622
Wakefield and Dewsbury TTWA	765
Calderdale TTWA	2,129
Leeds TTWA	168
Keighley TTWA	105
Skipton TTWA	35

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what safeguards he has in mind within the renegotiations of a multi-fibre arrangement to deal with disruptive import surges of textiles and carpet imports into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has in mind to control a possible surge of imports from Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea if under-used quotas are abolished.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In deciding our detailed policy on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement we shall bear in mind the possibility of sudden increases in imports of particular textile and clothing products.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the main tariff barriers and import bans by countries who import textiles, clothing and carpets from the United Kingdom; what steps he is taking to have these reduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade explained in the debate in the House on May 9 at columns 917-919, reducing trade barriers in developing countries, in many of which they are much too high, is one of the United Kingdom's objectives in the new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT. This applies to textiles, clothing and carpets as well as other products. The main barriers facing these products are summarised on pages 60-61 of "The Multi-Fibre Arrangement and the UK Economy" by Professor Z. A. Silberston, a copy of which is in the Library.

Anti-dumping Legislation

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to seek to strengthen the anti-dumping legislation and the law relating to counterfeiting clothing and textiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Anti-dumping legislation is a matter of Community competence and there are no present plans to strengthen it. As to counterfeiting, we are considering a proposal for general reform of the United Kingdom law made by the anti-counterfeiting group which represents a range of industries. The Government are also working both within the Community and in the GATT to improve measures restricting trade in counterfeit goods.

Westland Helicopters

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide, to the extent that this does not infringe commercial confidentiality, details of the total amounts of money provided to Westland Helicopters by Her Majesty's Government or Government bodies, including launch aid, regional aid, grants and loans between January 1977 and February 1985.

Mr. Butcher: My Department provided £38·9 million in launch aid and grants to Westland Helicopters in the financial years 1977-78 to 1984-85. A further £6·8 million has been paid since April 1985 and £55·5 million has been allocated for continuing Westland projects.

CR6 Taxi

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will specify the figure that has been invested to date by the Government in relation to the creation and development of the specialised CR6 taxi cab;

(2) if he will give details of the latest position with regard to the development of the CR6 taxi cab and a date when production is likely to start.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information relating to projects under the Department's support for innovation scheme, such as the CR6 taxi, is regarded as commercial-in-confidence between the applicant and the Department.

However, in respect of this particular project, there is some public acknowledgement of the Department's support. This can be found in the 1985 annual report of Manganese Bronze Holdings plc, the parent company of London Taxis International Ltd.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will show the crude balance of imports and exports of *(a)* cereals and cereal preparations, *(b)* motor vehicles and *(c)* electrical goods in 1979 and 1984; and if he will compare the net overall position in 1979 with 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The information is as follows:

Crude United Kingdom Trade Balances

Value £ million

	1979	*1984*
(a) Cereals and cereal preparations	−404	+364
(b) Motor Vehicles	−1,479	−2,870
(c) Electrical goods	−9	−2,644
TOTAL TRADE	−5,621	−8,479

Sources: The following SITC/R2 headings in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics; *(a)* Division 04 *(b)* Groups 781, 782 and 783 and Sub-group 784·1 *(c)* Divisions 75, 76 and 77 and Group 716.

Note: Crude balance is United Kingdom exports (fob) less imports (cif).

Grants (Job Creation)

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply of 5 December to the hon. Member for Swansea, West giving the amount paid in each constituency in the last year for grants directly related to jobs, if he will now give for those same constituencies the number of jobs directly related to those grants.

Mr. Brittan: The information requested is as follows:

	Jobs
Aberavon	2,649
Aldridge-Brownhills	74
Alyn and Deeside	780
Angus, East	442
Ashton under Lyne	33
Ayr	1,404
Barnsley, East	19
Barnsley, West and Penistone	20
Batley and Spen	95
Berwick-upon-Tweed	178
Beverley	26
Birkenhead	193
Birmingham, Erdington	127
Birmingham, Hall Green	15
Birmingham, Ladywood	194
Birmingham, Northfield	18
Birmingham, Selly Oak	30
Birmingham, Small Heath	105
Birmingham, Sparkbrook	3,847
Birmingham, Yardley	34
Bishop Auckland	1,137
Blackburn	370
Blaenau Gwent	601
Blaydon	95
Blyth Valley	436
Bolton, North-East	213
Bolton, South-East	77
Bolton, West	113
Boothferry	132
Bootle	470
Bosworth	222
Bradford, North	297
Bradford, South	70
Bradford, West	190
Brecon and Radnor	214
Bridgend	445
Bridlington	1,723
Brigg and Cleethorpes	1,096
Bromsgrove	30
Bury, North	46
Bury, South	24
Caernarfon	61
Caerphilly	182
Calder Valley	25
Cannock and Burntwood	41
Cardiff, Central	122
Cardiff, North	266
Cardiff, South and Penarth	206
Cardiff, West	116
Carmarthen	46
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	188
Central Fife	785
Ceredigion and Pembroke	75
Chorley	58
City of Chester	96
City of Durham	165
Clackmannan	142
Clwyd, North-West	87
Clwyd, South-West	34
Clydebank and Milngavie	557
Conwy	7
Copeland	45
Corby	1,885
Coventry, North-East	32
Coventry, South-East	135
Coventry, South-West	270
Crosby	52
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,901
Cunninghame, North	831
Cunninghame, South	650
Cynon Valley	471
Darlington	252
Delyn	755
Don Valley	156
Doncaster, Central	22
Doncaster, North	60
Dudley, East	46
Dudley, West	183
Dumbarton	57
Dundee, East	497
Dundee, West	2,541
Dunfermline, East	1,623
Dunfermline, West	1,332
Easington	543
East Kilbride	663
East Lindsey	24
East Lothian	95
Eastwood	74
Eddisbury	56
Ellesmere Port and Neston	48
Falkirk, East	326
Falkirk, West	70
Falmouth and Cambourne	164
Fylde	5
Gainsborough and Horncastle	391
Galloway and Upper Nithside	377
Gateshead, East	495
Glanford and Scunthorpe	1,340
Glasgow, Cathcart	383
Glasgow, Central	605
Glasgow, Garscadden	182
Glasgow, Govan	130
Glasgow, Hillhead	1,223
Glasgow, Maryhill	270
Glasgow, Pollok	139
Glasgow, Provan	214
Glasgow, Rutherglen	334
Glasgow, Shettleston	571
Glasgow, Springburn	67
Gower	30
Great Grimsby	89
Greenock and Port Glasgow	815
Halesowen and Stourbridge	849
Halton	385
Hamilton	764
Hartlepool	352
Hexham	29
Heywood and Middleton	152
High Peak	380
Houghton and Washington	775
Hyndburn	158
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	90
Islwyn	191
Jarrow	82

	Jobs
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	443
Kingston upon Hull, East	52
Kingston upon Hull, North	125
Kingston upon Hull, West	80
Kirkcaldy	256
Knowsley, North	220
Knowsley, South	585
Lancaster	30
Langbaurgh	32
Leigh	400
Linlithgow	1,501
Littleborough and Saddleworth	120
Liverpool, Broadgreen	70
Liverpool, Garston	327
Liverpool, Mossley Hill	16
Liverpool, Riverside	294
Liverpool, Walton	172
Liverpool, West Derby	11
Livingston	2,857
Llanelli	145
Ludlow	26
Makerfield	350
Manchester, Blackley	5
Manchester, Central	336
Manchester, Gorton	43
Meriden	57
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	883
Mid Worcestershire	343
Middlesbrough	434
Monklands, East	513
Monklands, West	211
Monmouth	223
Motherwell, North	478
Motherwell, South	244
Neath	237
Newcastle upon Tyne, Central	43
Newcastle upon Tyne, East	106
Newcastle upon Tyne, North	134
Newport	773
Newport, West	310
North Cornwall	414
North Devon	153
North Durham	104
North East Derbyshire	12
North Warwickshire	27
North West Durham	477
Northavon	18
Nuneaton	618
Ogmore	246
Oldham, Central and Royton	12
Oldham, West	223
Paisley, North	595
Paisley, South	847
Pembroke	445
Penrith and The Border	35
Perth and Kinross	82
Plymouth, Devonport	91
Plymouth, Drake	187
Plymouth, Sutton	284
Pontypridd	1,432
Pudsey	228
Redcar	122
Renfrew, West and Inverclyde	160
Rhondda	391
Richmond, (Yorkshire)	15
Rochdale	171
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	1,200
Rossendale and Darwen	187
Rother Valley	274
Rotherham	764
Rutland and Melton	15
Salford, East	79
Scarborough	133
Sedgefield	159
Sheffield, Attercliffe	7
Sheffield, Brightside	34
Sheffield, Central	92
Sheffield, Hillsborough	7
Shipley	301
Solihull	19
South East Cornwall	13
South East Staffordshire	187
South Hams	61
South Shields	194
South Staffordshire	295
Southport	101
St. Helens, North	210
St. Helens, South	623
St. Ives	202
Stalybridge and Hyde	21
Stirling	36
Stockton, North	371
Stockton, South	404
Stratford-on-Avon	28
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	163
Stretford	15
Sunderland, North	427
Sunderland, South	185
Sutton Coldfield	19
Swansea, East	96
Swansea, West	133
Tatton	16
Teignbridge	26
The Wrekin	549
Torfaen	3,580
Torridge and West Devon	50
Truro	131
Tyne Bridge	636
Tynemouth	484
Vale of Glamorgan	582
Wallasey	85
Wallsend	356
Walsall, North	99
Walsall, South	992
Wansbeck	521
Warley, East	397
Warley, West	423
Warrington, South	10
Wentworth	227
West Bromwich, East	80
West Bromwich, West	1,214
West Gloucestershire	1,265
West Lancashire	378
Wigan	248
Wirrall, South	104
Wirral, West	74
Wolverhampton, North East	23
Wolverhampton, South East	39
Workington	280
Worsley	6
Wrexham	1,387
Wyre	20
Wyre Forest	180
Ynys Mon	172

Live Aid Concert (Pirate Video Recordings)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make representations to the Government of Indonesia about the use of that country's official tax seal on pirate cassette recordings of the "Live Aid" concert which are on sale in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Pattie: The Government are very concerned at allegations that illegal recordings of the Live Aid concert are being manufactured in Indonesia on a large-scale with Government endorsement. We shall be making representations on this matter to the Indonesian Government.

Lloyd's Syndicate Bellew, Parry, Raven

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if an investigation by a Department of Trade and Industry inspector has been instituted into the operations of Lloyd's syndicate Bellew, Parry, Raven.

Mr. Howard: No.

Textiles and Clothing (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the number of persons employed in the clothing, textile and carpet manufacturing industries in the Barnsley travel-to-work area, the South Yorkshire metropolitan district and Yorkshire and Humberside, respectively; and to what extent they are affected by the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The most recent information is as follows:

Number of persons employed in 1981

	Clothing	*Textiles*	*Carpet manufacturing*
Barnsley TTWA	2,270	826	686
South Yorkshire	5,146	4,341	686
Yorkshire and Humberside	17,100	69,552	5,569

Source: 1981 census of employment

Employment in these industries in all parts of the United Kingdom is affected by many factors, including productivity, and competitiveness in export markets as well as the home market. Most United Kingdom imports of these products are unaffected by the multi-fibre arrangement.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Construction Industry

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to seek to reduce unemployment in the construction industry in the Province.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers were employed in the construction industry in the Province at the latest available date.

Dr. Boyson: According to the Northern Ireland quarterly employment inquiry there were 22,850 such employees in employment at September 1985.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searches)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, in October and November, respectively; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making an appearance at Armagh court-house on remand, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Scott: During October 1985, 42 searches were carried out on 23 prisoners; seven prisoners were searched once, 14 were searched twice, one was searched three times and one prisoner was searched on four occasions. During November 1985, 26 searches were carried out on 16 prisoners; seven prisoners were searched once, eight were searched twice, and one prisoner was searched three times. No prohibited article was found during these searches and no prisoner refused to be searched. Searches were carried out in the following circumstances:

	October	*November*
First admission on remand and awaiting trial	11	5
First admission on sentence and final discharge	12	9
Attending Armagh remand court	—	—
Attending other remand courts	1	—
Attending trial	1	—
Bail court appearances	12	4
Home leave scheme	1	3
Inter-prison visits	2	2
Other reasons	2	3
Total	42	26

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the text of the assurances circulated to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and other members of the public service concerning the effects of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. King: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

WALES

Road Maintenance

10. **Mr Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he proposes to make any change in the provision for trunk road maintenance and local road maintenance in Wales in the light of the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await my right hon. Friend's statement about rate support grant provision for local authorities for 1986-87, which will be made next week, and the public expenditure White Paper, which will announce the provision for trunk road maintenance.

National Health Service

12. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he will next meet the chairmen of health authorities in Wales to discuss the future funding of the Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend and I hold regular meetings with chairmen of health authorities in Wales and I last met chairmen on 22 November.

Welsh Development Agency

13. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency in each of the past three years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Gross expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency in each of the last three years was: £80·7 million in 1982-83; £66·6 million in 1983-84; and £71·6 million in 1984-85. The first two figures include special provision for steel closure areas. Gross expenditure this year is expected to be of the order of £70 million.

Rhuddlan Promenade (Caravan Parking)

14. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the approaches he has received from Rhuddlan borough council regarding a byelaw to limit the nuisance from overnight parking of caravans on the promenade; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Rhuddlan borough council submitted byelaws to my Department for confirmation in December 1982 and, in modified form, in July 1984; both applications were refused. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West raised the matter in correspondence during the summer. Since my hon. Friend, the Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas) last replied to him on 28 August there has been no further approach by the borough council.

Hospital Waiting Lists

15. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to bring forward measures to seek to reduce the waiting lists for surgery in the ear, nose and throat, gynaecology and general surgery specialists in Mid Glamorgan and other health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave her on 25 November.

Pig Industry

16. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of the pig industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The pig breeding herd in Wales has shown a tendency to decline during recent years. However, the June 1985 provisional census figures record an increase of 6·1 per cent. over June 1984 in the breeding herd which now stands at 15,800 head, indicating a return of confidence in this sector.

Cardigan (Job Creation)

17. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to seek to create employment and work in the Cardigan area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Employment and work are created by the enterprise of individuals and companies. I and my colleagues intend to continue to implement policies designed to encourage and assist in this process in Cardigan as elsewhere.

Health Service (Powys)

18. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the state of the Health Service in Powys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am anxious that all health authorities should continually seek to improve their services and their success is monitored through the annual performance reviews conducted by the NHS director for Wales.

Rural Pharmacies

19. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward proposals to increase the number of rural pharmacies in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The need to support small pharmacies in some areas has long been recognised and additional payments are available for this purpose under the present essential small pharmacies scheme. The new pharmacists contract, when implemented, will further enhance this.

Cardiff Harbour Barrage

20. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the likely cost of the barrage south of Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am proposing to commission studies of a scheme to construct a barrage across the mouth of Cardiff harbour. One of the principal purposes of these studies will be to establish the likely cost of the scheme, together with its feasibility and likely economic benefits.

Home Dialysis Machines

21. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost to each Welsh area health authority of installing home dialysis machines.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Renal dialysis is a regional service funded centrally by my Department and therefore the cost does not fall to individual health authorities.

Housing Defects Act

22. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the operation of the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Welsh Office has received a number of representations and enquiries about the operation of the Act. The main area of concern has been the availability of suitable repair methods. I am pleased to note that last month PRC Homes Ltd. issued its first two licences for schemes for the repair of Cornish unit houses, and that it expects to issue licences for a variety of repair schemes for most of the common types of PRC houses within the next few months.

Mentally Handicapped Persons (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date his Department first received the local Vanguard plan from Gwynedd county council concerning the provision of services for mentally handicapped people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The plan for the Gwynedd Vanguard district was received at the end of May this year. Following detailed analysis, it has now been approved, subject to certain conditions and Gwynedd county council is being informed today.

Disabled Children (Education)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of disabled children receiving education in special schools in Wales in 1980-81 and the corresponding number for the current academic year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of full-time and part-time pupils at special schools in Wales totalled 4,759 in January 1981. Figures for the current academic year are not yet available. The latest available figures indicate that the number attending special schools in January 1985 totalled 4,216.

Small Firms (Liquidations)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many small firms in Wales have gone into liquidation since May 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures of company liquidations are available for England and Wales but not separately for Wales. For the England and Wales figures I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given him on Wednesday 4 December 1985 at column *251* by my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

National Coal Board (Chairman)

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Wales how frequently he meets the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss the board's capital investment programme in Wales; and when the next such meeting is expected to take place.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board whenever the need arises to discuss matters relevant to the Welsh coalfields. The last occasion was on 14 November. The date for a further meeting has not yet been fixed.

Morriston Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients attended the casualty and accident unit at Morriston hospital in its first week of operation; and how this compares with the numbers at Singleton hospital in the previous week and in the last week of November 1984.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A total of 848 people attended the new accident and emergency unit at Morriston during its first week of operation from 7.30 am on 24 November 1985. This compares with 880 at Singleton in the previous full week and 832 at Singleton in the last week of November 1984.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy Stipends and Pensions

28. **Mr. Chapman** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is his estimate of the contribution the Church Commissioners will make in the current year to clergy stipends and pensions.

Sir William van Straubenzee: £34·5 million on stipends and £31·9 million on pensions.

Residential Flats, Edgware Road

29. **Sir David Price** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, why the Church Commissioners have allowed contractors to drill trenches through a block of residential flats which they own on the Edgware road, throughout the weekend, including Sunday mornings, for the installation of cable television.

Sir William van Straubenzee: In order to cause minimum disruption to tenants the commissioners asked the contractors to undertake their work expeditiously. Tenants were informed in advance of the commencement of the work and no complaints have been received. I have arranged for the contractors to undertake no further weekend working after 1 pm on Saturday.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Gibraltar

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total sum which Her Majesty's Government propose to make available to the Gibraltar Government to cover that Government's responsibility for payment of pensions to former Spanish workers; what is the estimated total future liability of the Gibraltar Government in this respect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: Discussions with the Gibraltar Government about how their responsibility will be met are proceeding; the total liability is not yet established. The Government will make a significant contribution for the first year while the matter of future contributions is pursued.

Copyright

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, when setting the overseas aid budget for the next financial year, he will make it his policy not to grant aid to those states which export products to the United Kingdom which breach international copyright conventions.

Mr. Raison: We take many factors into account in providing aid to individual countries. The Government are participating fully in initiatives to combat privacy and counterfeiting within the GATT, the European Community, the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the Council of Europe.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities and Polytechnics (Student Places)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessments have been made by his Department of the demand for student places at universities and polytechnics during the next three years;

how these compare with the numbers which were available between 1982 and 1985; and how far central Government financing for tertiary education institutions takes these future assessments into account.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department assesses demand for higher education as a whole. Such forecasts were more recently published in "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524). Revised projections should be published next year. Total student numbers are expected to remain at broadly present levels or to increase slightly over the next three years compared with 1984. Provisional figures for the United Kingdom as a whole show that in 1984-85 there were 540,000 home full-time and sandwich students in higher education compared with 519,000 in 1982-83. The comparable figures for my own areas of responsibility (Great Britain universities and advanced further education in England) are 478,000 and 466,000, respectively. The Government's expenditure plans should provide sufficient resources to allow demand to be met at the expected level.

College Building Modernisation

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to allow colleges to use the full proceeds of the sale of redundant buildings to modernise and extend the rest of their buildings.

Mr. Walden: New arrangements to allow universities greater freedom to retain the proceeds of sale of land and buildings were announced by my right hon. Friend on 15 January at columns *91-92*. These already allow universities (subject to the approval of the University Grants Committee) to use some or all of the proceeds of sale on cost-effective schemes to rationalise or replace existing buildings. My right hon. Friend is prepared to consider the possibility of allowing similar freedom to those colleges which are grant-aided by the Department. The entire sale proceeds of redundant college and polytechnic buildings belonging to local authorities are retained by them. They may, if they wish, apply the proceeds to modernise or extend the remainder of their buildings, subject to regulations made under schedule 12 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. These currently provide that local authorities may use up to 30 per cent. of the sale proceeds to enhance their capital allocations in any given year. The arrangements for the control of local authority capital expenditure are currently under review and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment hopes to publish proposals in a Green Paper early in the new year.

Students (Drop-out Rate)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the annual drop-out rate for students of universities and polytechnics in the United Kingdom each year since 1979.

Mr. Walden: The information, for all years since 1979, in respect of universities in Great Britain is not readily available. However, analyses conducted on 1979 and 1983 figures estimate that 10·1 per cent. and 7·8 per cent., respectively, of full-time undergraduates left before completion of their course. Of those 5·9 per cent. and 4·5 per cent., respectively, left during their first year. Further work is in progress on the methodology behind these analyses which may lead to the revision of the figures. Similar information for students at polytechnics is not available.

Vocational Qualifications (Review)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about his review of vocational qualifications.

Mr. Chris Patten: The review group on vocational qualifications, chaired by Mr. H. G. de Ville, made an interim report on 23 September to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, Employment, Wales, and to the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission. A copy of the interim report has been placed in the Library. It offers a statement of objectives for an improved system of vocational qualifications and specific recommendations for the certification of the two-year youth training scheme; my right hon. Friends have indicated their acceptance of these. The report also sets out options for an improved qualifications structure and for the appropriate machinery for achieving that; these are currently the subject of consultation with the interests concerned. A final report is expected in April 1986.

CERN

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has reached a decision on the future level of United Kingdom participation in CERN.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has not yet taken a decision on the recommendations in the Kendrew report concerning the future level of the United Kingdom subscription to CERN.

Initial Teacher Training

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are or were undertaking courses of initial teacher training in England and Wales; and how many students were in each institution providing courses of initial training in *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1983-84, *(d)* 1982-83 and *(e)* 1981-82.

Mr. Walden: Information for 1985-86 is not yet available. The total number of students undertaking courses of initial teacher training in England and Wales in each of the previous four years is as follows:

Students on ITT courses in England and Wales Universities and Public Sector Establishments: 1 November of each year

	Number
1981	33,300
1982	31,300
1983	30,900
1984	31,700

The numbers of students in each year undertaking courses of initial teacher training in each public sector establishment in England which offers such courses are shown in the tables. Figures for individual universities cannot be shown without obtaining the consent of each university at disproportionate cost. Figures for public sector institutions in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Students on courses of initial teacher training in Polytechnics
England: 1 November each year

	1984	1983	1982	1981
North East London Polytechnic	67	92	137	117
Middlesex Polytechnic	488	437	458	408
Kingston Polytechnic	305	274	220	262
City of Birmingham Polytechnic	352	354	309	427
Lanchester Polytechnic	0	0	0	0
The Polytechnic of Wolverhampton	524	520	649	680
Liverpool Polytechnic	636	625	95	107
Manchester Polytechnic	698	657	413	785
Sheffield City Polytechnic	656	579	659	664
Huddersfield Polytechnic	339	421	450	432
Leeds Polytechnic	567	527	463	544
Newcastle Polytechnic	335	317	278	320
Sunderland Polytechnic	308	269	249	230
Polytechnic of North London	320	299	338	305
Polytechnic of the South Bank	343	332	303	246
City of London Polytechnic	0	0	0	0
Polytechnic of Central London	0	0	0	0
Thames Polytechnic	92	147	203	182
Bristol Polytechnic	484	431	430	457
Teesside Polytechnic	23	55	82	81
Plymouth Polytechnic	0	0	0	0
Brighton Polytechnic	791	681	661	719
Portsmouth Polytechnic	216	183	182	200
Hatfield Polytechnic	0	0	15	0
Preston Polytechnic	0	0	0	0
Leicester Polytechnic	116	154	230	305
Trent Polytechnic	675	556	566	614
Oxford Polytechnic	306	318	310	199
North Staffordshire Polytechnic	28	52	153	214
All Polytechnics	8,669	8,270	7,853	8,498

Students on Courses of Initial Teacher Training in Maintained Colleges (other than Polytechnics) England: 1 November each year

Maintained College	1984	1983	1982	1981
Avery Hill	640	610	581	613
Bath College of Higher Education	641	622	563	551
Bedford College of Higher Education	422	432	454	485
Bradford/Ilkley	220	310	217	219
Bretton Hall	296	252	202	241
Bulmershe	527	551	585	604
Charlotte Mason	308	255	194	170
Chelmer Institute of Higher Education	183	185	162	164
Crewe and Alsager	583	537	541	613
Dorset	63	94	214	274
Edge Hill	686	654	647	669
Hertfordshire College of Higher Education	417	366	377	447
Humberside	127	115	144	219
City of Liverpool College of Higher Education	0	0	324	350
Manchester College of Higher Education	0	0	276	334
Matlock College of Higher Education	0	0	246	269
Nene	336	278	256	289
New College	111	166	264	253
North Cheshire	0	25	62	114
North Riding	370	342	298	260
Rolle	361	328	318	324
West Midlands	346	361	395	399
Worcester	578	543	544	570
Total	7,215	7,026	7,864	8,431

Students on Courses of Initial Teacher Training in Grant-Aided Colleges: England: 1 November each year

Grant-Aided College	1984	1983	1982	1981
Bishop Grosseteste	305	209	189	200
Chester	386	386	417	431
Christ Church	377	347	322	300
De La Salle	136	297	446	399
Derby Lonsdale/Derbyshire	32	364	234	253
Goldsmiths	530	484	421	640
Homerton	264	239	329	366

Grant-Aided College	1984	1983	1982	1981
King Alfreds	625	564	559	570
La Sainte Union	377	309	251	319
Liverpool Institute of Higher Education	626	589	533	0
Newman	304	239	249	311
Ripon York	559	563	564	537
Roehampton	1,026	926	849	878
St. Mark and St. John	313	294	301	322
St. Martins	424	387	390	433
St. Mary Fenham	3	39	86	126
St. Mary Twickenham	423	389	402	412
St. Paul and St. Mary	601	518	510	482
Trinity and All Saints	412	338	315	308
West London Institute of Higher Education	408	385	377	469
West Sussex Institute of Higher Education	518	453	388	438
Westhill	255	230	209	204
Westminster (Oxford)	377	346	352	358
Total	9,281	8,895	8,693	8,756

Open University

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of financing he intends to allocate to the Open university during the next three years; and how this compares with the financing it has received from his Department during the last three years.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend received the report of the Open university visiting committee on 25 November. He hopes to reach decisions on the Open university's grant in the near future.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how summer school fees and Open university tuition fees in 1979 compare with those in 1971 in 1971 constant prices.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	1971 fee £	1979 fee at 1971 prices (£)
Summer School fee	25	18
Tuition fee	20	19

The conversion to constant prices has been made using the GDP deflator.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how summer school fees and Open university tuition fees in 1985 compared with those in 1979 in 1979 constant prices.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	1979 fee £	1985 fee at 1979 prices (£)
Summer school fee	52	57
Tuition fees	55	85

The conversion to constant prices has been made using the GDP deflator on the basis of the assumed figure for 1985.

Student Awards

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to narrow the financial gap between students receiving maximum grant and those receiving minimum grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Narrowing the financial gap betwen the maximum and minimum grant would involve the reintroduction of the minimum maintenance payment. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 28 November 1985, at column *627*, there is no intention to do this.

Children with Special Needs

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of places for children of compulsory school age with special needs *(a)* in each local education authority in England, *(b)* for all local education authorities in England, *(c)* for privately run special schools and *(d)* the total of such places (i) for all such children and (ii) expressed in those categories used as classification by his Department in each of the last 10 years and the percentage change involved in each case.

Mr. Dunn: Because a large number of children with special educational needs are educated in ordinary schools, the question cannot be answered in this form.

Religious Education Teachers

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the extent to which the availability of religious education teachers in secondary schools is consistent with the statutory obligations regarding the inclusion of religious education in the school curriculum as laid down in the Education Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government look to local education authorities and schools to ensure that religious instruction is provided in schools in accordance with the statutory requirements. My right hon. Friend has sought to ensure, through the planning of intakes to initial teacher training, that there is an adequate supply of suitably trained teachers to meet the staffing requirements of schools in respect of religious education, and has no evidence to suggest that demand is not being met. Local authorities have nevertheless been encouraged to keep under review the match between the qualifications and deployment of teachers already in the schools, so that provision may be made at an appropriate standard.

Academic Tenure

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now publish his proposals for legislation to limit academic tenure in the universities.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. Proposals for legislation to limit academic tenure in the universities for future appointments and promotions, and to amend provision for dismissal for good cause, have recently been published and sent to the Association of University Teachers and Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for their views. Copies of the proposals have been placed in the Library of the House.

Poundswick School

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what correspondence he has received about the Poundswick school dispute in Manchester; and what replies he has sent or will be sending.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1985, c. *228*]: My right hon. Friend has replied to the right hon. Member today. The text of his letter is as follows:

9 December 1985

Dear Alfred,

Further to your recent Question in the Commons and also to your letters of 22 October, 28 October and 1 December enclosing letters and a petition from various constituents and others concerned about the dispute at Poundswick High School, I am now able to give you a substantive reply.

I have received representations from six Members, including yourself, and from 26 members of the general public.

I have been watching the progress of events with concern, and have considered carefully whether it is a matter in which I should intervene. I have made detailed inquiries of the Manchester Education Authority about the events leading up to the present situation with a view to establishing whether I should use my power of intervention under Section 68 of the Education Act 1944. Under section 68 the holder of my office is not called upon or entitled to substitute his judgement for that of the local education authority. He is only entitled to consider whether the decision made by the LEA was arbitrary or otherwise such that no reasonable LEA could have taken it. In the light of my inquiries and the other information at my disposal I have concluded that there are insufficient grounds for me to be satisfied that the authority's action has been unreasonable in the sense in which that term has—as explained above—to be interpreted in law.

I nevertheless remain very concerned about the continuing disruption to the education of all the pupils at Poundswick, and in this connection my Department has now written to Manchester Education Authority. The text of the letter is as follows:

"I am directed by the Secretary of State to write about the situation at Poundswick High School.

The Secretary of State has considered all the information available to him, including that supplied by the Authority at his request on 25 October, with a view to determining whether there is a case for his giving directions under Section 68 of the Education Act 1944. The authority will wish to know that he is not satisfied that the information available to him affords a sufficient basis for him to intervene under that section.

He is nevertheless concerned about the prolonged disruption that has arisen to the education of many of the pupils: I am to ask the Authority how it proposes to discharge its duty under the Education Acts to secure the efficient full-time education of the pupils.

I am to ask for a reply to this letter no later than 17 December."

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands (Fisheries)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of interests in the Falkland Islands about the management and conservation of fisheries.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has recently had discussions on this subject with representatives of Falkland Islands interests, including members of the Falkland Islands Committee and the Falkland Islands Association.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated expenditure in this financial year on the education of children of British civil servants working in the European Economic Community whose schooling is either paid for or subsidised by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Eggar: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff on secondment to European Community institutions. In the current financial year the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will only have one member of staff on secondment to the European Community institutions, in this case the European Commission. No expenditure will be incurred on education costs.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated expenditure in this financial year on the education of children of members of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service whose schooling is either paid for or subsidised by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated expenditure in this financial year is £8,239,143. This covers the education of children of members of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service, including staff of the communications departments and members of the Home Civil Service currently on secondment to the Diplomatic Service.

SCOTLAND

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is conducting discussions with the police concerning the tape recording of interviews with suspects in police stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: On 16 October 1985 the Scottish Home and Health Department issued a consultation paper seeking the views of several organisations with interest in criminal justice on issues relating to the tape recording of police interviews with suspects in Scotland. These organisations include the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents and the Scottish Police Federation. My right hon. Friend intends to make a statement when he has received and considered the responses to the consultation paper.

Road Maintenance Condition Survey

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the results of the Scottish road maintenance condition survey.

Mr. Ancram: Comprehensive information is maintained by my Department for trunk roads and motorways only, using a system which identifies lengths of road with defects requiring treatment. The aggregate results for recent years are set out:

	Lengths of trunk road and motorway requiring treatment (kms)
1980	278
1981	301
1982	291
1983	315
1984	360

A number of regional and islands councils, under the auspices of the Scottish branch of the County Surveyors' Society, co-operate in producing a separate roads condition survey for their own needs. I do not have the results at my disposal.

Licensing (Scotland) Act

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what areas of research he expects to be covered by the anticipated Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report on the working of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. John MacKay: The OPCS survey covers *(a)* volume and types of alcohol consumed; times and days, places and locations when alcohol is consumed; and lunchtime drinking with pub lunches; *(b)* public attitudes towards late-night pub and hotel drinking, Sunday pub drinking, all-day opening, the admission of children into pubs providing bar lunches; and the opening of off licences on Sundays; and *(c)* sex and age of drinkers—particularly women of childbearing age.

In addition to the survey of the public's attitude, OPCS carried out a survey of licensees to ascertain their views on certain aspects of the present legislation.

Construction Industry

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to reduce unemployment in the construction industry in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The construction industry in Scotland has shared in the general economic upturn experienced over the last few years. Employment prospects in the industry depend on the Government's adherence to policies which will continue to promote economic recovery and the right environment for growth.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the construction industry in Scotland in June 1979 and at the last available date.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of employees in employment in the construction industry in Scotland is estimated to have been 157,000 in June 1979, and 114,000 in June 1985.

Dental Charges

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions dentists have recorded the cost of treatment as the reason for a patient not completing a course of treatment in part II of the National Health Service dental estimate form F.P.17 in each of the last three years; and if he will collate and publish figures on the incidence of this problem in future.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is not available and I do not believe its collection in this way would serve any useful purpose.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will explain the manner in which he intends to distribute additional rate support grant and to adjust relevant expenditure between local authorities in respect of the costs of running list D schools following the transfer of responsibility for those schools from his Department to local authorities.

Mr. Ancram: The additional rate support grant and expenditure provision for 1986-87 will be allocated to regional and islands authorities in direct proportion to the number of children for whom they were responsible in list D schools at 31 March 1985.

Forestry Commissioners

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if the Forestry Commission will be producing guidance notes for its staff on its new duty under the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985;

(2) what specific changes the Forestry Commission intends to make in order to fulfil its new duty under the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, with particular regard to achieving a reasonable balance between afforestation and timber production and landscape and wildlife conservation in the wider countryside.

Mr. John MacKay: It has for some years been the policy of the Forestry Commission to seek a reasonable balance between the needs of forestry and of the environment, and this was brought out in the evidence submitted by the commission to the Environment Committee of the House last year when it considered the operation and effectiveness of part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The appointment by the commission of a landscape consultant and of a conservation consultant, the preparation of conservation plans to cover the commission's forests, and the review of broadleaves policy, all took place before the placing of a statutory duty on the commission by the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985.

The placing of a duty on the commission under that Act —while welcome, in that it gave statutory force to the policy of seeking the right balance—did not therefore necessitate its having to make any immediate change of course or to instruct its staff to operate in very different ways. Nevertheless, the director general of the commission wrote to all his staff, before the Act came into operation, drawing their attention to the new statutory duty and reminding them of their responsibility to act in a positive way to achieve the balance required. In addition, the commission is proposing to update its existing publications and guidance after detailed consultations with the environmental agencies and bodies most closly concerned.

Childhood Cancer

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Her Majesty's Government are carrying out or intend to carry out any investigations into the incidence of childhood cancers in the areas around *(a)*Holy Loch and *(b)* Rosyth.

Mr. John MacKay: I am considering how best the necessary complex statistical and epidemiological analysis of claims made about the incidence of childhood cancers in the areas around Holy Loch and Rosyth can be undertaken.

Higher Education

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on a future strategy for higher education in Scotland; and if he will also make a statement on the further work of the council.

Mr. Younger: The report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council (STEAC) on its review of future strategy for higher education in Scotland has been published today as a Command Paper. Copies will be available in the Vote Office.

I shall wish to receive comments on the report before decisions are taken on the council's recommendations; such comments should be sent to the Scottish Education Department by 27 March 1986. The Government will consider the report and comments on it in the wider context of consideration of future higher education policies following the Green Paper on higher education (Cmnd. 9524).

There is, however, one specific matter arising from the STEAC report to which I wish to refer at this stage. STEAC proposes that a planning and funding body should be established to cover both the university and non-university sectors in Scotland, but that such a body should in the first instance have responsibility for academic planning and the co-ordination of provision only. STEAC recommends that the addition of funding responsibility (within arrangements involving the transfer of responsibility for the Scottish universities from the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the Secretary of State for Scotland) should be subject to certain conditions, including the safeguarding of continued access by the Scottish universities to a United Kingdom-based peer review system.

STEAC further recommends that the committee reviewing the University Grants Committee chaired by Lord Croham, which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 25 July, should be invited to consider how such continued access might be secured in the event that administrative and financial responsibility were transferred in the manner proposed. Although the Government have at this stage not reached a view on these proposals, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Northern Ireland have agreed to invite Lord Croham's committee to consider in relation to its terms of reference the implications of adopting the STEAC recommendations concerning the planning and funding of higher education in Scotland having regard in particular to the concern expressed in the STEAC report that continued access by the Scottish universities to a United Kingdom-based peer review system would be desirable. This is being done in advance of general consultations on the report because of the need to give that committee the maximum notice of this additional task. It is entirely without prejudice to future decisions on the STEAC report.

I am still considering what additional tasks it may be appropriate to invite STEAC to undertake. Meanwhile, I have decided to ask STEAC to join in discussions with other advisory bodies on the future distribution of student numbers in the different sectors of higher education in the United Kingdom.

STEAC's present term of office expires in July 1986. Its longer-term future will be decided in the light of comments on its strategy and of its further work.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each of the last 12 months for which figures are available *(a)* the number of visitors applying for entry clearance to the United

Kingdom at ports of entry, *(b)* the number of visitors whose applications have been refused, *(c)* the number of such cases in which Members of Parliament have intervened, *(d)* the number of cases under *(c)* in which temporary admission has been granted pending representations, and *(e)* the number of cases under *(c)* in which detention has been applied pending representations; and if he will give these figures for (i) visitors from Bangladesh and (ii) all visitors, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: The precise information requested is either not available or could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, figures are available for the numbers of citizens of (i) Bangladesh and (ii) all non-EC countries who were *(a)* admitted as visitors and *(b)* refused leave to enter and subsequently removed for each month in the period July 1984 to June 1985; figures for refusals, but not, as yet, for admissions, are also available for July to October and are given in the table.

TABLE A

	Visitors admitted		*Refused admission and removed*	
Month of admission/ removal	*Bangladesh*	*Non-EC Total*	*Bangladesh*	*Non-EC Total*
1984				
July	1,400	776,000	26	1,780
August	1,060	737,000	36	1,830
September	880	641,000	34	1,700
October	670	460,000	69	1,670
November	620	343,000	37	1,270
December	640	343,000	59	1,600
1985				
January	440	260,000	55	1,280
February	400	343,000	42	990
March	540	420,000	53	1,280
April	680	468,000	47	1,220
May	820	637,000	50	1,230
June	1,250	847,000	50	1,390
July	*	*	70	1,600
August	*	*	99	1,800
September	*	*	153	1,860
October	*	*	192	1,790

* Not yet available.

Information is also available for recent months on the numbers of citizens of Bangladesh refused leave to enter, but not necessarily subsequently removed, and representations from hon. Members at Heathrow terminal 3; those figures for July, August and September were given in a reply to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on 29 October at columns *408-9*, and are as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Refusals of entry		
July	22	129
August	28	237
September	22	318
TOTAL	72	684
Representations from hon. Members		
July	7	57
August	4	122
September	5	181
TOTAL	16	360

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used by immigration officers in deciding whether to allow a visitor refused entry temporary admission pending representations by an hon. Member.

Mr. Waddington: Paragraph 21 of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act gives an immigration officer authority to admit temporarily to the United Kingdom any person who is liable to be detained or is detained under paragraph 16 of the same schedule. It may only be used pending the completion of an examination, the implementation of removal directions, or when a decision to refuse entry has been taken but is being reconsidered. The immigration officer may grant temporary admission subject to such restrictions as to residence and reporting to an immigration officer or to the police as are considered necessary.

Temporary admission is granted readily to any person who, in the judgment of the immigration officer, can be trusted to comply with its terms and is not therefore likely to abscond. Compassionate aspects, such as age and infirmity, are taken into account as is the reliability of any sponsor involved. These criteria are applied to all cases, including those where representations are made by right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances relatives, friends or representatives are able to remain with travellers arriving from or returning to the port during an interview by immigration officers.

Mr. Waddington: The initial examination of a person arriving in the United Kingdom is normally conducted by the immigration officer with the individual passenger alone. Exceptions are made where members of a family are travelling together. The presence of friends or representatives is not at this stage normally allowed. In any subsequent interview the presence of friends or representatives is normally allowed, subject to their agreement that this will be only as observers and to the consent of the passenger.

Police (Raids)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the raid on seven homes in Brailsford and Arlingford roads, London SW2, in the week commencing 28 October, to include the number of charges resulting from the raid, the cost thereof and the number of police officers deployed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that as a result of a raid on a house in Brailsford road, SW2, one man has been charged with arson and arson with intent to endanger life. Sixty-nine policy officers, two scene of crime officers and two photographers were deployed to this operation as a part of normal duties; no additional costs were incurred.

Police (Drivers)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether police drivers have to undergo special training before being allowed to drive patrol cars on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Before performing motorway patrol duties police officers are generally required to complete

both an advanced driving course and a traffic patrol course. These courses include specific training for motorway duties.

Departmental Broadcasting Unit

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in connection with what programmes the broadcasting unit of his Department has made contact with (i) the British Broadcasting Corporation and (ii) the IBA in the last month.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The broadcasting department is in regular contact with the BBC and IBA about a variety of matters. No detailed record is kept of such contacts.

Brixton Prison

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will outline the search procedures followed for *(a)* a strip search and *(b)* a body search, as carried out in Brixton prison on female remand prisoners;

(2) whether he will publish in a table the number of cell changes that have taken place during the months of October and November on female remand prisoners in Brixton prison, and the frequency;

(3) whether he will publish a table showing the number of cell searches carried out on the two female remand prisoners held in Brixton prison during the months of October and November, detailing the frequency and whether they were carried out during the day or night;

(4) on what basis, random strip searches are carried out in Brixton prison, in addition to strip searches being carried out on entering and leaving the prison, for female remand prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The practices followed by Brixton prison have been in accordance with rule 39 of the Prison Rules 1964 and with standing instructions. These provide that every prisoner shall be given a strip search on reception and at other times thereafter including those at which they have been carried out at Brixton—that is, before and after court appearances, after visits, and at the time of cell changes and wing and cell searches; that a prisoner shall be searched in as seemly a manner as is consistent with discovering anything concealed; that no prisoner shall be stripped and searched in the sight of another prisoner; that no female inmate shall be searched in the sight or presence of a male officer; and that a prisoner shall be searched only by an officer of the same sex. For reasons which the hon. Member will understand, it is not the practice to disclose detailed information such as that requested about security arrangements — for example, the frequency of cell changes or cell searches. However, my noble Friend will write to the hon. Member giving such further information as he can.

Leo Walker and Judith Bennett

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley as to progress with inquiries into allegations against Leo Walker and Judith Bennett, trading variously as Southern Technical Services, Trendhart Ltd. and Odestage Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Thames Valley police informs me that inquiries are being made into Southern Technical Services, Trendhart Ltd. and Odestage Ltd. following a complaint of theft.

Greenham Common (Police Vans)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley police as to the arrangements for the safety and emergency evacuation of police vans specifically in use for transporting to nearby courts persons arrested in the vicinity of the Greenham common air base.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Thames Valley police that both police vans and purpose-built prison vans have been used to convey persons arrested around Greenham common air base to nearby courts, and that both types of vehicles are widely used by police forces. Adequate arrangements for evacuation in an emergency are provided in all these vehicles.

Departmental Objectives

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a statement of the objectives of his Department, and of the indicators it uses to assess the extent to which they have been achieved.

Mr. Hurd: The overriding duty of my Department is to discharge its functions efficiently, effectively and economically. Its most important objectives include the maintenance of the Queen's peace, the rule of law and the prevention of crime, and the satisfactory discharge of its specific statutory responsibilities. My accountability to Parliament provides a continuing test of the performance of the Department. I attach importance to the level of public confidence in the criminal justice system and in the services which support it. More specific indicators include the achievement of financial and manpower budgets and the completion of the prison building programme.

Dr. Sathananthian

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the arrangements under which Dr. Sathananthian is enabled to prescribe heroin to registered addicts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Electoral Rolls

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* each of the parliamentary constituencies in Hampshire in ranking order according to the size of their current electorates and indicating the percentage variation on the English average of 68,716 electors per constituency.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested has been taken from OPCS Monitor EL85/2 (published 4 June 1985) and is as follows:

Parliamentary Constituency	1985 Electorate	Percentage Difference from English Average
Eastleigh	86,329	+25·6
Hampshire, East	84,333	+22·7
Portsmouth, North	80,366	+17·0
Aldershot	80,153	+16·6
Basingstoke	76,838	+11·8
Portsmouth, South	76,303	+11·0
Havant	75,880	+10·4
Winchester	75,590	+10·0
Romsey and Waterside	75,337	+ 9·6
Fareham	75,104	+ 9·3
Southampton, Test	74,891	+ 9·0
Southampton, Itchen	73,657	+ 7·2
New Forest	73,452	+ 6·9
Hampshire, North-West	69,026	+ 0·5
Gosport	68,253	− 0·7

Civil Defence

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek to give to civil defence volunteers powers to safeguard items of artistic importance in the event of natural or manmade disaster.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department that the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 give local government authorities powers to recruit, train and exercise Civil Defence volunteers. The primary role of the volunteer is to safeguard the civilian population during and after an armed attack on this country. Although there is no specific provision for it in the regulations, they could take measures to protect art treasures if so directed at the time, but their first responsibility would remain to the welfare of the public. Similarly they could be used in the event of a natural disaster.

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether items of artistic importance are listed in terms of priority for safeguarding in the event of natural or manmade disaster.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

Of the wide range of conceivable natural disasters which could affect national art treasures, only flooding in central London has been regarded as sufficiently probable and predictable to call for planning measures which were likely to be feasible and effective. This particular risk has now been eliminated by the completion of the Thames barrier.

Arrangements exist for safeguarding the most important of the nation's art treasures against the risk of destruction or damage in the event of war. As paragraph 2.9 of the Government's observations (Cmnd. 9127) on the Eighth Report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, Session 1981-82, explained, the directors of national collections are asked to arrange for the earmarking of items to be moved if an emergency should arise.

The selection of the limited number of key items for which emergency transport and alternative accommodation can be provided is a matter for the authorities concerned with each collection. The Government's observations explained why it would not be in the public interest to publish further details of these arrangements.

ENVIRONMENT

Water

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the new draft model water byelaws have been withdrawn and their publication delayed; when he now expects to publish them; and whether he intends to extend the requirement for potability to water supplies not directly derived from the water mains.

Mr. John Patten: Publication of the Department's new model water byelaws has been delayed because legal drafting has taken longer than expected. I now expect the model to be published early next year. It is for Parliament to fix byelaw-making powers to private suppliers of water.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why, under the provisions of article 9 of the European Community directive (80/778/EC) relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption, he has granted a derogation for parameters such as aluminium, nitrates and nitrites present in drinking water due to waterworks practice or environmental pollution.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have granted these derogations under article 9(1)*(a)* of EC directive 80/778 because in the relevant cases there is no public health hazard, and the other terms of the directive are satisfied.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for the introduction of devices intended to discourage the use of water for hygiene purposes in the home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have no such proposals.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in the United Kingdom receive drinking water which does not meet European standards set out in European Community directive 80/778; and if he will give the reasons for this.

Mr. John Patten: Water authorities and water companies in England have applied for and been granted departures under articles 9 and 20 of the directive in respect of water supplies to about 25 per cent. of the population. Many of these applications relate to harmless constituents of the raw water which can nevertheless affect its taste or appearance; for example, iron, manganese and discoloration. As provided for in the directive, where there is any health risk or the excess is due to poor treatment works or distribution systems, programmes of improvement are in train.

Responsibility for these matters in other parts of the United Kingdom rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Sewers

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to include provision for investment in sewerage in any legislative or administrative measures for the privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. John Patten: The possible privatisation of the water authorities is under active consideration. An announcement will be made in due course. Whatever is decided will provide for the continuing effectiveness of the sewerage system.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken to seek to ensure that the sewer systems in inner city areas are adequate to withstand the risk of flooding by sewage; what further measures are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for sewer systems in inner city areas, as elsewhere, rests with water authorities. Provision for necessary work on such systems is included in the water authorities' plans and is taken into account in the Government's public expenditure decisions. Capital expenditure on sewerage by the water authorities in England and Wales in 1986-87 is expected to reach about £290 million, compared with £275 million in the current year out of total sums for capital expenditure of over £900 million in 1986-87 and about £820 million in the current year.

Council House Sales

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount obtained from the sale of council houses during each of the last three years; and how much of this councils have been permitted to spend during the same period.

Sir George Young: Receipts from sales of council houses by local authorities in England (including mortgage repayments) were £1,300 million in 1982-83, £1,373 million in 1983-84 and £1,253 million in 1984-85. The prescribed proportion of these receipts which authorities could use for capital expenditure each year was 50 per cent. in 1982-83 and 1983-84 and 40 per cent. in 1984-85. Each year authorities are also permitted to use for capital expenditure the prescribed proportion of accumulated receipts from earlier years.

Sporting Events (Sponsorship)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to seek an end to the promotion and sponsorship of sport and sporting events by the tobacco industry.

Mr. Tracey: The promotion and sponsorship of sport and sporting events by tobacco companies is restricted by a voluntary agreement between the Government and the industry. The agreement stands until at least 31 December this year. I am currently considering what changes to seek to the agreement, both in the light of advice from the medical profession and the views of other bodies concerned as well as public reaction, and following the continuing negotiations between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and the industry in respect of the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising.

Construction Industry

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest consultations which he has been having with representatives of the construction industry in respect of their claims for increased Government financing of the infrastructure.

Mr. John Patten: My ministerial colleagues and I maintain close and frequent contact with the construction industry. Its views are well known to us, including those on the present level of public expenditure on infrastructure. The autumn statement provided, within the Government's overall economic framework, for additional finance in several areas of capital expenditure, including housing, roads, water and the Health Service.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek to reduce unemployment in the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the numbers of construction workers unemployed; what plans he has to stimulate the employment of out-of-work construction workers on improving buildings and the environment; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The latest results from the Department of Employment's labour force survey indicate that in spring 1984 there were about 200,000 people in England and Wales who had had a job in the construction industry within the previous three years and who were then without a paid job and seeking employment. The corresponding figure for 1983 was 230,000.

This suggests that employment in the construction industry is increasing, a trend confirmed by the latest figures available from my Department's housing and construction statistics which show that 24,000 more people were employed in the industry in Great Britain in 1984 than in 1983.

The best way to create long term employment in the construction industry is to keep down public borrowing, thus lowering interest rates and inflation. This will benefit the industry through encouraging business investment and private housing expenditure. At the same time, the annual review of spending announced in the recent autumn statement, provided the opportunity, within our overall economic framework, to reconsider priorities and allow for additional finance in several areas of capital spending, especially housing renovation, roads, water and the Health Service. This should also encourage employment in the construction industry.

Municipal Housing (Rent Arrears)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a detailed breakdown of gross rent arrears of council house rents referred to in the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), on Monday 2 December to the hon. Member for Dorset, North showing a detailed breakdown of types of authorities and the amounts of arrears due from authorities in each city and district in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: I will put the information into the Library shortly.

Kirklees (Empty Council Properties)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of empty council properties in total and in each of the districts of Kirklees metropolitan district council on 30 November.

Sir George Young: This information is not available. The number of dwellings owned by Kirklees metropolitan district council which were vacant at 1 April 1985, is

contained in its housing investment programme return which is in the Library. The council may be able to provide more detailed information.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on the review of the financial guidelines to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Laurence Gould Consultants Ltd. reported on its review of the financial guidelines for management agreements in September. Its report is currently being considered in detail.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in West Sussex.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that there are 55 sites of special interest in West Sussex. I am writing to my hon. Friend with details.

Council Houses (Maintenance)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average expenditure on maintenance per council house in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In 1984-85, the estimated expenditure on repairs and maintenance from the housing revenue accounts of local authorities was £274 per dwelling. This compares with expenditure of £113 per dwelling in 1978-79, and represents and increase over that period of 142 per cent. in cash terms and 34 per cent. in real terms.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information his Department has about how many people in England and Wales live in *(a)* municipal housing, *(b)* housing association accommodation and *(c)* other private rented accommodation;

(2) how many elderly people in Portsmouth and Hampshire, respectively, live in *(a)* municipal housing, *(b)* housing association accommodation and *(c)* other private rented accommodation;

(3) if he will estimate the number of elderly people in England and Wales who do not live in a home owned by themselves or owned by relatives;

(4) if he will estimate the number of people in Portsmouth and Hampshire, respectively, who do not live in a home owned by themselves or owned by relatives.

Sir George Young: The following analyses of people enumerated in the 1981 census appear for England and Wales in the national report for Great Britain part 1 and for Hampshire and Portsmouth in the county report for Hampshire, part 1:

Persons usually resident in private households by the tenure of the household

All ages	Table 25 of the census
Pensionable age	Table 39 of the census

Persons not in private households by type of establishment

All ages and pensionable age	Table 9 of the census

People living in households headed by owners to whom they are not related, are not separately tabulated.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the Greater London council's programme to give training opportunities to its manual workers and unskilled staff is continued by the London residuary body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: It will be for successor bodies, including the London residuary body, to determine their own training programmes for their employees.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any services and property of the Greater London council not covered by the Local Government Act 1985 are currently being considered by his Department for transfer to the City of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: All the services and property of the GLC are covered by the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department on consultancy fees connected with the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: £111,200.

Smith Houses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to local authorities seeking to sell Smith houses.

Mr. John Patten: Copies of the Building Research Establishment's report on the structural condition of Smith houses were sent in December 1983 to all local authorities reported to own houses of this type. We would expect authorities to make available to purchasers any information they had on the structure or condition of these properties.

I will be announcing shortly our conclusions on the designation of Smith houses, together with the findings of BRE's recent investigation of Smith houses in Sandwell.

Waste Disposal (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the likely costs to the London borough of Newham of the waste disposal service after 1 April 1986 compared with that borough's present contribution to the service provided by the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: These costs will depend upon the decisions taken by the East London waste authority (to be established on 1 January 1986 under the Waste Regulation and Disposal (Authorities) Order 1985). The London borough of Newham will appoint members to this authority.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to ensure

consultation with the local communities affected by proposals for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Sir George Young: The London Docklands Development Corporation has instituted a regular series of meetings with local community groups. The corporation has met the Association of Island Communities, the Limehouse Development Group and the Docklands Forum to discuss proposals for Canary wharf. Further meetings with each group have been arranged to take place before Christmas.

Norfolk Broads

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis for his statement to the House on 4 December regarding the alleged hybridity of the proposed Bill to create a new regulatory authority for the Norfolk Broads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The promoters of the proposed Broads Bill were advised that legislation on the lines of the draft Bill ought to be effected by a public Bill, which would be hybrid, and should not be allowed to proceed as a private Bill. I understand that in coming to that view counsel was influenced by the wide issues of public policy raised by the proposed transfer to the new authority of many of the functions of other statutory authorities, and by the extent to which the new authority was to be financed by Exchequer funds. We believe this Bill to be in principle a good one and are at present considering what further steps could be taken.

Waste Disposal (West Yorkshire)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the levy on each authority in west Yorkshire for waste disposal, as defined in the Local Government Act 1985; and how the levy is arrived at.

Mrs. Rumbold: The authorities responsible for waste disposal in west Yorkshire will be the metropolitan district councils. They will meet their expenditure from their general rate funds in accordance with the agreement which they have made for joint arrangements for the discharge of this service.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made for the capital allocations by the district councils in west Yorkshire for waste disposal after 1 April 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have invited the local authority associations and others for comment on the proposal that my Department should invite bids for waste disposal capital resources for 1986-87 from all waste disposal authorities in Greater London and the metropolitan counties (including each district council in west Yorkshire) and should make allocations in the light of these bids. We are considering the responses.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the arrangements for the payment of capital debt for waste disposal in west Yorkshire.

Mrs. Rumbold: We propose that responsibility for servicing this debt should be discharged by the districts in the county in proportion to population.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of implementation by the residuary body of the arrangements for waste regulation and disposal in west Yorkshire under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under section 9 of, and schedule 6 to, the Local Government Act 1985 it is the metropolitan district councils in west Yorkshire, and not the residuary body, that become responsible at abolition for the waste regulation and disposal functions of the county council. Where these councils could with advantage make joint arrangements for these functions and had not done so by 15 November 1985, my right hon. Friend is under a duty to set up a single authority for those functions. However, as my right hon. Friend announced on 21 November, the district councils in west Yorkshire have made satisfactory joint arrangements for the discharge of these functions, and there is therefore no need for my right hon. Friend to intervene.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of *(a)* gross and *(b)* net capital expenditure by local authorities at (i) plan and (ii) estimated outturn in each year from 1981-82 and 1986-87.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will answer this question shortly.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the shares of total grant-related expenditure given to *(a)* London, *(b)* the metropolitan areas and *(c)* non-metropolitan areas in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87, provisional, taking account of all changes in definition and service transfers for year to year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The latest information for each year is as follows:

Shares of total GRE 1981-82 to 1986-87 (percentages)

	London	*Metropolitan areas*	*Non-metropolitan areas*
1981-82*	18·7	25·4	55·9
1982-83*	19·0	25·3	55·8
1983-84*	18·9	25·3	55·8
1984-85*	18·6	25·3	56·2
1985-86†	19·7	25·0	55·4
1986-87†	20·5	25·0	54·5

* For the years 1981-82 to 1984-85 estimates of current accepted expenditure for Transport Supplementary grant have been included with GREs in order to put figures for those years on a consistent basis with those for 1985-86 and 1986-87 to reflect the incorporation of transport supplementary grant taken to revenue into GREs from 1985-86.

† For the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 an estimate of the notional GRE for public transport in London has been added to London's GREs to maintain consistency with earlier years when London received GRE in respect of public transport revenue support.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish changes in the overall make-up of *(a)* total, *(b)* current and *(c)* relevant expenditure in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87, taking account of changes in definition and service transfers from year to year;

(2) if he will publish the shares of (i) block grant and (ii) rate support grant paid to *(a)* London, *(b)* metropolitan areas and *(c)* non-metropolitan areas at (i) budget and (ii) estimated outturn in each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will answer these questions shortly.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of those authorities or other bodies which make either precepts or other levies on boroughs and districts in (i) the Greater London area and (ii) the metropolitan county areas in *(a)* 1984-85, *(b)* 1985-86 and *(c)* his current expectations for 1986-87, including payments to any London rates equalisation schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is as follows.

A London rate equalisation scheme was made for 1984-85 and 1985-86. I expect a further scheme to be made for 1986-87.

	1984-1985	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
	Precepts	*Precepts*	*Precepts*
GLC Area	GLC	GLC	London Fire and Civil Defence Authority
	ILEA	ILEA	ILEA
	Receiver of Metropolitan Police	Receiver of Metropolitan Police	*Lea Valley regional park
			Receiver of Metropolitan police
		Levy	*Levy*
		Secretary of State for Transport	Secretary of State for Transport
			London Residuary Body
			Statutory waste regulation and/or disposal authorities where established
	Precepts	*Precepts*	*Precepts*
Metropolitan county areas	County councils	County Councils	Police authorities
			Fire and civil defence authorities
			Passenger transport authorities
			Levy
			Residuary Bodies
			Statutory waste regulation and/or disposal authorities where established

* Included in GLC precept for 1984-85 and 1985-86

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of block grant paid at budget to each of the authorities subject to rate limitation in 1985-86 in each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86, showing also the total for each year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is given in the table. The figures are in cash terms after holdback. Those for 1985-86 are at first supplementary report stage. London boroughs' figures for 1981-82 include grant paid in respect of the Greater London council and the Metropolitan police and for 1982-83 grant paid in respect of the Metropolitan police.

Block Grant at Budget £ million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Merseyside	69·6	69·8	67·8	62·5	80·8
South Yorkshire	67·6	68·5	68·3	62·3	67·9
Sheffield	90·2	86·0	82·8	84·3	85·2
Greater London Council	0	26·5	0	0	36·9
Inner London Education Authority	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	13·4	7·8	0	0	0
Greenwich	29·5	27·5	22·7	21·4	32·0
Hackney	41·6	41·9	42·7	41·2	33·5
Islington	25·2	27·5	21·6	0	21·5
Lambeth	47·1	52·5	44·1	32·4	40·7
Lewisham	46·0	44·2	42·5	38·7	43·8
Southwark	44·0	41·6	32·5	13·7	38·4
Brent	52·4	60·1	51·5	50·3	45·7
Haringey	56·1	60·0	51·6	50·2	44·0
Basildon	3·1	3·0	2·0	0	0·9
Leicester	9·2	8·3	8·3	9·7	11·7
Portsmouth	7·6	7·0	8·8	7·8	8·6
Thamesdown	4·4	3·8	3·0	2·5	1·9
Total Block Grant	8,289	8,304	8,405	8,176	7,939

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the net capital allocations to each local authority in 1984-85 and his most recent estimate of comparable outturn for that year, showing authorities by class, ranked from biggest excess over allocation to biggest expenditure below allocation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today placed in the Library a table giving the information requested which is taken from the fourth quarter capital payments returns completed by local authorities.

Local authorities are entitled to incur prescribed expenditure in excess of allocations by using the prescribed proportion of capital receipts.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the resources discount given to (i) inner London and (ii) outer London within the London arrangements for block grant in each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In 1981-82 the inner London resource discount was 23·5 per cent. and outer London discount was 10·6 per cent. These were increased to 29·6 per cent. and 17·2 per cent. respectively in 1982-83 and have not been changed since.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of expenditure by *(a)* the Greater London council and *(b)* each metropolitan county council which will be taken into account when setting the block grant arrangements for 1986-87, showing also the comparable figures for each authority in 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I hope to announce my decisions on the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 before the Christmas recess.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of total current expenditure undertaken by *(a)* the Greater London council and *(b)* the metropolitan county councils in 1985-86 will be transferred on 1 April 1986 to bodies outside local goverment, including residuary bodies, other quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, nationalised industries, new boards and other institutions; and if he will estimate how much will be transferred to each outside body.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The expenditure of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils that will be transferred on 1 April 1986 to residuary bodies and bodies outside local government is still subject to further decisions by the authorities and bodies concerned. Therefore, it is not possible at this stage to state what proportion of the total current expenditure undertaken by the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils in 1985-86 will be transferred on 1 April 1986 to residuary bodies and organisations outside local government.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the estimated aggregate Exchequer grant paid to local authorities in each year since 1978-79 *(a)* at settlement and *(b)* estimated outturn; and if he will also give the planned figure for 1986-87.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following is the information.

	Aggregate Exchequer grant	
	at settlement £ *million*	*latest estimate* £ *million*
England and Wales		
1978-79	*7,644	8,298
1979-80	†8,607	9,517
1980-81	‡9,600	11,182
England		
1981-82	10,895	10,939
1982-83	11,484	11,242
1983-84	11,782	11,486
1984-85	11,872	11,497
1985-86	11,764	11,225
1986-87	‖11,764	

Source: 1978-79 — 1980-81: Rate support grant orders and latest rate support grant (increase) orders.
1981-82 — 1985-86: Rate support grant reports and latest rate support grant (supplementary) reports.

Notes: All figures in cash prices except:
* at November 1977 prices.
† at November 1978 prices.
‡ at November 1979 prices.
‖ The 1986-87 figure is provisional, as announced in July 1985.

Legislation

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each piece of new legislation which fell within the responsibility of his Department in each year since 1979, showing the number of man days spent on each Bill in each year; and what is his estimate of the number of man-days expected to be spent on the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department's legislation for the years 1979 to date is as follows:

Session	*Title of Bill*	*Number of*	
		Clauses	*Schedules*
1979-80	Local Government Planning & Land (No. 2)	197	34
1979-80	New Towns	2	—
1979-80	National Heritage	18	2
1979-80	Housing	155	26
1980-81	Water Bill	7	—
1980-81	Wildlife and Countryside	74	17
1981-82	Local Government Finance	Withdrawn	
1981-82	Local Government Finance (No. 2)	39	6
1981-82	New Towns	2	—
1981-82	Derelict Land	4	—
1982-83	Water	11	5
1982-83	Housing & Building Control	Lost on Dissolution	
1982-83	Local Authorities Expenditure Powers	Lost on Dissolution	
1982-83	Mobile Homes	6	2
1983-84	Housing and Building Control	66	12
1983-84	Local Authorities Expenditure Powers	2	—
1983-84	Town and Country Planning (Crown Land)	6	—
1983-84	Rates	19	2
1983-84	Local Government (Interim Provisions)	13	—
1983-84	Housing Defects	29	4
1983-84	Somerset House	2	—
1984-85	Local Government	106	17
1984-85	New Towns and Urban Development Corporations	15	4
1984-85	Mineral Workings	11	2
1984-85	Town and Country Planning (Compensation)	3	—

Session	Title of Bill	Number of Clauses	Number of Schedules
1985-86	Local Government	11	—

A record of the number of man days on each Bill is not available.

The number of the man days spent on the Local Government Bill will depend on the realisation by the hon. Member and his colleagues of the importance and sensibility of this measure in protecting the interests of the ratepayer.

Northumberland Wharf (Transfer Station)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has refused consent for the redevelopment of the Northumberland wharf river waste transfer station.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has not refused consent for this redevelopment. As explained in his answer of 21 November at column *255-57* to my hon. Friend the member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg), he has withheld it until the London borough of Tower Hamlets has decided the exact nature of the redevelopment that it wishes to undertake on this site.

County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *223*, if he will publish the representations he has received during the past year concerning the future of county hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. Those representations which have been received have been passed to the London residuary body for consideration. They must be regarded as matters of commercial confidentiality between LRB and the parties concerned.

Queen Elizabeth II Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the bookings received so far in respect of the Queen Elizabeth II centre.

Sir George Young: It would not be appropriate for me to disclose details of bookings which are the subject of commercial confidence. Publicity is a matter for the sponsor of the particular events.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his intentions with regard to the future of the Greater London Enterprise Board.

Mr. Tracey: In giving consents to GLC expenditure to meet the running costs of the GLEB during the current financial year my right hon. Friend has made it clear that he would expect control of the board and its assets, which have been funded by London ratepayers, to pass at least to a significant proportion of London boroughs on abolition of the GLC. He therefore welcomes the steps which have been taken both to allow London boroughs to exercise a controlling influence from 1 April 1986, should they wish to do so, and for the board's assets to be returned to all London ratepayers via the residuary body in the event of the board's dissolution.

In order to enable the London boroughs to decide whether to exercise the option now proposed and to assist him in reaching a decision on outstanding applications for consent from the GLC for further grants to the board, my right hon. Friend has called for an independent assessment of the board's financial situation and viability to be undertaken with the following terms of reference:

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT GLEB

1. Review the arrangements proposed to be made with the London Boroughs to provide financial support for GLEB, both in respect of ongoing commitments of the Board in 1985-86 and 1986-87 and new investments proposed to be made.

2. Assess the minimum sum required from the GLC and/or the London Boroughs in 1985-86 and 1986-87 in order to maintain the value and viability of GLEB's existing assets and investments. This assessment will be based upon:

2.1 a review of the validity and appropriateness of the assumption and bases used by the Board in assessing the amount required;

2.2 a review of the adequacy of the financial data available to support the amount required;

2.3 a review of the consistency of both the assumptions and the financial data for each area of the Board's activities;

2.4 an evaluation of the Board's current assets and liabilities including a list of assets which are capable of being disposed of without further company investment for values in excess of £50,000 in each case.

3. Assess GLEB's ability to continue as a going concern until the end of 1986-87 financial year. This assessment will be based inter alia upon:

3.1 a review of the options identified by the Board for funding the future operations of GLEB;

3.2 an evaluation of the proposals for funding by the Boroughs (see 3.1 above) against the sum required to maintain value and viability of assets, investments (see 2 above) *and* the Board's current financial position as reflected by 2.4 above.

3.3 the projected cash flow of the Board and the Group for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

4. The Report on these assessments should be accompanied by a copy of the Board's and the Group's projected Revenue Account, Balance Sheet and Source and Application of Funds Statements (including a breakdown of the components of working capital requirements) for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87, prepared in accordance with the appropriate Statements of Standard Accounting Practice; and should contain confirmation or otherwise that neither the figures arrived at nor the basis of the assessments made are affected by the exclusion of subsidiaries from consolidation.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Soil Survey

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors he took into account in deciding the period over which the Soil Survey of England and Wales should become commercially viable; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Our consideration of the work of the Soil Survey suggested that the wide range of organisations which made use of the information and expertise it provides offered scope for it to operate more commercially in the future. We made no change in the funding of the survey in the current year and have set the Ministry's commissioned expenditure at half the present level in 1986-87 in order to allow time for these commercial activities to be developed.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the figures for his Department's funding for the Soil Survey for the year 1985-86; how this compares with the recommendations made by Minster Agricultline Ltd.; and if he has any figure for 1986-87.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department's commission with the Soil Survey in 1985-86 amounts to £1,676,000 and will be set at around £850,000 in 1986-87. The consultant's report referred to both these figures. It also recommended that the operating costs of the Soil Survey should be reduced below the present level and that its business base should be developed as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans *(a)* to reduce further Government funding of the Soil Survey of England and Wales or *(b)* to disband the survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The level of our commissioned expenditure with the Soil Survey in the current year and in 1986-87 has already been announced. We are considering what our future needs in this area might be and we are also encouraging the Soil Survey to develop alternative sources of income through its commercial activities.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantities of butter and cereals are stored on behalf of the European Economic Community in the metropolitan borough of Doncaster; and at which locations.

Mr. Gummer: The following are the quantities and locations of butter and cereals held at intervention stores in the metropolitan borough of Doncaster on 31 October 1985, the latest date for which information is available.

	tonnes
Butter	
Kirk Sandall	2,754
Cereals	
Doncaster (2 stores)	65,330
Kirk Sandall	5,065
Thorne	4,164

Food Act 1984

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations seeking the amendment of section 13 of the Food Act 1984 to cover animals and poultry sold live to intending consumers for immediate slaughter on the vendor's premises; whether he is satisfied with the working of the Food Act 1984 in this context; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government proposed in their consultation document on the review of food legislation that section 13 of the Food Act 1984, the Food and Drugs (Scotland) Act 1956 and the Food and Drugs (Northern Ireland) Act 1958 should be amended to specify that references to "food" in these sections should be construed as including animals (including poultry) sold live to intending consumers for immediate slaughter on the vendor's premises. I have received a number of representations on this and other proposals and these are being considered before a final decision is taken.

Subsidised Alcohol

Mr. Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to ensure that European Community proposals concerning the disposal of subsidised alcohol do not disturb or distort competition in the spiritous beverage market to the disadvantage of Scotch whisky.

Mr. Jopling: One of my Department's major concerns in discussion of the Commission's proposals for general rules for the disposal of intervention alcohol stocks has been to ensure that the minimum sale prices permitted will be at levels which do not disturb the markets for alcohol and spiritous beverages including, of course, Scotch whisky. To that end, a number of changes in the proposed rules have already been secured. Should the proposals be endorsed by the Council, it will continue to be our concern that in applying the detailed rules this intention is fully observed and respected.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has received any applications from Marples International Limited for a licence to dump at sea toxic waste, including asbestos, cadmium and mercury, from the Glory Hole, Portsmouth;

(2) if Marples International appealed against the last decision not to allow dumping of toxic waste at sea.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Department spent on advertising in national and local newspapers, on television and in other printed journals during the financial year 1984-85; and what is the amount budgeted and spent to date in 1985-86.

Mr. Jopling: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1984-85 spent £109,287 on advertising in national and local newspapers and other printed journals.

In 1985 from 1 April to 30 September the Ministry has spent £35,173 in national and local newspapers and other printed journals. No specific sum has been budgeted for advertising for the rest of 1985-86.

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Jopling: In 1983-84 the COI appointed Messrs Doyle, Dane and Bernbach, on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as its advertising agency. In that year the Ministry spent £48,618 on a campaign for

the prevention of rabies. In 1984-85, £51,534 will be spent on the same advertising campaign with the same agency. Prior to 1983-84, the Ministry had no appointed advertising agents.

Glyphosate

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the approved concentration for the aerial application of glyphosate (N phosphonomethyl glycine); what was the agency responsible; and what was the scientific basis for determining this figure.

Mrs. Fenner: Glyphosate is not at present cleared for application from the air. Two limited clearances for the aerial application of glyphosate to a total of 800 ha of Forestry Commission land during 1985 were granted but both have now run out. In both cases the clearance stated that the glyphosate should be applied at the rate of three litres of the formulated product in 60 litres of water per hectare. The limited clearances were granted under the pesticides safety precautions scheme by the following Government Departments acting jointly:

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
The Department of the Environment
The Health and Safety Executive
The Department of Health and Social Security
The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland
The Department of Agriculture (Northern Ireland)
The Department of Health and Social Services (N.I.)
The Scottish Home and Health Department
The Welsh Office

The scientific basis for granting these limited clearances was the data provided by the notifier under the terms of the PSPS.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under which circumstances the aerial application of glyphosate (N phosphonomethyl glycine) would be sanctioned at concentrations greater than four litres per hectare.

Mrs. Fenner: Clearances for the use of glyphosate from the air have so far specified an application rate of three litres of product in 60 litres of water per hectare. It is not possible to speculate about the conditions that would be applied to any higher dose rates.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the adequacy of present controls on the aerial application of glyphosate (N phosphonomethyl glycine); and if he has any plans to seek to institute additional controls during the lifetime of the current Parliament.

Mrs. Fenner: During 1985, limited clearances under the pesticides safety precautions scheme were granted for the use of glyphosate from the air for a stipulated period. The limitations on use imposed by these clearances (which have now expired) and the requirements of the Air Navigation Order 1980, as enforced by the Civil Aviation Authority, provided adequate controls over its safe application. The Government circulated proposals for further strengthening of statutory controls over aerial spraying in the consultative document issued on 1 November.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that the common fisheries policy control system is currently working fully in the interests of the British fishing fleet, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Jackson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps the Government will take to preserve United Kingdom fishing quotas for the British fishing industry.

Mr. Jopling: Article 4 of the basic Community regulation on the common fisheries policy (Regulation 170/83) provides for quotas of stocks subject to catch limits to be distributed between the member states in a manner which assures each member state relative stability of fishing activities of each of the stocks considered. Article 5(2) puts the responsibility on the member states to determine, in accordance with the applicable Community provisions, the detailed rules for the utilisation of the quotas allocated to them. The objectives of the CFP, and in particular the principle of relative stability of fishing activities, are clearly threatened if fishing vessels from other countries are able to attach themselves artificially to a member state in order to fish against its quotas.

In the light of our experience since the introduction of the system of national quotas in January 1983 and following discussions with the main industry organisations, Fisheries Ministers have concluded that further action is now needed, under article 5(2) of the basic regulation.

Access for British fishing vessels of 10 m or over to stocks under quota is already subject to licensing by the Fisheries Ministers. We have now decided to introduce as from next year new licence conditions aimed at ensuring that licensed vessels have a real economic link with this country. From 1 January 1986 vessels wishing to fish against United Kingdom quotas will have to be registered as British fishing boats under part IV of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 and to meet the following three conditions:

(i) the vessel must normally operate from the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or Isle of Man: evidence of regular landings in or of regular visits to British ports will be expected;

(ii) at least 75 per cent. of the crew must be British citizens or EC nationals ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or Isle of Man: but for the duration of the relevant transitional arrangements on free movement of workers, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese nationals will not, with limited exceptions, be eligible to be counted towards this percentage;

(iii) the skipper and all the crew must contribute to United Kingdom national insurance, or equivalent Isle of Man and Channel Islands schemes.

Owners may be required to make the vessels and relevant documentation available for inspection at a United Kingdom, Isle of Man or Channel Islands port to ensure that these licence conditions are being met.

Fisheries Ministers have also decided that from today western hake should be designated as a "pressure stock" and that only those fishermen who are currently entitled to fish for western hake will be eligible to fish the stock in future. This will not, however, carry with it an automatic entitlement to fish for other "pressure stocks" under the present restrictive licensing arrangements.

As a further measure the arrangements, announced on 3 February 1984, under which prospective vessel owners

who at that date had entered into an enforceable contract were entitled to a "pressure stock" licence will be terminated from 31 December 1985.

In order to give effect to these new licensing arrangements and to the restrictions on beam trawling in ICES sub areas VII and VIII, announced on 25 July 1985, arrangements will be made for all existing licences to be replaced.

The detailed arrangements are being notified to the industry within the next few days.

British Freezer Vessels

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's longer-term policy regarding the capacity of the British freezer vessel fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

North Sea (Aggregate Dredging)

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the enforcement of the code of practice for aggregate dredging in the southern North sea in order to protect fishing grounds and spawning areas.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what estimates he has made of the effects on the revenue to the Government and the British fishing industry since 1983, of the Government not imposing a 200-mile fishing limit around the Falkland Islands;

(2) what estimates he has made of the impact on the British fishing fleet of the possibility of Japan becoming self-sufficient in squid as a result of access to the fisheries within a 200-mile limit of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Polluted Wine

Ms. Jo Richardson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the results of the wine testing for diethylene glycol will be published; whether the results will be distributed to local authorities; and why more information has not been passed from his Department to local authorities to date.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department first issued lists of wines contaminated with diethylene glycol to local food and drugs authorities on 31 July. This information was subsequently updated and supplemented on 23 August, 18 September and 2 December. The information made available in this way included the results of tests carried out at my Department's laboratories.

Field Drainage

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the availability of conservation advice in respect of field drainage design will be advertised in literature promoting the new agricultural and development advisory service field drainage design service.

Mrs. Fenner: We have no current plans to advertise the availability of conservation advice in the literature promoting the field drainage design service. In the exercise of all their functions relating to land, agricultural development and advisory service officers have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what circumstances written conservation advice will be provided as part of the field drainage design service.

Mrs. Fenner: Where conservation interests seem likely to be involved in relation to individual field drainage design service schemes, appropriate measures will be taken by the agricultural development and advisory service to draw them to the attention of the client.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the field drainage design service, including conservation advice, will be available to the non-agricultural sector, such as sporting interests.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total number of field drainage schemes on which agricultural and development advisory service staff provided advice each year since 1975; and if he will also indicate this as a proportion of the total number of grant-aided field drainage schemes undertaken in each year.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that this information is not available.

Internal Drainage Boards

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take measures to ensure that internal drainage boards meet their requirements fully under section 48 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes. My Department, the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office jointly issue guidelines to internal drainage boards regarding the exercise of their duties under section 48 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These guidelines are being reviewed in the light of the recommendations of the House of Commons Environment Committee.

Broads Grazing Marshes Conservation Scheme

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers operate within the boundaries of the Broads grazing marshes conservation scheme; and how many are currently participating in the financial arrangements under the scheme.

Mrs. Fenner: The system of land tenure within the area covered by the Broads grazing marshes conservation

scheme is complex, with much of the land being the subject of annual grazing lets. For this reason, we do not know the precise number of farmers operating within the scheme area.

Only landowners and full tenants are eligible to participate in the scheme. Of these, 102 did so in 1985. They accounted for a land area of 3,402 hectares, or about 85 per cent., of the grassland area within the scheme's boundaries. A further 221·6 hectares of grassland is protected either by short-term holding agreements with the Broads authority, or by virtue of its having been purchased by a conservation body. Taking this into account, over 90 per cent. of the grassland area within the scheme's boundaries is protected.

Surplus Butter Sales

Mr. Oakes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of subsidy per 100 kilos in ecus and per tonne in pound sterling for sales of surplus butter to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Gummer: Sales of butter to the Soviet Union do not attract any special subsidy, although they do qualify for export refunds in the normal way.

Mr. Oakes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has any plans to dispose of the surplus butter currently held by intervention boards within the European Economic Community directly to European Economic Community citizens; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has received any proposals to reduce the amount of surplus butter currently held by intervention boards within the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps he is taking to reduce the amount of surplus butter currently held by intervention boards within the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Schemes to dispose of stocks of butter held by intervention agencies within the Community are the responsibility of the Commission of the European Communities, although it is required to consult member states through the management committee procedure on any measures it intends to take.

The Commission recently outlined a number of possible options, including further sales for export and the use of butter in calf feed. Two particular measures, one on the sale of concentrated butter for cooking, the other an extension of an existing scheme under which butter may be used in manufactured foodstuffs, have since been adopted. Both are of benefit to Community consumers. No proposals have yet been made in respect of any other measures, but, if and when they are, we shall consider them on their merits taking into account views expressed to us.

Other than the possibilities already mentioned, I have not received any proposals about the disposal of intervention stocks. But I have received a proposal from a section of the dairy trade that the scope of the existing Community "social butter" scheme, under which open-market butter may be sold at a reduced price to persons receiving social assistance, be expanded to include pensioners and the unemployed. My Department is currently studying this proposal in depth.

In considering any measures to dispose of surplus stocks, we must ensure value for money in terms of the marginal cost (which may be much higher than the actual rate of subsidy involved) and avoid disruption of the normal commercial market.

Mr. Oakes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of subsidy per 100 kilos in ecus and per tonne in pound sterling for sales of surplus butter under the social butter scheme as defined by European Community Council regulation 2990/82.

Mr. Gummer: The scheme in regulation 2990/82 provides for a maximum Community contribution of 80 ecu per 100 kg (£494·93 per tonne) but does not limit the amount of subsidy which member states themselves may pay. Only Ireland currently operates this scheme.

Mr. Oakes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of subsidy per 100 kilos in ecus and per tonne in pound sterling for sales of surplus butter under the Christmas butter scheme of 1984-85.

Mr. Gummer: The 1984-85 Christmas butter scheme permitted the sale of specified quantities of butter from intervention and aided private storage at a price reduction of 160 per ecu per 100 kg (£989·85p per tonne). However, a lower rate of 147·25 ecu per 100 kg (910·97 per tonne) applied to those member states (including the United Kingdom) operating the Community's general consumer butter subsidy. The difference between these two rates was equivalent to the maximum Community contribution towards the cost of the consumer butter subsidy.

Mr. Oakes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of subsidy per 100 kilos in ecus and per tonne in pound sterling for sales of surplus butter as feed for livestock.

Mr. Gummer: There has never been a subsidy for sales of surplus butter as feed for livestock.

Surplus Wine Alcohol

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his negotiations with the EEC concerning the disposal of surplus wine alcohol are proceeding on the basis of the recommendations in the National Economic Development Office report of 1984 on behalf of the distilling sector working group; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes. Consistent with the recommendations in the NEDO report, one of my Department's major concerns in discussion of the Commission's proposals for disposal of intervention alcohol stocks has been to ensure that such sales will not disturb the alcoholic drinks market or create distortion of competition between other spirits and Scotch whisky.

French Turkeys

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take action to halt the import of all French turkeys until United Kingdom sheepmeat can be freely exported to France.

Mr. Gummer: We have written to the French Minister of Agriculture to protest about the introduction of controls over our sheepmeat exports to France and to ask for their immediate removal. We have also drawn the French action

to the attention of the EC Commission which appears to share our view that the French action is illegal. It may be doubted whether the best means to return France to adherence to her treaty obligations is for Britain herself to act illegally.

Brucellosis

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle were slaughtered in each of the last five years because of their having brucellosis.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *99*]: The numbers of brucellosis reactors slaughtered in Great Britain in each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	*Number of reactors slaughtered*
1980	6,305
1981	1,886
1982	548
1983	688
1984	510

Bovine Tuberculosis

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle have been slaughtered in each of the last five years *(a)* with symptoms of bovine tuberculosis and *(b)* as bovine tuberculosis reactors.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *99*]: The numbers of bovine tuberculosis reactors slaughtered in Great Britain and the numbers of these reactors which showed visible tuberculous lesions on post-mortem examination in each of the last five years are as set out:

Year	*Number of reactors slaughtered*	*Number of reactors showing visible lesions at PM*
1980	873	380
1981	784	363
1982	567	251
1983	623	263
1984	669	242

Badger Control

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current policy of the badger control section of his Department in connection with Clouts Wood nature reserve in Wiltshire.

Mrs. Fenner: [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *99*]: Tuberculosis has been disclosed in a cattle herd close to the Clouts Wood reserve and disease has been confirmed in badgers using the breakdown farm. In these circumstances I have decided there is no option but to carry out a badger control operation. However, we are not at present proposing to set traps in Clouts Wood and I have undertaken to write to the Wiltshire Trust for Nature Conservation if we later decide to do so.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost in each of the last 10 years of badger control.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *99*]: A recent update of previous figures puts the estimate of operational costs of badger control in England and Wales at an average of £310,000 per annum over the last 10 years. An important contributory factor in this increase was the change from gassing to trapping as the principal method of control.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the increase in real and cash terms, in hill livestock compensatory allowances payable in each year from 1980 to date in the original less-favoured areas and from their inception to date in the new less-favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1985, c. *269*]: The information requested is set out in the tables:

Increase over previous year's rates of allowance

(a) Original less-favoured area

	Rate increase £	*Real terms* percentage*	*Cash terms percentage*
(i) *Suckler cows*			
1980	6·00	+2	+21
1981	7·50	+9	+21
1982	2·00	−4	+4
1983	—	−4	—
1984	—	−5	—
1985	—	−6	—
1986†	10·00	−18	+22
(ii) *Ewes of mountain breeds*			
1980	1·40	+14	+34
1981	0·75	+2	+14
1982	—	−8	—
1983	—	−5	—
1984	—	−5	—
1985	—	−6	—
1986†	0·50	+4	+18
(iii) *Other ewes*			
1980	1·40	+27	+49
1981	—	−11	—
1982	—	−8	—
1983	—	−4	—
1984	—	−5	—
1985	—	−6	—
1986†	0·25	+2	+6

(b) New less-favoured area

(i) *Suckler cows*			
1985	First year in which HLCAs were paid		
1986†	5·00	+18	+22
(ii) *Ewes*			
1985	First year in which HLCAs were paid		
1986†	0·13	+2	+6

* The figures have been deflated by the retail prices index. For 1986, the forecast change in the retail prices index is as given in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

† Proposed.

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS (Merit Awards)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total annual cost of merit awards to National Health Service consultants; and what percentage are awarded to full-time National Health Service employees.

Mr. Hayhoe: The actual amounts paid out in distinction awards are not collected centrally since the award holder is paid pro-rata to his sessional commitments to the National Health Service. The current value of awards recommended by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body for Great Britain is £52.2 million, of which it is estimated that some £42.6 million will be paid. Of the 5,290 awards in payment in England and Wales at 31 December 1984, 36·3 percent. were held by whole-time, and a further 38 per cent. by maximum part-time, consultants. Exactly comparable information for Scotland is not readily available.

Lancashire (District Health Authorities)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure in each of the district health authority areas in Lancashire in each of the last six years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of the district health authorities, the former Lancashire area health authority and the North Western regional health authority:

	1979-80 £ million	*1980-81* £ million	*1981-82* £ million
Lancashire Area Health Authority	173·7	221·2	258·3

District Health Authorities	*1982-83* £ million	*1983-84* £ million	**1984-85* £ million
Lancaster	39·3	39·9	41·8
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	45·3	45·1	50·3
Preston	63·0	65·0	67·9
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	49·5	49·8	53·7
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	45·0	44·7	49·9
West Lancashire	20·5	21·4	22·2
Chorley and South Ribble	11·1	12·2	13·4

* Provisional figures.

Notes:

1. The expenditure shown is the total of revenue and capital expenditure by each authority, together with capital expenditure by the North Western regional health authority on services for that particular district or for the former Lancashire area. Other expenditure by the regional health authority cannot be attributed to individual districts and is therefore excluded.

2. The figures for the Preston health authority, and those for the Lancashire area health authority up to 1981-82, include revenue expenditure on the Lancashire ambulance service which was:

	£ million
1979-80	5·0
1980-81	6·4
1981-82	6·8
1982-83	7·2
1983-84	7·5
1984-85	*7·8

* Provisional figure.

3. The figures exclude payments to doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians and others providing services under contracts with the Lancashire family practitioner committee. These were shown in the accounts of the Lancashire area health authority until 1981-82, and subsequently in those of the West Lancashire health authority. The totals were:

	£ million
1979-80	48·3
1980-81	59·9
1981-82	67·8
1982-83	78·7
1983-84	83·8
1984-85	*92·7

* Provisional figure.

Spectacle Frames

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the extent to which manufacturers have ceased production of spectacle frames available on the National Health Service since the implementation of the provisions of the Health and Social Security Act 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand that some small manufacturers have ceased production of NHS frames and that others are limiting production to the most common types, colours and sizes. However, the largest manufacturers are reported to be maintaining production of all NHS frames.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he anticipates that the Advisory Committee on National Health Service drugs will conclude their consideration of whether or not cyanocobalimin should be included on the list of drugs prescribable under the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The committee has completed its consideration of cyanocobalamin. Following its recommendation cyanocobalamin injection BP is available for prescription under the National Health Service by regulations which came into effect on 1 December.

McColl Committee

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement concerning the implications of the McColl committee report for the artificial limb service to patients in the West Norfolk and Wisbech health district; and what measures he plans to take to improve this service both locally and nationally.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 13 November at columns *207-208*.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the health authorities which have a computerised call and recall system for cervical cancer screening in operation in their area covering all women over 20 years old.

Mr. Hayhoe: As at June 1985, 37 district health authorities had computerised call and recall systems or firm plans to implement such systems by the end of 1985.

These are able to identify women in particular age groups or other risk categories. The following authorities use (or plan to use) their systems to call women from 20 years of age.

Aylesbury Vale
Barnsley
Cheltenham and District
Croydon
East Berkshire
Exeter
Gloucestershire
Mid-Downs
North Derbyshire
North Devon
Northampton
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Rotherham
South Tees
Torbay
Worthing
Wycombe

Consultant Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the information available to his Department on the waiting times experienced by patients for appointments to see consultants for each district and for each specialty.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not at present available centrally. However, the Health Services information steering group has recommended in its first report that a new annual district return be submitted centrally to record, by specialty, the number of patients waiting for an out-patient appointment. Health authorities have been asked to plan on the basis that the steering group's report will be implemented by April 1987.

Scoliosis

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on plans for the future treatment of children with scoliosis in north London; if he will seek to ensure that the same provision for parents to stay with their children is made as is available at Stanmore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the right hon. Member is referring to a proposal in the report of a working party on orthopaedic services set up by Bloomsbury health authority. The proposal was that for their peri-operative period the more complex cases of scoliosis be treated within a multi-faculty hospital, with an intensive therapy unit and other specialised facilities readily available rather than at the Stanmore branch of the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital. It was suggested that this work might be transferred to the Middlesex or University College hospitals, or to hospitals, such as the hospitals for sick children, outside the district.

I understand that at its meeting on 4 December, when Bloomsbury health authority considered the responses to consultation on the report, it agreed that further discussions on the future location of scoliosis work were needed with the consultants concerned and that there were no plans at present to transfer the work to another hospital. These are at present matters for the health authorities concerned and any proposed changes would require full consultation in the usual way.

I am sure that one of the points which will be considered by the health authority in reaching a decision on whether to propose any changes will be the provision of overnight accommodation for parents. We have already made it clear that the final decision on any major changes at the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore, will be taken by the Secretary of State.

Senior Registrars

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many senior registrars, after completing at least five years in the grade, have left the hospital service in each year from 1979 to 1985 without achieving a consultant appointment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not readily available because of current reprogramming of the computerised data base and other priorities.

Health for All Strategy

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to give any advice to district and regional health authorities and local authorities on implementing the World Health Organisation's health for all strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: We have taken steps to bring the strategy to the attention of chief officers of regional health authorities and are arranging discussions with interested groups and the World Health Organisation on how the elements of the strategy may best be applied in the United Kingdom context.

Health Care (Social Inequalities)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he intends to bring forward to reduce inequalities in health between socio-economic classes.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government's policy is aimed at directing health care services towards the most vulnerable groups of people and towards areas of greatest need and will benefit those whose health needs may arise from social inequalities.

Single Payments (Edinburgh)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time between the receipt of a request for a single payment and the payment of such a claim in Great Britain, in Scotland and in the East Edinburgh office of his Department respectively.

Mr. Major: Claims for single payments are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected. A limited sample of recent cases at Edinburgh (East) local office suggests that, on average, claims for single payments are currently being determined 18 days after their receipt. (When a claim is successful the payment is normally made on the day it is determined or the following day). Similar figures for Great Britain and Scotland are not available.

Dental Charges

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions dentists have recorded the cost of treatment as the reason for a patient

not completing a course of treatment in part II of the National Health Service dental estimate form F.P.17 in each of the last three years; and if he will collate and publish figures on the incidence of this problem in future.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not available and I do not believe its collection would be justified.

Cancer

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to encourage public awareness of the symptoms that, if they persist, can indicate cancer;

(2) if he will list the publications in which the Health Education Council has given advice on the symptoms that the public should look out for as they might indicate cancer; and if he will list the symptoms and the cancers they may indicate;

(3) how many copies of the leaflet, "Can you avoid Cancer?", have been printed by the Health Education Council; and to whom, and what organisations, they have been circulated;

(4) what proportion of the budget of the Health Education Council is spent on activities related to cancer and in particular to cancer prevention; and if he will list the ways in which the council publicises cancer prevention.

Mr. Whitney: Malignant tumours can affect many organs and tissues of the body, and the symptoms to which they give rise are correspondingly various. To avoid arousing unnecessary alarm over minor symptoms as much as to prevent neglect of potentially serious ones, health education about cancer needs to be carefully conducted. Accordingly the preferred approach is to encourage people to consult a doctor about changes in their normal health which last longer than a short time.

The Health Education Council has produced two publications specifically about cancer. "Can You Avoid Cancer?" gives information on possible contributory factors and suggests action that individuals can take to reduce the risks. 500,000 copies of the publication were produced to support a television series of the same name. Members of the public were sent copies on request; individuals and organisations on the council's subscription list received a copy automatically. Copies also went to all National Health Service health education units to distribute to the public, health professionals and organisations. The booklet gives examples of symptoms which call for medical advice, such as persistent hoarseness or coughing, unexpected bleeding or a lump, but the emphasis is on the need to ask a doctor about unexplained changes in normal health lasting more than two weeks.

The council's leaflet about breast cancer, "A Guide to Examining Your Breasts", lists the signs to look for as part of a regular examination including changes in nipples, veins or breast size.

The council estimates that it spends about 20 per cent. of its budget, or some £2 million, on activities related to cancer prevention. Its smoking education programme is a major source of such activity and its alcohol and nutrition work also contribute. The council disseminates its advice and information through many channels, including television, radio, newspaper publicity, printed material intended for a wide range of audiences, workshops and seminars for health workers educational materials for schools, and so on.

Health Education Council (Budget)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the budget of the Health Education Council for each of the last five years in both cash and real terms.

Mr. Whitney: The figures are:

	Cash £ million	*Real Terms £ million*
1981-82	6·6	8·0
1982-83	8·6	9·7
1983-84	9·3	10·1
1984-85	9·6	10·0
1985-86	10·1	10·1

Opticians (Fees)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the costs incurred by his Department as a result of cutting National Health Service examination and dispensing fees for opticians from 1 September until the Judicial Review hearing on 7 October.

Mr. Hayhoe: The costs incurred by my Department are contained within the general costs of administration and cannot be separately identified.

National Health Service (Red Alerts)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospitals and their district health authorities which have already been on red alert for no further admissions other than emergencies at least once in the current winter; and how many red alerts in how many hospitals there were last winter.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department was first aware that the acquired immune deficiency syndrome was a sexually communicable disease; and what action was then taken to seek to combat the dangers.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many acquired immune deficiency syndrome cases have occurred in the Bolton area in each year since acquired immune deficiency syndrome was first notified.

Mr. Hayhoe: Nine cases have been reported in the areas of the Mersey and North-Western regional health authorities. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of this figure without running the risk of affecting the confidentiality of information on individual patients.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make acquired immune deficiency syndrome a notifiable disease.

Mr. Hayhoe: No, but the matter is kept under review.

National Insurance Contributions

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the additional income in the 1986-87 financial year from abolishing the ceiling on national insurance contributions for the employed and self-employed.

Mr. Major: If the upper earnings limit for employee's class 1 contributions and the upper profits limit for self-employed people's profit-related class 4 contributions were to be abolished in 1986-87, but the ceiling retained for the contracted-out rebate, the additional contribution revenue would be:

£680 million from employees
£80 million from self-employed people.

These figures are based on the same assumptions as Cmnd. 9672 (the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-Rating) Order 1985).

Residential Homes

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received on issues relating to the amendment of the Registered Homes Act 1984 to include all homes which provide accommodation to the elderly.

Mr. Whitney: Four representations of this kind have been received since 1 January 1985 when the Act was brought into force.

Residential Homes (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of homes in Portsmouth and Hampshire, respectively, that are registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr Whitney: Provisionally at 31 March 1985 there were 354 homes registered under part I of the 1984 Act in Hampshire. Of these 61 were in the non-metropolitan district of Portsmouth.

Mr. Hancock: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of elderly people in Portsmouth and Hampshire, respectively, who are living in homes registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Whitney: Provisionally at 31 March 1985 there were 4,240 residents aged 65 or over in homes registered under part I of the Act in Hampshire. Of these 601 were in the non-metropolitan district of Portsmouth. There are also some residents aged 65 or over in homes for the mentally handicapped and homes for the mentally ill but information on the total number is not available.

Childhood Cancers

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Her Majesty's Government are carrying out, or intend to carry out, any investigations into the incidence of childhood cancers in the areas around *(a)* Aldermaston and *(b)* Burghfield.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Child Abuse

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will set up a system for central reporting and registration of cases of child abuse resulting in serious injury or death; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are considering very carefully points raised in recent reports about the information on child abuse that should be reported centrally, as part of the programme of work the Department already has in hand to help prevent child abuse cases and improve their handling when they occur.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Social Services Inspectorate has made any recommendations on the prevention, detection or treatment of child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Social Services Inspectorate is currently undertaking an inspection of the supervision of social workers in the assessment and monitoring of children in need of protection. Its report, which is expected at the end of the year, will form part of the Department's continuing programme of work to help prevent child abuse cases and improve their handling.

Poverty (Definition)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what definition of poverty he uses in the context of those policies and programmes for which he is responsible.

Mr. Major: There is no single agreed definition of poverty. I would, however, draw my hon. Friend's attention to the discussion of measures of poverty and their relevance to social security contained in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517) volume 1, paragraph 4.7.

Acheson Report

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the recommendations of the Acheson report have been implemented.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Prescriptions

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prescriptions were dispensed by chemists in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of prescriptions dispensed by chemists in England in each year since 1979 were:

	Number
1979	304,358,325
1980	303,143,246
1981	299,789,158
1982	311,087,632
1983	315,107,107
1984	320,377,179

National Health Service (Annual Report)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid to the Stationery Office for the copies of the National Health Service annual report 1985 distributed by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: The Department will receive the standard pre-publication discount of 40 per cent. and will pay £9,300.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many staff, and at what Civil Service grades, were involved in preparing the National Health Service annual report 1985;

(2) when work commenced in his Department on preparing the National Health Service annual report 1985; when the copy went to the printers; and when it was published;

(3) why his Department made no provision for monitoring the total costs of preparing, promoting and distributing the National Health Service annual report 1985.

Mr. Whitney: "The Health Service in England—Annual Report 1985" was produced in order to inform the public about the largest of our public services, which forms a major part of the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Social Services. As such, the production of the report is in the mainstream of the Department's activities, and its preparation and costs are integral to the normal responsibilities of the Department.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any outside persons or organisations were involved in preparing the National Health Service annual report 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The report was prepared entirely within the Department.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the full printing cost of the print run of the National Health Service annual report 1985.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated cost of printing the report was £8,500 including materials.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of the National Health Service annual report 1984 were printed; how many were distributed free; how many were sold; and how many were left unsold.

Mr. Whitney: Three thousand eight hundred and thirty copies of the report were printed, 1,800 were distributed free, and Her Majesty's Stationery Office has no remaining copies of the report.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many press releases were issued by his Department about the National Health Service annual report 1985; when they were issued; and what was the embargo time.

Mr. Whitney: The press office of the Department issued on the afternoon of 25 November one press release about the National Health Service annual report without embargo.

The figure for 1984 contained in the report, were also given in a statistical bulletin published on 4 October. A press release was issued on 3 October embargoed for 0001 hours the following day. Copies of both releases have been placed in the Library.

Private Practice

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1970 and for each region the number of attendances by *(a)* private out-patients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day patients.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c *481-82*]. The available information is given in the tables.

Number of attendances by private out-patients in NHS hospitals in England

Region†	1970	1971	1972	1973	†1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	†1982	1983	1984
Northern	907	1,022	980	873	621	574	528	665	1,213	1,961	3,432	4,806	5,222	5,581	6,808
Yorkshire	1,555	1,624	3,176	3,758	2,457	2,845	2,250	3,259	2,606	5,302	15,930	13,009	9,986	10,832	11,093
Trent	7,348	9,121	8,355	7,944	742	7,849	7,341	7,519	8,999	10,505	12,789	16,767	10,361	8,062	9,575
East Anglian	248	916	741	738	1,262	2,311	2,163	1,089	1,798	2,380	3,031	4,250	4,710	5,179	7,915
North West Thames	12,860	14,168	14,486	10,109	18,045	18,030	22,621	25,015	24,348	26,669	27,914	33,570	27,626	26,324	27,556
North East Thames	13,868	13,768	15,234	14,784	16,522	16,923	16,981	15,914	17,567	23,489	22,691	30,392	34,913	37,879	40,189
South East Thames	12,484	13,692	14,655	8,144	8,037	10,278	10,168	9689	7,966	8,594	8,730	11,319	14,101	16,109	19,445
South West Thames	15,146	18,013	18,602	12,482	3,405	3,605	3,994	3,128	4,287	7,501	5,866	13,300	14,237	14,880	14,753
Wessex	381	1,047	693	834	1,857	2,104	2,629	2,418	2,662	2,807	3,135	3,798	4,465	5,123	6,046
Oxford	3,145	3,339	4,066	4,650	5,128	659	363	439	3,409	6,193	5,904	4,282	5,072	5,637	6,556
South Western	2,143	1,209	1,357	1,910	1,359	1,113	1,704	609	651	1,208	1,937	3,644	3,320	3,559	3,879
West Midlands	2,278	1,258	3,064	4,018	2,903	2,533	2,684	2,844	3,001	4,245	4,907	5,761	6,629	7,795	8,828
Mersey	1,281	2,197	1,865	1,814	2,814	2,106	2,490	3,026	2,993	2,635	3,236	3,141	5,141	6,762	8,561
North Western	4,727	5,376	6,376	7,113	5,776	5,707	5,065	6,504	6,371	7,382	9,074	12,845	14,845	16,535	19,188
Special Health Authorities/ Boards of Governors	**	**	**	**	7,883	8,406	10,425	22,911	23,138	21,052	19,949	19,917	21,795	20,511	21,073
England	78,371	86,750	93,650	79,171	78,811	85,043	91,406	105,029	111,009	131,923	148,525	180,801	182,423	190,768	211,465

Number of attendances by private day cases in NHS hospitals in England

Region†	1970	1971	1972	1973	†1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1081	†1982	1983	1984
Northern	*	*	1,480	1,538	1,547	1,619	1,665	2,051	2,600	2,037	2,610	2,886	1,236	1,950	2,020
Yorkshire	*	*	1,480	1,814	3,212	3,875	3,435	3,491	3,837	2,809	3,357	3,644	2,875	3,156	2,793
Trent	*	*	2,122	2,043	1,659	1,714	2,540	2,091	2,252	2,324	3,147	3,205	2,739	2,864	2,468
East Anglian	*	*	386	886	742	1,032	1,167	1,215	1,452	1,508	1,484	1,285	1,016	886	815
North West Thames	*	*	1,322	1,569	1,180	1,399	1,996	1,870	1,934	1,813	2,381	3,293	2,404	2,214	2,273
North East Thames	*	*	2,854	3,032	2,593	3,092	3,133	2,625	2,418	2,117	2,567	2,668	3,024	2,760	2,444
South East Thames	*	*	2,071	2,072	1,988	2,398	2,426	1,977	2,392	2,964	3,607	3,514	3,059	3,007	3,140
South West Thames	*	*	1,299	1,506	1,210	1,286	1,204	1,219	1,727	1,569	2,049	2,137	2,480	2,593	2,112
Wessex	*	*	1,795	1,536	1,677	1,574	1,977	1,713	1,545	1,554	1,744	1,627	1,587	1,560	1,612

Region†	1970	1971	1972	1973	†1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1081	†1982	1983	1984
Oxford	*	*	1,154	1,343	1,049	1,264	1,355	1,201	1,614	1,074	1,390	948	936	871	938
South Western	*	*	1,007	1,165	703	1,348	1,295	1,207	1,493	1,538	1,901	1,496	1,368	1,274	1,232
West Midlands	*	*	1,367	2,423	2,146	2,738	3,150	3,081	4,187	3,517	4,059	4,487	3,414	3,949	3,531
Mersey	*	*	770	1,064	1,495	1,227	1,387	1,367	1,536	1,311	1,695	1,941	1,692	1,621	1,888
North Western	*	*	2,583	3,126	2,383	2,499	2,856	3,086	3,705	3,232	3,592	3,997	2,310	2,687	2,628
Special Health Authorities/ Boards of Governors	*	*	**	**	187	187	313	581	650	560	887	669	890	920	935
England	*	*	21,690	25,117	23,771	27,252	29,899	28,775	33,342	29,927	36,470	37,797	31,030	32,312	30,829

Number of attendances by private regular day patients in NHS hospitals in England

Region†	1970	1971	1972	1973	†1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	†1982	1983	1984
Northern	*	*	266	308	183	1	—	—	—	—	147	—	1	—	—
Yorkshire	*	*	—	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Trent	*	*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Anglian	*	*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Thames	*	*	2	99	—	—	20	—	4	28	88	211	—	16	—
North East Thames	*	*	2	2	36	—	—	—	—	—	1	64	34	35	61
South East Thames	*	*	—	141	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	43	30	—
South West Thames	*	*	11	15	—	2	40	200	95	126	10	—	—	—	—
Wessex	*	*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oxford	*	*	—	5	2	—	32	435	1,064	—	98	169	187	163	145
South Western	*	*	13	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	37	52
West Midlands	*	*	206	—	157	40	3	60	154	128	70	769	366	36	111
Mersey	*	*	—	—	—	—	—	—	84	3	326	747	592	1,230	1,142
North Western	*	*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—
Special Health Authorities/ Boards of Governors	*	*	**	**	141	8	84	58	183	212	276	195	127	74	94
England	*	*	500	591	519	52	179	755	1,584	497	1,016	2,155	1,358	1,621	1,605

* Not available.
** Included in regional totals.
† Figures prior to 1974 relate to Regional Health Boards. Because of NHS restructuring in 1974 and 1982 the regional figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each special health authority, district health authority, regional health authority and for England as a whole *(a)* the number of authorised amenity beds on 31 December 1984, *(b)* the average daily number of beds occupied by amenity patients, *(c)* the discharge and deaths of amenity patients and *(d)* the income from amenity patients; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *481-82*]: The information is given in the table.

Regional and District Health Authority	Number of beds authorised at 31 December		Average daily number of occupied beds		Discharges and deaths		Income under section 63 of the NHS Act 1977*†	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983-84 £	1984-85 £ (provisional)
Northern Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority Total	218	212	7·8	8·5	414	431	27,117	26,997
Hartlepool	9	9	0·3	0·1	21	5	632	615
North Tees	3	3	0·2	0·2	10	10	—	—
South Tees	14	14	0·3	0·5	7	12	316	1,278
East Cumbria	14	14	1·8	1·8	108	97	4,201	4,060
South Cumbria	4	4	0·5	0·6	31	33	1,720	1,180
West Cumbria	10	10	0·2	0·3	18	23	760	1,216
Darlington	7	7	0·4	0·4	13	13	1,086	1,000
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Durham	10	10	0·1	0·1	6	10	310	680
South West Durham	8	8	0·3	0·4	24	18	770	1,260
Northumberland	29	30	2·3	1·8	111	99	9,027	7,349
Gateshead	—	—	—	—	—	—	90	260
Newcastle upon Tyne	72	72	0·5	1·3	32	62	2,433	2,918
North Tyneside	4	8	0·1	0·2	1	10	150	830
South Tyneside	9	9	0·5	0·4	27	31	2,347	1,320
Sunderland	25	14	0·3	0·4	5	8	3,275	3,032
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority Total	309	289	35·8	30·9	1,311	1,104	66,623	55,746
Hull	3	3	—	—	—	1	5	178
East Yorkshire	11	11	0·2	0·2	9	8	530	1,080
Grimsby	9	7	1·0	0·6	71	47	2,695	2,780
Scunthorpe	14	14	0·3	0·2	16	5	750	803
Northallerton	11	7	0·5	0·6	24	28	1,295	1,430
York	32	30	4·7	4·5	156	158	9,858	10,934
Scarborough	8	8	0·0	0·2	0	11	1,050	540
Harrogate	30	30	9·3	8·8	601	575	25,721	19,398
Bradford	91	91	1·8	1·3	73	73	9,686	3,926
Airedale	40	40	14·6	11·6	1	3	1,974	2,210
Calderdale	12	12	0·1	0·0	5	1	350	540
Huddersfield	21	14	1·0	0·9	100	74	4,899	3,476

Regional and District Health Authority	Number of beds authorised at 31 December		Average daily number of occupied beds		Discharges and deaths		Income under section 63 of the NHS Act 1977*†	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983-84 £	1984-85 £ (provisional)
Dewsbury	9	9	1·5	1·3	93	75	5,643	4,357
Leeds Western	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	630
Leeds Eastern	3	2	—	—	—	1	—	350
Wakefield	6	6	0·2	0·1	8	8	525	315
Pontefract	5	5	0·6	0·6	154	36	1,642	2,800
Trent Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	198	175	10·5	5·9	279	124	21,728	18,727
North Derbyshire	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Derbyshire	14	14	0·1	0·2	12	16	376	340
Leicestershire	29	28	0·2	0·1	17	19	406	786
North Lincolnshire	86	77	7·9	5·1	27	11	14,607	9,298
South Lincolnshire	15	8	0·2	0·3	23	34	1,610	2,210
Bassetlaw	4	4	1·4	—	144	2	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	8	8	0·1	—	3	—	255	98
Nottingham	9	9	0·1	—	3	7	2,723	3,213
Barnsley	8	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Doncaster	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	23	19	0·5	0·2	50	35	1,752	2,783
East Anglian Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	54	47	1·1	5·6	71	73	4,235	4,564
Cambridge	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Peterborough	1	1	—	—	2	2	60	20
West Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Suffolk	17	17	0·4	0·2	25	17	1,155	700
Norwich	21	15	0·5	0·6	32	33	2,010	2,425
Great Yarmouth	9	8	0·1	—	5	2	650	140
West Norfolk and Wisbech	6	6	0·1	0·2	7	6	360	500
Huntingdon	—	—	—	4·6	—	13	—	779
North West Thames Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	96	109	13·2	8·3	360	378	24,180	18,023
North Bedfordshire	8	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Bedfordshire	9	8	8·1	—	45	—	330	490
North Hertfordshire	1	2	0·2	0·2	6	8	420	539
East Hertfordshire	11	11	0·0	0·1	2	22	80	625
North West Hertfordshire	8	8	0·2	1·9	40	27	870	1,250
South West Hertfordshire	6	14	0·0	0·4	28	55	6,317	2,061
Barnet	17	23	1·3	0·7	93	69	5,682	3,045
Harrow	12	12	1·9	3·7	70	134	—	—
Hillingdon	6	6	0·6	0·5	32	21	2,630	4,060
Hounslow and Spelthorne	2	1	0·1	0·1	17	11	389	140
Ealing	—	—	0·0	—	1	—	—	15
Brent	—	—	0·3	0·3	11	8	105	—
Paddington	2	2	0·1	0·3	3	21	830	430
Hammersmith and Fulham	14	14	0·4	0·1	12	1	6,319	4,710
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	1	208	658
North East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	86	94	11·5	5·8	283	370	26,082	18,285
Basildon and Thurrock	8	20	0·1	0·5	11	68	1,230	952
Mid Essex								
North East Essex	18	14	1·0	0·8	63	69	2,230	3,645
West Essex	11	14	1·0	1·0	48	43	4,230	3,452
Southend	9	9	0·5	0·6	31	34	2,294	1,660
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	8	6	—	—	1	2	195	70
Hampstead	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bloomsbury	9	9	0·3	0·2	26	23	6,984	494
Islington	—	1	0·2	0·4	13	34	1,525	2,170
City and Hackney	8	7	6·1	0·3	7	24	1,204	1,290
Newham								
Tower Hamlets								
Enfield	4	4	0·1	0·2	10	9	1,343	1,200
Haringey	—	—	0·1	—	4	3	1,733	420
Redbridge	1	1	0·9	1·0	—	1	55	80
Waltham Forest	10	9	1·2	0·8	69	60	3,060	2,852
South East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	183	164	4·4	14·7	235	1,017	27,146	34,319
Brighton	22	16	0·7	9·6	22	688	4,044	6,010
Eastbourne	52	42	1·3	1·9	103	148	9,020	7,030
Hastings	18	18	0·3	0·1	12	6	610	360
South East Kent	11	10	0·1	—	6	4	510	510

Regional and District Health Authority	Number of beds authorised at 31 December		Average daily number of occupied beds		Discharges and deaths		Income under section 63 of the NHS Act 1977*†	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983-84 £	1984-85 £ (provisional)
Canterbury and Thanet	19	19	—	0·1	3	11	75	190
Dartford and Gravesham	6	6	—	0·1	2	3	—	260
Maidstone	8	4	—	—	3	4	240	360
Medway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tunbridge Wells	32	34	1·4	2·1	38	42	6,380	7,960
Bexley	6	6	0·3	0·3	11	13	950	1,888
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	—	—	131	40
Bromley	—	—	0·3	0·5	11	17	2,570	2,425
West Lambeth	9	9	—	—	24	81	2,430	6,909
Camberwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	—	—	—	—	—	—	186	377
South West Thames Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	110	105	27·8	17·0	462	497	27,459	35,870
North West Surrey	9	5	1·0	0·1	21	16	1,830	1,530
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	13	—	0·2	0·1	5	8	440	470
South West Surrey	—	8	—	0·1	7	12	595	1,060
Mid Surrey	6	7	1·0	0·9	82	65	3,635	3,950
East Surrey	15	15	2·2	1·8	82	83	5,480	8,695
Chichester	7	7	1·1	1·0	69	72	3,570	3,318
Mid Downs	7	7	1·1	0·8	30	29	1,610	4,209
Worthing	5	4	—	0·3	2	17	—	384
Croydon	—	—	0·1	—	6	—	10	—
Kingston and Esher	12	12	0·2	0·5	15	25	1,965	3,975
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	3	12	19·0	10·1	66	54	3,256	4,019
Wandsworth	16	11	0·2	0·2	9	10	1,650	1,210
Merton and Sutton	17	17	1·7	1·1	68	106	3,417	3,050
Wessex Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	144	144	8·5	8·7	293	276	28,096	26,671
East Dorset	9	9	0·7	0·6	43	37	2,994	2,605
West Dorset	6	6	0·2	0·3	10	5	1,110	280
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	17	17	1·1	0·6	60	46	7,298	4,660
South West Hampshire and Southampton	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	279
Winchester	6	6	0·9	0·9	65	71	3,030	3,610
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Salisbury	50	50	—	—	—	—	1,105	90
Swindon	10	10	—	0·4	5	18	140	2,890
West Wiltshire and Bath	35	35	5·5	5·7	97	89	11,749	11,686
Isle of Wight	10	10	0·1	0·2	13	10	650	570
Oxford Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	79	75	4·0	3·6	171	158	12,278	10,599
East Berkshire	12	12	0·2	0·2	18	9	1,540	640
West Berkshire	18	18	1·1	0·5	56	50	2,648	2,905
Aylesbury	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wycombe	8	8	0·9	0·9	40	48	3,325	2,800
Milton Keynes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	60
Kettering	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northampton	22	22	0·4	0·6	18	12	840	368
Oxfordshire	15	15	1·4	1·4	39	39	3,925	3,826
South Western Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	118	123	5·2	4·1	264	196	17,281	16,630
Bristol and Weston	—	—	0·1	0·1	8	3	35	125
Frenchay	11	11	0·4	0·6	20	21	1,465	1,950
Southmead	—	—	—	—	—	—	100	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	22	20	0·2	0·1	14	4	865	1,080
Exeter	7	8	0·1	0·2	8	7	190	320
North Devon	6	6	0·2	0·2	11	12	530	450
Plymouth	14	14	0·2	—	13	—	514	490
Torbay	20	21	—	—	2	2	135	411
Cheltenham	3	10	2·3	1·1	107	72	6,273	5,710
Gloucester	8	8	0·3	0·7	12	21	1,890	2,420
Somerset	27	25	1·4	1·1	69	54	5,284	3,674
West Midlands Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority total	173	159	4·0	2·1	230	181	14,714	12,171
Bromsgrove and Redditch	9	7	0·4	0·2	9	12	1,690	480
Herefordshire	—	—	0·2	0·1	10	9	445	600
Kidderminster and District	8	7	0·5	0·2	10	9	470	735
Worcester and District	19	19	0·2	0·2	12	9	355	290
Shropshire	10	8	0·8	0·5	22	22	3,714	3,907
Mid Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Regional and District Health Authority	Number of beds authorised at 31 December		Average daily number of occupied beds		Discharges and deaths		Income under section 63 of the NHS Act 1977*†	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983-84 £	1984-85 £ (provisional)
North Staffordshire	37	37	—	—	—	—	—	—
South East Staffordshire	14	14	—	0·0	1	1	70	20
Rugby	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Warwickshire	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
South Warwickshire	21	19	1·2	0·1	71	54	4,869	3,752
Central Birmingham	6	6	0·1	0·1	7	7	170	20
East Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Birmingham	5	5	0·3	0·3	12	12	1,115	500
South Birmingham	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—	190	—
Coventry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dudley	6	2	—	—	2	—	70	—
Sandwell	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	273
Solihull	4	4	0·2	0·4	62	41	870	1,380
Walsall	20	20	—	—	—	—	240	30
Wolverhampton	2	4	0·1	0·0	11	5	445	185
Mersey Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority Total	172	137	9·6	7·7	447	449	25,604	23,607
Chester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crewe	20	20	0·3	0·3	34	17	674	603
Halton	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Macclesfield	7	—	0·1	—	2	—	945	772
Warrington	11	—	0·1	—	2	—	780	—
Liverpool	76	76	6·4	4·8	254	196	12,887	11,809
St. Helens and Knowsley	22	6	0·3	0·2	18	5	1,704	3,332
Southport and Formby	8	8	1·2	1·2	65	79	3,795	3,440
South Sefton	11	11	0·2	0·0	11	1	640	200
Wirral	16	16	1·0	1·2	61	151	4,179	3,451
North Western Regional Health Authority								
Regional Health Authority Total	115	118	9·4	7·5	723	628	46,013	33,300
Lancaster	4	4	—	—	—	—	107	197
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	15	14	0·7	0·5	44	42	2,460	2,570
Preston	2	2	0·1	0·2	6	17	485	670
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	8	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	3	3	0·6	0·5	43	40	3,154	831
West Lancashire	4	2	0·9	0·5	20	14	3,703	1,649
Chorley and South Ribble	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bolton	6	6	—	—	3	—	—	—
Bury	—	—	—	—	2	—	201	400
North Manchester	9	3	0·3	0·2	14	11	1,036	625
Central Manchester	4	4	3·3	2·1	308	237	9,725	8,880
South Manchester	30	33	1·7	1·9	147	141	11,634	4,800
Oldham	6	6	0·1	0·1	13	12	4,861	4,708
Rochdale	—	6	—	—	—	2	540	710
Salford	12	13	0·6	0·6	56	47	2,079	2,440
Stockport	—	—	—	—	—	—	410	350
Tameside and Glossop	—	—	—	—	—	—	60	205
Trafford	—	—	0·1	—	7	2	2,655	790
Wigan	12	14	1·0	0·9	60	63	2,904	3,475
Special Health Authorities								
SHAs Total	36	27	7·5	2·4	501	363	20,760	10,060
The Hospital for Sick Children	1	—	0·2	—	15	—	—	—
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moorfields Eye Hospital	6	4	1·3	0·6	120	232	3,800	2,865
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	6	—	1·1	—	40	—	—	—
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Royal Marsden Hospital	11	11	0·5	0·1	24	1	770	85
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	12	12	4·4	1·7	302	130	16,210	7,110
The Eastman Dental Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
England Total	2,091	1,578	160·3	132·8	6,044	6,245	389,336	345,569

* Some totals may not add up precisely due to roundings.
† The figures are for the financial years indicated and are derived from the annual accounts of health authorities. At this stage, all 1984-85 figures are provisional.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will explain the classification private regular day cases on Form SBH211.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *481-82*]: Separate figures are collected on day cases and regular day patients on form SBH211. Day cases are patients who attend for investigation, treatment or operation under clinical supervision and who occupy a bed but do not stay in hospital overnight. Regular day patients are those patients who regularly attend for a course of treatment over a period, who are provided with treatment and care as though they were inpatients, but who return home at night.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each special health authority,

district health authority, regional health authority and for England as a whole, the number of attendances during 1984 by *(a)* private outpatients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day patients, and if he will also give the 1983 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *481-82*]: The information requested is given in the tables.

Private patients in NHS hospitals, England

District Health Authority	*Number of attendances by private out-patients*		*Number of attendances by private day cases*		*Number of attendances by private regular day patients*	
	1983	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern Regional Health Authority						
Hartlepool	218	264	109	147	—	—
North Tees	265	233	55	30	—	—
South Tees	846	1,658	277	356	—	—
East Cumbria	452	482	239	173	—	—
South Cumbria	348	358	108	151	—	—
West Cumbria	106	42	21	8	—	—
Darlington	67	104	76	93	—	—
Durham	405	483	17	101	—	—
North West Durham	238	212	61	78	—	—
South West Durham	190	173	36	26	—	—
Northumberland	385	473	54	48	—	—
Gateshead	185	90	188	138	—	—
Newcastle	1,412	1,774	309	314	—	—
North Tyneside	—	—	20	13	—	—
South Tyneside	23	23	106	109	—	—
Sunderland	441	439	274	235	—	—
Regional total	5,581	6,808	1,950	2,020	—	—
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority						
Hull	447	496	461	160	—	—
East Yorkshire	17	5	172	229	—	—
Grimsby	234	242	306	282	—	—
Scunthorpe	1,479	1,425	114	61	—	—
Northallerton	120	202	69	51	—	—
York	1	115	106	84	—	—
Scarborough	42	48	7	2	—	—
Harrogate	—	70	21	33	—	—
Bradford	3,037	2,803	453	394	—	—
Airedale	883	522	257	239	—	—
Calderdale	988	846	442	405	—	—
Huddersfield	45	263	54	36	—	—
Dewsbury	22	34	159	145	—	—
Leeds Western	2,540	2,784	26	161	—	—
Leeds Eastern	105	151	15	15	—	—
Wakefield	872	1,087	241	293	—	—
Pontefract	—	—	249	194	—	—
Regional total	10,832	11,093	3,156	2,793	—	—
Trent Regional Health Authority						
North Derbyshire	66	150	336	432	—	—
Southern Derbyshire	758	1,233	301	344	—	—
Leicestershire	—	100	681	773	—	—
North Lincolnshire	3,434	4,228	105	118	—	—
South Lincolnshire	950	1,217	242	265	—	—
Bassetlaw	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	68	144	207	57	—	—
Nottingham	326	104	667	229	—	—
Barnsley	28	89	204	147	—	—
Doncaster	296	433	17	4	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	2,136	1,877	104	99	—	—
Regional total	8,062	9,575	2,864	2,468	—	—
East Anglian Regional Health Authority						
Cambridge	1,568	2,917	10	15	—	—
Peterborough	607	746	138	128	—	—
West Suffolk	342	304	87	107	—	—
East Suffolk	774	1,414	5	16	—	—
Norwich	1,360	1,517	294	159	—	—
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	353	353	96	57	—	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	80	565	248	287	—	—
Huntingdon	95	99	8	46	—	—

District Health Authority	Number of attendances by private out-patients		Number of attendances by private day cases		Number of attendances by private regular day patients	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Regional total	5,179	7,915	866	815	—	—
North West Thames Regional Health Authority						
North Bedfordshire	654	1,023	75	71	—	—
South Bedfordshire	501	606	152	125	—	—
North Herfordshire	705	773	77	61	—	—
East Hertfordshire	1,902	2,028	174	172	—	—
North West Hertfordshire	17	14	309	251	—	—
South West Hertfordshire	356	11	98	89	—	—
Barnet	5,891	5,960	144	159	—	—
Harrow	705	557	24	16	16	—
Hillingdon	606	842	207	222	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	1,397	1,426	280	352	—	—
Ealing	84	124	28	30	—	—
Brent	513	424	2	5	—	—
Paddington and North Kensington	2,231	2,088	129	96	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	6,744	6,054	315	323	—	—
Victoria	4,018	5,626	200	301	—	—
Regional total	26,324	27,556	2,214	2,273	16	—
North East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Basildon and Thurrock	762	606	355	290	—	—
Mid Essex	1,696	1,966	637	512	—	—
North East Essex	3,619	3,957	89	113	—	—
West Essex	5,185	5,691	197	207	—	—
Southend	1,758	1,236	317	248	—	—
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	3,344	4,023	273	258	—	9
Hampstead	5,209	4,808	160	161	—	—
Bloomsbury	4,320	5,751	288	229	—	—
Islington	181	269	36	58	—	—
City and Hackney	14	54	16	22	—	—
Newham	18	116	4	11	—	—
Tower Hamlets	6,363	6,116	—	—	—	—
Enfield	317	350	163	141	—	—
Haringey	627	481	107	90	—	—
Redbridge	3,924	4,190	78	65	—	—
Waltham Forest	542	575	40	39	35	52
Regional total	37,879	40,189	2,760	2,444	35	61
South East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Brighton	428	601	4	40	—	—
Eastbourne	934	261	130	126	—	—
Hastings	271	436	47	34	28	—
South East Kent	352	230	108	61	—	—
Canterbury and Thanet	1,864	2,411	105	179	—	—
Dartford and Gravesham	1,332	1,393	128	127	—	—
Maidstone	1,273	1,883	154	150	2	—
Medway	822	3,553	242	171	—	—
Tunbridge Wells	2,165	2,025	786	885	—	—
Bexley	3,425	3,666	267	266	—	—
Greenwich	2,436	2,373	167	169	—	—
Bromley	538	382	371	280	—	—
West Lambeth	269	281	198	216	—	—
Camberwell	—	—	240	377	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	—	—	60	59	—	—
Regional total	16,109	19,445	3,007	3,140	30	—
South West Thames Regional Health Authority						
North West Surrey	3,731	3,304	419	405	—	—
West Surrey and North East Hants	780	551	205	229	—	—
South West Surrey	2,452	2,429	75	106	—	—
Mid Surrey	1,688	2,073	526	400	—	—
East Surrey	110	348	51	51	—	—
Chichester	918	1,018	316	175	—	—
Mid Downs	2,402	1,997	253	140	—	—
Worthing	24	42	62	67	—	—
Croydon	12	19	98	49	—	—
Kingston and Esher	520	610	66	116	—	—

District Health Authority	Number of attendances by private out-patients		Number of attendances by private day cases		Number of attendances by private regular day patients	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	462	501	9	17	—	—
Wandsworth	1,075	961	109	59	—	—
Merton and Sutton	706	900	404	298	—	—
Regional Total	14,880	14,753	2,593	2,112	—	—
Wessex Regional Health Authority						
East Dorset	175	51	42	26	—	—
West Dorset	354	277	11	19	—	—
Portsmouth and South East Hants	1,226	1,799	580	563	—	—
Southampton and South West Hants	43	594	261	451	—	—
Winchester	—	—	115	107	—	—
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	—	—	202	186	—	—
Salisbury	143	5	40	24	—	—
Swindon	3,068	2,933	186	135	—	—
Bath	84	337	98	3	—	—
Isle of Wight	30	50	25	98	—	—
Regional Total	5,123	6,046	1,560	1,612	—	—
Oxford Regional Health Authority						
East Berkshire	340	314	7	22	163	145
West Berkshire	—	271	112	134	—	—
Aylesbury Vale	961	1,408	190	196	—	—
Wycombe	1,364	1,237	6	3	—	—
Milton Keynes	129	59	—	—	—	—
Kettering	1,803	2,077	369	383	—	—
Northampton	1,040	1,190	140	169	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	—	47	31	—	—
Regional Total	5,637	6,556	871	938	163	145
South Western Regional Health Authority						
Bristol and Weston	305	541	83	86	—	—
Frenchey	129	63	27	166	—	—
Southmead	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	384	522	99	62	37	52
Exeter	1	177	76	70	—	—
North Devon	454	604	63	55	—	—
Plymouth	—	—	39	—	—	—
Torbay	1,345	975	262	200	—	—
Cheltenham	286	188	131	119	—	—
Gloucester	385	609	284	233	—	—
Somerset	270	200	210	241	—	—
Regional total	3,559	3,879	1,274	1,232	37	52
West Midlands Regional Health Authority						
Bromsgrove and Redditch	814	910	17	24	—	—
Herefordshire	—	—	28	42	—	—
Kidderminster and District	—	209	190	176	—	—
Worcester and District	91	258	620	365	—	—
Shropshire	433	255	128	124	—	—
Mid Staffordshire	192	402	194	214	—	—
North Staffordshire	739	821	457	318	—	—
South East Staffordshire	2,411	2,064	280	280	—	—
Rugby	799	731	102	202	—	—
North Warwickshire	173	205	78	90	—	—
South Warwickshire	28	16	101	105	—	—
Central Birmingham	94	75	270	197	—	—
East Birmingham	—	—	30	33	—	—
North Birmingham	—	15	279	247	—	—
South Birmingham	161	191	25	54	—	—
West Birmingham	461	191	131	71	—	—
Coventry	33	55	203	226	36	111
Dudley	3	17	344	284	—	—
Sandwell	462	1,247	153	139	—	—
Solihul	3	84	2	4	—	—
Walsall	474	568	273	317	—	—
Wolverhampton	424	514	44	19	—	—
Regional total	7,795	8,828	3,949	3,531	36	111
Mersey Regional Health Authority						

District Health Authority	Number of attendances by private out-patients		Number of attendances by private day cases		Number of attendances by private regular day patients	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Chester	203	51	5	22	—	—
Crewe	1,273	2,315	496	548	—	—
Halton	9	16	—	—	—	—
Macclesfield	345	415	95	181	28	9
Warrington	90	315	401	408	—	—
Liverpool	351	431	186	190	—	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,307	2,981	257	256	—	—
Southport and Formby	—	606	65	148	—	—
South Sefton	2	222	14	107	—	—
Wirral	1,182	1,209	102	28	1,202	1,133
Regional total	6,762	8,561	1,621	1,888	1,230	1,142
North Western Regional Health Authority						
Lancaster	106	199	216	286	—	—
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	279	158	145	91	—	—
Preston	1,166	1,054	324	407	—	—
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	18	74	3	48	—	—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	322	105	248	249	—	—
West Lancashire	1,463	1,354	70	94	—	—
Chorley and South Ribble	—	86	6	2	—	—
Bolton	—	4	238	1	—	—
Bury	489	687	403	406	—	—
North Manchester	402	333	21	16	—	—
Central Manchester	41	86	173	235	—	—
South Manchester	9,715	11,463	296	167	—	—
Oldham	780	772	75	89	—	—
Rochdale	339	298	4	4	—	—
Salford	335	753	37	29	—	—
Stockport	266	357	42	42	—	—
Tameside and Glossop	401	385	46	79	—	—
Trafford	177	150	61	74	—	—
Wigan	236	671	279	309	—	—
Regional total	16,535	19,188	2,687	2,628	—	—
Special Health Authorities						
The Hospitals for Sick Children	1,697	1,940	183	147	—	—
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	1,962	1,989	82	77	—	—
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	875	37	4	—	—
The Bethlem Royal Hospital and the Maudsley Hospital	120	188	7	4	—	—
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	3,390	3,781	5	87	—	—
The Royal Marsden Hospital	10,044	8,469	220	137	74	94
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	3,016	3,423	386	479	—	—
The Eastman Dental Hospital	282	408	—	—	—	—
SHA total	20,511	21,073	920	935	74	94
ENGLAND TOTAL	190,768	211,465	32,312	30,829	1,621	1,605

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each special health authority, district health authority, regional health authority and for England as a whole *(a)* the number of authorised pay beds at 31 December 1984, *(b)* the average daily number of beds occupied by private patients during 1984 and *(c)* the number of discharges and deaths of private patients during 1984; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *481-82*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Private patients in NHS hospitals, England

District Health Authority	Number of pay-beds at 31 December		Average daily number of beds occupied by private patients		Discharges and deaths of private patients	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Northern Regional Health Authority						
Hartlepool	6	6	0·9	1·0	85	78
North Tees	7	7	1·1	1·1	83	68
South Tees	15	15	3·6	3·1	368	393
East Cumbria	10	10	2·8	1·9	281	174

District Health Authority	Number of pay-beds at 31 December		Average daily number of beds occupied by private patients		Discharges and deaths of private patients	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
South Cumbria	7	9	3·7	3·8	254	346
West Cumbria	4	4	1·1	0·1	85	11
Darlington	7	7	1·6	1·4	113	107
Durham	4	4	0·4	0·4	28	26
North West Durham	5	5	0·5	0·8	44	54
South West Durham	3	3	0·6	0·3	37	19
Northumberland	8	8	0·9	1·1	53	70
Gateshead	3	3	0·2	0·3	24	23
Newcastle	9	9	6·6	6·3	476	440
North Tyneside	2	2	0·7	0·4	39	32
South Tyneside	4	4	0·9	0·9	65	68
Sunderland	9	9	2·8	3·3	347	352
Regional total	103	105	28·4	26·2	2,362	2,261
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority						
Hull	12	12	1·5	2·0	109	125
East Yorkshire	10	10	2·6	2·9	252	309
Grimsby	7	7	2·4	2·6	235	212
Scunthorpe	9	9	2·7	2·5	199	177
Northallerton	7	7	1·4	1·1	78	69
York	5	5	2·2	1·9	116	138
Scarborough	6	6	0·7	0·3	44	18
Harrogate	8	8	3·9	3·3	183	190
Bradford	34	34	3·2	3·5	244	348
Airedale	12	12	6·5	9·0	405	439
Calderdale	24	24	12·4	11·3	746	731
Huddersfield	10	10	4·4	4·9	187	262
Dewsbury	6	6	1·4	1·6	71	92
Leeds Western	29	29	21·0	21·3	950	1,115
Leeds Eastern	6	6	3·2	3·5	133	215
Wakefield	10	10	4·6	3·5	410	344
Pontefract	4	4	1·4	1·4	96	93
Regional total	199	199	75·5	76·6	4,462	4,877
Trent Regional Health Authority						
North Derbyshire	7	7	1·9	2·1	147	145
Southern Derbyshire	15	15	5·4	4·8	448	465
Leicestershire	23	23	8·8	10·0	747	756
North Lincolnshire	18	18	5·8	2·8	114	75
South Lincolnshire	11	11	6·2	5·7	428	433
Bassetlaw	6	6	1·6	1·2	164	104
Central Nottinghamshire	15	15	4·7	1·1	374	108
Nottingham	30	30	10·9	3·2	1,033	312
Barnsley	5	5	1·6	1·0	140	150
Doncaster	3	3	0·5	0·6	73	76
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	10	10	4·1	4·7	308	355
Regional total	143	143	51·5	37·2	3,976	2,979
East Anglia Regional Health Authority						
Cambridge	11	11	8·4	5·0	366	269
Peterborough	18	18	1·5	0·2	115	12
West Suffolk	10	10	5·4	4·7	287	306
East Suffolk	24	24	12·8	8·3	619	470
Norwich	28	28	19·7	13·3	1,618	954
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	5	5	2·2	1·8	226	215
West Norfolk and Wisbech	6	8	3·4	4·3	295	334
Huntington	4	4	1·5	2·9	91	155
Regional total	106	106	54·9	40·5	3,617	2,715
North West Thames Regional Health Authority						
North Bedfordshire	12	12	4·4	5·1	328	321
South Bedfordshire	9	9	2·4	1·1	307	92
North Hertfordshire	10	10	1·6	1·4	146	94
East Hertfordshire	10	10	3·5	2·5	336	173
North West Hertfordshire	15	15	7·0	6·3	518	439
South West Hertfordshire	6	6	0·4	2·1	143	150

District Health Authority	Number of pay-beds at 31 December 1983	1984	Average daily number of beds occupied by private patients 1983	1984	Discharges and deaths of private patients 1983	1984
Barnet	12	12	4·4	3·5	306	298
Harrow	13	13	1·9	3·7	70	134
Hillingdon	32	32	13·9	15·6	1,054	964
Hounslow and Spelthorne	7	7	3·6	4·2	364	309
Ealing	3	3	0·1	0·1	12	14
Brent	10	10	2·0	1·0	96	64
Paddington and North Kensington	65	65	38·5	35·9	2,348	2,210
Hammersmith and Fulham	30	30	22·6	20·6	1,179	1,210
Victoria	58	58	31·5	28·3	1,684	1,536
Regional total	292	292	137·8	131·4	8,891	8,008
North East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Basildon and Thurrock	11	11	4·6	3·3	375	331
Mid Essex	20	20	10·8	12·1	1,266	1,204
North East Essex	9	9	3·1	4·2	286	314
West Essex	15	21	8·0	8·3	690	796
Southend	19	19	5·4	3·6	507	319
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	13	13	6·6	5·1	516	360
Hampstead	29	29	26·1	24·0	961	1,042
Bloomsbury	178	178	81·2	72·3	4,570	4,207
Islington	31	31	2·7	2·3	207	191
City and Hackney	15	15	9·1	7·1	198	185
Newham	2	2	—	0·2	11	11
Tower Hamlets	34	34	16·9	18·8	968	1,038
Enfield	3	3	1·8	1·9	128	104
Haringey	10	10	1·4	2·2	88	80
Redbridge	8	8	4·2	3·0	219	177
Waltham Forest	7	7	3·9	3·2	180	172
Regional total	404	410	185·8	171·6	11,170	10,531
South East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Brighton	24	24	9·9	9·6	635	688
Eastbourne	4	4	1·4	1·6	99	137
Hastings	6	6	2·8	2·9	262	231
South East Kent	12	12	1·5	1·9	119	138
Canterbury and Thanet	29	29	2·2	1·8	217	169
Dartford and Gravesham	8	8	1·3	1·0	124	109
Maidstone	7	7	1·4	1·4	100	108
Medway	8	8	1·4	1·6	109	81
Tunbridge Wells	39	39	19·0	18·3	1,529	1,555
Bexley	10	10	4·5	3·9	288	297
Greenwich	14	14	5·4	3·5	355	218
Bromley	24	24	6·8	3·5	462	201
West Lambeth	38	38	27·6	27·1	1,283	1,331
Camberwell	45	45	28·1	25·4	1,444	1,402
Lewisham and North Southwark	69	69	31·2	28·4	2,064	2,086
Regional total	337	337	144·5	132·1	9,090	8,751
South West Thames Regional Health Authority						
North West Surrey	13	13	7·5	7·8	599	525
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	11	11	6·0	4·9	740	659
South West Surrey	5	15	2·3	4·3	151	242
Mid Surrey	20	20	10·2	7·9	775	564
East Surrey	23	23	14·6	4·9	840	284
Chichester	6	6	3·1	3·1	199	220
Mid Downs	25	27	11·5	10·6	839	643
Worthing	6	6	1·3	1·1	80	72
Croydon	12	12	2·8	2·6	317	877
Kingston and Esher	8	8	4·5	3·4	251	221
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	12	12	1·9	1·0	93	61
Wandsworth	20	20	7·5	6·2	298	272
Merton and Sutton	21	21	8·0	6·5	456	494
Regional total	182	194	81·2	64·3	5,638	5,144
Wessex Regional Health Authority						
East Dorset	14	14	4·1	2·9	264	208
West Dorset	13	13	0·8	0·7	57	64
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	16	16	11·3	11·2	1,184	1,081
Southampton and South West Hampshire	16	16	9·3	7·1	457	485

District Health Authority	Number of pay-beds at 31 December		Average daily number of beds occupied by private patients		Discharges and deaths of private patients	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Winchester	11	11	3·1	3·1	224	193
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	11	11	12·2	12·9	791	817
Salisbury	10	10	1·7	0·8	74	18
Swindon	12	12	8·8	6·7	866	766
Bath	11	11	2·0	1·5	91	62
Isle of Wight	6	6	4·0	4·6	387	435
Regional total	120	120	57·3	51·5	4,395	4,129
Oxford Regional Health Authority						
East Berkshire	17	17	3·2	2·6	251	230
West Berkshire	26	26	15·5	15·2	1,800	1,753
Aylesbury Vale	32	32	19·3	25·8	729	798
Wycombe	24	24	9·8	8·6	916	786
Milton Keynes	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kettering	11	11	7·1	7·3	642	688
Northampton	13	13	6·6	6·6	570	564
Oxfordshire	57	57	19·5	18·6	1,019	1,108
Regional total	180	180	81·0	84·7	5,927	5,927
South Western Regional Health Authority						
Bristol and Weston	6	6	2·5	3·0	263	618
Frenchay	6	6	3·0	3·1	145	134
Southmead	2	2	—	0·1	18	20
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	13	13	3·0	2·0	212	174
Exeter	10	10	1·5	1·4	87	74
North Devon	5	5	1·7	1·5	148	141
Plymouth	8	8	2·7	2·2	266	282
Torbay	9	9	3·3	2·5	251	228
Cheltenham	14	14	9·8	6·1	644	422
Gloucester	18	18	7·5	12·7	555	387
Somerset	13	13	7·4	7·5	449	434
Regional Total	104	104	42·4	42·1	3,038	2,914
West Midlands Regional Health Authority						
Bromsgrove and Redditch	6	6	0·8	1·3	69	96
Herefordshire	4	4	1·1	1·5	76	79
Kidderminster and District	6	6	1·3	1·6	119	130
Worcester and District	20	20	6·7	7·0	629	647
Shropshire	14	14	5·6	5·6	284	272
Mid Staffordshire	8	10	4·5	4·2	302	282
North Staffordshire	16	16	4·2	4·5	431	470
South East Staffordshire	10	10	3·6	3·8	364	390
Rugby	7	7	3·0	3·4	271	316
North Warwickshire	3	3	1·3	1·4	179	206
South Warwickshire	13	13	5·3	4·8	275	247
Central Birmingham	67	67	15·7	12·9	957	613
East Birmingham	3	10	1·2	0·8	80	92
North Birmingham	9	9	5·2	4·4	315	338
South Birmingham	21	21	4·1	3·0	171	138
West Birmingham	10	10	1·9	1·0	262	161
Coventry	10	10	4·9	4·1	329	311
Dudley	10	10	1·6	2·0	114	119
Sandwell	8	8	2·2	5·6	167	169
Solihull	4	4	1·3	1·2	92	68
Walsall	11	11	5·6	5·1	473	502
Wolverhampton	7	7	0·8	0·7	57	70
Regional Total	267	276	81·9	79·9	6,015	5,716
Mersey Regional Health Authority						
Chester	8	8	1·2	0·9	77	39
Crewe	16	16	8·8	6·4	685	650
Halton	—	—	—	—	—	—
Macclesfield	15	15	1·9	1·9	120	121
Warrington	15	15	10·1	7·0	526	466
Liverpool	20	20	8·3	7·6	431	517
St. Helens and Knowsley	15	15	3·8	2·1	207	116
Southport and Formby	7	7	3·3	3·0	209	201
South Sefton	10	10	2·3	5·0	156	144
Wirral	17	17	4·7	4·2	240	345
Regional total	123	123	44·4	38·1	2,651	2,599

District Health Authority	Number of pay-beds at 31 December 1983	1984	Average daily number of beds occupied by private patients 1983	1984	Discharges and deaths of private patients 1983	1984
North Western Regional health Authority						
Lancaster	13	13	7·5	7·7	521	516
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	15	15	3·1	2·3	196	171
Preston	12	12	2·6	3·7	155	288
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	9	9	1·2	0·6	62	53
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	8	8	3·6	3·1	299	296
West Lancashire	15	15	6·5	6·3	209	204
Chorley and South Ribble	4	4	0·1	0·1	4	12
Bolton	20	20	6·2	0·4	405	12
Bury	15	15	6·4	6·5	491	473
North Manchester	9	9	3·5	6·0	82	55
Central Manchester	43	43	17·2	18·9	1,718	1,703
South Manchester	33	33	14·9	11·6	1,009	843
Oldham	5	5	2·5	2·1	182	252
Rochdale	2	2	0·2	0·3	18	31
Salford	11	11	1·2	0·9	99	73
Stockport	5	6	0·7	1·0	94	134
Tameside and Glossop	2	2	0·4	0·1	36	42
Trafford	7	7	1·5	0·3	87	92
Wigan	16	16	4·9	3·4	279	249
Regional total	244	245	84·2	75·3	5,946	5,499
Special Health Authorities						
The Hospitals for Sick Children	34	34	22·5	24·1	956	928
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	18	18	9·6	9·9	298	297
Moorfields Eye Hospital	22	22	10·8	8·8	1,284	1,138
The Bethlem Royal Hospital and the Maudsley Hospital	6	6	1·1	2·1	40	45
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	38	38	21·1	22·5	982	962
The Royal Marsden Hospital	27	27	17·0	17·7	1,002	958
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	38	38	20·5	19·3	1,178	1,111
The Eastman Dental Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—
SHA Total	183	183	102·6	104·4	5,740	5,439
England Total	2,987	3,019	1,253·4	1,155·9	82,938	77,489

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1984, for each region and for England as a whole, the number of deaths and discharges a month and the number of beds occupied on a given date by patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service; and if he will break down these figures in the categories of *(a)* medical, *(b)* surgical, *(c)* pre-convalescent and post-operative, *(d)* convalescent, *(e)* geriatric, *(f)* disease of the chest, *(g)* maternity, *(h)* mental illness, *(i)* mental handicap, *(j)* rehabilitation, *(k)* terminal care and *(l)* others; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *497*]: The information requested is given in the tables.

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service in 1983 and 1984

Specialty	Deaths and discharges 1983	*1984	Beds occupied at 31 December 1983	*1984
Medical	1,440	1,533	269	285
Surgical	9,010	9,356	105	90
Pre-convalescent and post operative	565	187	18	4
Convalescent	6,022	6,899	173	106
Geriatric	957	1,086	787	789
Diseases of the chest	961	1,121	55	51
Maternity	560	876	7	6
Mental illness	441	573	99	159
Mental handicap	302	324	643	674
Rehabilitation	373	344	75	69
Terminal care	3,796	4,091	313	300
Others	193	279	315	289
Totals	24,620	26,669	2,859	2,822

Specialty	Deaths and discharges 1983	Deaths and discharges *1984	Beds occupied at 31 December 1983	Beds occupied at 31 December *1984
Northern Regional Health Authority				
Medical	—	1	1	3
Surgical	82	136	1	1
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	959	1,145	20	19
Geriatric	—	—	—	—
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—
Mental handicap	2	5	97	96
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	—	—	—	—
Others	26	28	53	53
TOTALS	1,069	1,315	172	172
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority				
Medical	59	56	8	8
Surgical	356	384	5	3
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	401	591	22	—
Geriatric	291	246	58	45
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	35	47	12	11
Mental handicap	—	—	—	—
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	59	58	8	6
Others	1	1	14	14
TOTALS	1,202	1,383	127	87
Trent Regional Health Authority				
Medical	52	—	1	1
Surgical	232	—	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	308	301	11	10
Geriatric	—	—	1	—
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	—	1	—	2
Mental handicap	—	—	—	1
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	410	442	19	22
Others	—	—	—	1
TOTALS	1,002	744	32	37
East Anglian Regional Health Authority				
Medical	830	968	18	16
Surgical	2,320	2,421	16	26
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	6	—	—
Convalescent	—	—	—	—
Geriatric	40	61	15	16
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	560	557	7	6
Mental illness	1	3	3	—
Mental handicap	1	—	35	30
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	58	52	4	4
Others	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	3,810	4,068	98	98
North West Thames Regional Health Authority				
Medical	—	—	—	—
Surgical	1,759	2,191	32	30
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	90	126	—	—
Geriatric	4	—	—	—
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—

Specialty	Deaths and discharges 1983	Deaths and discharges *1984	Beds occupied at 31 December 1983	Beds occupied at 31 December *1984
Mental illness	—	2	—	1
Mental handicap	215	231	89	87
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	19	36	1	3
Others	47	61	58	59
TOTALS	2,134	2,647	180	180
North East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Medical	30	40	97	94
Surgical	—	—	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	95	—	—	1
Convalescent	1,326	1,412	20	11
Geriatric	24	43	104	150
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	2	4	5	1
Mental handicap	1	4	47	68
Rehabilitation	198	215	20	17
Terminal care	862	702	87	86
Others	50	50	68	46
TOTALS	2,588	2,470	448	474
South East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Medical	1	—	1	10
Surgical	—	1	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	979	962	30	29
Geriatric	13	18	40	54
Diseases of the chest	15	29	—	1
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	—	—	1	3
Mental handicap	—	—	—	26
Rehabilitation	101	85	47	43
Terminal care	24	39	3	1
Others	4	13	24	27
TOTALS	1,137	1,147	146	194
South West Thames Regional Health Authority				
Medical	201	204	103	106
Surgical	738	799	4	3
Pre-convalescent and post operative	470	181	18	3
Convalescent	222	147	2	4
Geriatric	50	132	131	123
Diseases of the chest	913	1,059	45	44
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	6	3	2	6
Mental handicap	3	7	60	54
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	207	200	23	16
Others	7	6	57	58
TOTALS	2,817	2,738	445	417
Wessex Regional Health Authority				
Medical	18	9	16	32
Surgical	116	99	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	33	65	3	4
Geriatric	60	53	98	98
Diseases of the chest	3	—	2	1
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	4	4	6	4
Mental handicap	—	—	7	7
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	2
Terminal care	1	—	3	3
Others	1	4	33	18
TOTALS	236	234	168	169

Specialty	Deaths and discharges 1983	Deaths and discharges *1984	Beds occupied at 31 December 1983	Beds occupied at 31 December *1984
Oxford Regional Health Authority				
Medical	—	—	7	6
Surgical	—	—	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	—	—	—	—
Geriatric	—	—	—	2
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	46	35	31	29
Mental handicap	—	1	2	4
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	1	2
TOTALS	46	36	41	43
South Western Regional Health Authority				
Medical	248	255	17	9
Surgical	1,975	1,880	24	5
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	1,565	1,981	57	23
Geriatric	44	49	30	1
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—
Mental handicap	—	—	—	—
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	75	220	15	15
Others	57	112	7	11
TOTALS	3,964	4,497	150	64
West Midlands Regional Health Authority				
Medical	1	—	—	—
Surgical	1,432	1,403	23	20
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	—	—	—	—
Geriatric	—	—	—	—
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	319	—	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—
Mental handicap	3	3	19	22
Rehabilitation	74	44	8	7
Terminal care	1,007	1,115	59	48
Others	—	4	—	—
TOTALS	2,517	2,888	109	97
Mersey Regional Health Authority				
Medical	—	—	—	—
Surgical	—	—	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	—	—	—	—
Geriatric	40	81	67	66
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—
Mental handicap	76	68	160	162
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	87	66	11	14
Others	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	203	215	238	242
North Western Regional Health Authority				
Medical	—	—	—	—
Surgical	—	42	—	2
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	139	147	8	6
Geriatric	391	403	243	234
Diseases of the chest	30	33	8	5

Specialty	Deaths and discharges 1983	Deaths and discharges *1984	Beds occupied at 31 December 1983	Beds occupied at 31 December *1984
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	347	474	39	102
Mental handicap	1	5	127	117
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	987	1,161	80	82
Others	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	1,895	2,265	505	548
Special Health Authorities				
Medical	—	—	—	—
Surgical	—	—	—	—
Pre-convalescent and post operative	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	—	22	—	—
Geriatric	—	—	—	—
Diseases of the chest	—	—	—	—
Maternity	—	—	—	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—
Mental handicap	—	—	—	—
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—
Terminal care	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	0	22	0	0

* 1984 figures are provisional.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements with health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *481-82*]: The information requested is given in the table.

The private institutions providing inpatient and outpatient treatment to NHS patients under contractual arrangements with health authorities in 1984 are as follows, as reported by the authorities, within the NHS regions in which they are located.

Private institutions providing inpatient and outpatient treatment to NHS patients under contractual arrangements with health authorities during 1984 (provisional list)

Northern region
Cumberland and Westmorland Convalescent Home, Carlisle
Durranhill House, Carlisle
Holehird Lake District Cheshire Home, Windermere
Lemmington Hall, Alnwick, Northumberland
Maften Hall, Maften, Northumberland
Marie Curie Memorial Foundation Nursing Home, Newcastle upon Tyne
Nazareth House, Middlesborough, Middlesborough
St. Camillus Hospital, Hexham, Northumberland
St. Cuthbert's Hospital, Darlington

Yorkshire region
Donnisthrope Hall, Leeds
Retreat, The, York
St. John of God Hospital, Richmond
St. Joseph's Convalescent Home, Leeds
Sue Ryder Home, Keighley
Victoria Home for Invalid Ladies, Leeds

Trent region
Broomgrove Trust Nursing Home, Sheffield
Caenby Nursing Home, Lincoln
Langham House Nursing Home, Rutland, Leicestershire
North Nottinghamshire Cheshire Home, Retford, Nottinghamshire
Ranmoor Grange Nursing Home, Sheffield
St. Luke's Nursing Home, Sheffield
Staunton Horold Cheshire Home, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

East Anglian region
All Hallows Hospital, Bungay, Suffolk
North Sea Medical Centre, Great Yarmouth
Papworth Village Settlement, Everard, Cambridgeshire
RAF Ely, Ely, Cambridgeshire
St. Edmund's Nursing Home, Ipswich
St. Joseph's Home, Sudbury, Suffolk

North West Thames region
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, London SW1H
Hertfordshire Cheshire Home, Hitchin
Leonard Cheshire Home, Ampthill, Bedford
Nazareth House, Brookgreen, London W6
Nazareth House, Finchley, London N2
Nazareth House, Isleworth, Isleworth
Royal Star and Garter Home, Richmond
Silver Birches, Elizabeth Fiztory House, Richmond
St. Elizabeth's Home, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire
St. Raphael's Centre, London NE6
St. Vincent's Orthopaedic Hospital, Pinner, Middlesex

North East Thames region
Abberton Manor Nursing Home, Colchester
Cadlington House, London EC14
Cedars and Sandy Point Nursing Homes, Frinton on Sea
Charles Palmer Trust Hamilton Lodge, Colchester
Crouchend Court Nursing Home, Colchester
Dominican Convalescent Home, Kelvedon, Essex
Hill Homes, London N6
Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, London NW8
Jewish Home and Hospital, London N15
Kingston Trust, Leigh on Sea
Lulworth Court, Westcliff on Sea
Marie Stopes Nursing Home, London W2
Marillac Hospital, Brentwood
P and G Advisory Service, London WIV
Pregnancy Advisory Service, London W1P
Rustington Convalescent Home, London EC2N
St. Joseph's Hospice, London E8
St. Joseph's Nursing Home, Chelmsford
St. Michael's Convalescent Home, Clacton on Sea
St. Osyth Priory Convalescent Home, Clacton on Sea
West Mersea Nursing Home, West Mersea, Essex
Hospital and Home of St. Giles, Chelmsford
Nightingale BUPA Hospital, London NW1

South East Thames region
Amberclair Residential Home, Hastings
Benenden Hospital Trust, Cranbrook, Kent
Catherine House Convalescent Home, St. Leonards on Sea

Catisfield House, Hove
Chaseley Nursing Home, Eastbourne
Chelwood Corner Nursing Home Ltd., Uckfield, Sussex
Clairleigh House, Bromley
Derwent House, Chislehurst
Edith Priday Red Cross Home, London SE3
Fallowfield, Chislehurst
Hawkhurst Castle, Tunbridge Wells
Hazelville Nursing Home, Hove, East Sussex
Horder Centre for Arthritics, Crowborough, East Sussex
Hurst, The, Hastings
John Howard Home, Brighton
London Cheshire Home, London E2
Mote House, Maidstone
Oaklawn Private Clinic, SE26
Philbeach, Hythe, Kent
Raleigh Nursing Home, London SW2
Ranyard Memorial Nursing Home, London SE13
Rectory House Nursing Home, Lancing, West Sussex
Southern Convalescent Homes Inc., Lancing, West Sussex
St. Cecilia's Cheshire Home, Bromley
St. Christophers Hospice, London SE26
St. Georges Retreat, Burgess Hill, Sussex
St. Mary's Convent, Brighton
Sussex House, St. Leonards on Sea
Ticehurst House Hospital, Wadhurst, East Sussex
Wadeville, Belvedere, Kent
Westminster Convalescent Home, Hastings
Wilbury Lodge, Hove

South West Thames region
Ashley Lodge, Ashley, Hampshire
Bermondsey and Brook Lane Medical Mission, Bognor Regis
Camelot Nursing Home, Worthing
Cleveland Nursing Home, Worthing
Donec House, Hindhead, Hampshire
Eastridge Nursing Home, Bolney, Sussex
Foxley Lodge Nursing Home, Purley, Surrey
Gifford House, Queen Alexandra, Worthing
Grange, The, Hindhead, Surrey
Heaton House Nursing Home, Worthing
Holy Cross Hospital, Haslemere
Homelands Nursing Home, Cowfold, West Sussex
Hurst Nursing Home, Worthing
Hydon Hill Cheshire Home, Godalming
King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst, West Sussex
Kingsmead Nursing Home, Horsham, Sussex
Kylemore Nursing Home, Worthing
Leonard Cheshire Foundation, St. Bridgets, East Preston, Sussex
Madeira Nursing Home, Worthing
Marie Carlisle House, Woking
Maryfield House, Roehampton
Melbreck Childrens Home, Waverley, Surrey
Midmay Convalescent Home, Worthing
Myrtles Nursing Home, Worthing
Offington Nursing Home, Worthing
Ravenswood Nursing Home, Worthing
Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15
Sandena Nursing Home, Worthing
Seacroft Nursing Home, Littlehampton
South View Nursing Home, Worthing
St. Marys Convent, London SW15
St. Michael's Nursing Home, Worthing
St. Peters Convent, Woking
St. Teresas Hospital, London SW20
Sutton Lodge Nursing Home, Worthing
Trinity Hospice, London SW4
Victoria House, Leatherhead
Whiteley Hospital, Walton-on-Thames

Wessex region
Alexandra Nursing Home, Bournemouth
Allendale Nursing Home, Poole
Anglesey Lodge, Gosport
Belmont Nursing Home, Bournemouth
Bethany House Nursing Home, Swindon
Birchy Hill Nursing Home, Lymington, Hampshire
Bordean House, Petersfield, Hampshire
Branksome Nursing Home, Poole
Brooklyn Nursing Home, Bournemouth
Cadlington House School, Havant
Cromer Lodge Nursing Home, Bournemouth
Fairholm Nursing Home, Highcliff, Dorset
Frasergate Ltd., Westbury House, West Meon, Hampshire
Greathouse Cheshire Homes, Chippenham
Hill House Rest Home, Lyndhurst, Hampshire
Hillsdon Nursing Home, Poole
James Burns House, Bournemouth
Kenton House Nursing Home, Bordon, Hampshire
Le Court, Liss, Hampshire
Leabury Nursing Home, Bournemouth
Nazareth House, Southampton
Newlands Lodge Nursing Home, Southsea, Hampshire
Northbrook Nursing Home, Devizes
Ormonde Nursing Home, Poole
Penerley Lodge, Southampton
Pinebeach Nursing Home, Highcliff, Dorset
Poolmead Home for Deaf Women, Bath
Railway Convalescent Home, Portsmouth
Sandringham House Nursing Home, Poole
Sarnhill Nursing Home, Swindon
Spyway Adolescent and Young People Unit, Swanage
St. Anne's Nursing Home, Bournemouth
St. Catherine's Nursing Home, Bath
St. Johns, Southampton
St. Josephs Convalescent Home, Bournemouth
Stable Family Home Trust, Ringwood, Hampshire
Sunnyholm Nursing Home, Christchurch

Oxford region
Ascot Nursing Home, Ascot
Bird's Grove Nursing Home, Bracknell, Berkshire
British Red Cross Physiotherapy Unit, Bletchley
Byron House Nursing Home, Aylesbury
Chiltern Cheshire Home, Gerrards Cross
Kemsley Unit, St. Andrews Hospital, Northampton
Leonard Cheshire Family Care Scheme, The, Gerrards Cross
Nazareth House, Oxford, Oxford
Oxfordshire Cheshire Home, Banbury, Oxon
Peppard House, Reading
Ravenswood, Crowthorne, Berkshire
St. Andrews Hospital, Northampton

South Western region
Amberley House, Truro
Beechwood Private Hotel, St. Ives, Cornwall
Belmont Nursing Home, Clevedon, Avon
Bickington House, St. Ives, Cornwall
Blackdown Nursing Home, Tavistock
Bonaer Nursing Home, Hayle, Cornwall
Bradley Court Nursing Home, Gloucester
Chypons, Penzance
Cleeve Hill Nursing Home, Cheltenham
Elms Nursing Home, The, Saltash, Cornwall
Eschol, Porthscatho, Cornwall
Firs Nursing Home, The, Redruth
Garswood, Penzance
Glades, The, Hayle, Cornwall
Gwendra, Falmouth
Hansord, Penzance
Henly House, Truro
Homefield House, Hayle, Cornwall
Manor House Nursing Home, St. Ives, Cornwall
Maryland, Newquay, Cornwall
Mount Stuart Hospital, Torquay
North Hill Nursing Home, St. Austell
Old Roselyon Manor, Par, Cornwall
Old Tree Nursing Home, Launceston
Pearn Convalescent Home, Plymouth
Penair Nursing Home, Truro
Pendeen Rest Home, Redruth
Penhellis House, Helston, Cornwall
Red Cross House, Truro
Roselyn, Hayle, Cornwall
Rowcroft Hospice, Torquay
Salmonsbury House, Bourton-on-the-Water
St. Michaels Hospital, Hayle, Cornwall
St. Pauls Nursing Home, Gloucester
St. Peters Convent, Plymouth
Summer Lodge Convalescent Home, St. Agnes, Cornwall

Tregarth, St. Austell
Trelawny Nursing Home, Wadebridge
Tremethick House, Redruth
White House, The, Falmouth
Wick House Private Nursing Home, Bristol
Wise Acre, St. Agnes, Cornwall
Wynberg, St. Agnes, Cornwall

West Midlands region
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Birmingham
Compton Hall Macmillan Home, Wolverhampton
Derwen Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, Oswestry
Douglas Macmillan Home, Stoke on Trent
Helen Leys House, Leamington Spa
Myton Hamlet Hospice, Warwick
Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa
St. Giles Hospice, Lichfield
St. Marys Hospice, Birmingham
Sunfield Children's Homes Ltd., Stourbridge
Warwickshire Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham
Wharf Street Hostel, Warwick

Mersey region
Beach Lawn Nursing Home, Waterloo, Merseyside
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Liverpool
Merseyside Nursing Home, Liverpool
St. Josephs Childrens Hospital, Liverpool
St. Martin's Home, Liverpool
St. Vincent's Hospice, Liverpool
Stapely Hospital, Liverpool
Sunnybank Nursing Home, Liverpool
Thingwall Hall Residential Training Centre, Liverpool

North Western region
Alexian Brothers Nursing Home, Manchester
Cheadle Royal Hospital, Cheadle
Gillibrand Hall, Chorley
Heathlands, Manchester
Hyde Physiotherapy Centre, Hyde
Lisieux Hall, Chorley
Philip Godlee Lodge, Manchester
St. Ann's Hospice, Cheadle
St. Ann's Hospice, Manchester
St. John of God Hospital, Carnforth
St. Joseph's Hospital, Preston
Wigan Hospice, Wigan

Wales
Care Concern (Well Street), Corwen, Clwyd
Nazareth House, Cardiff

Renal Failure

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died of kidney failure over the past five years; if he will estimate what proportion of these people could have been saved if suitable kidney and transplant facilities had been available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died of kidney failure in each district health authority for each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his replies*, on 26 November 1985, c. *544* and 28 November 1985, c. *656*]: I very much regret that an error was made in the table showing the number of deaths from renal failure in England and Wales in my reply of 26 November. The explanation given in my reply of 28 November may also benefit from amplification.

The cause of deaths statistics are compiled by coding the underlying cause of death, in accordance with the international classification of diseases. The underlying cause is derived from the information which is given by the doctor who completed the medical certificate of cause of death.

Deaths where the certificate mentioned renal failure without specifying an antecedent disease are coded to ICD 585 and 586. Deaths where the underlying cause is specified as renal disease are coded to ICD 580-584 or 587-9, but these cases may or may not have died from renal failure; other complications of the renal disease can result in different terminal events. Thus the codes ICD 585-6 on their own will understate the number of deaths where renal failure was a terminal event, but on the other hand the whole group ICD 580-589 will include some cases where there was no renal failure.

In addition, there will be an appreciable number of deaths where renal failure occurs as a terminal event of a disease, such as diabetes, where the renal failure is not classified as the underlying cause. Such cases cannot be identified in the statistics.

For district health authorities, the deaths from the whole group ICD 580-589 in 1980-84 are published in table 4 of "Mortality Statistics by Area", DH5 Series, copies of which are in the Library. Figures for the more limited group ICD 585-6 are included in the above but are not available separately for each District; these figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The numbers of deaths from renal disease of all forms in England and Wales 1979-84 were:

Year	*Total numbers in International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 580-589*
1979	4,380
1980	4,482
1981	4,766
1982	4,950
1983	4,742
*1984	4,391

* 1984 figures are not comparable with those of earlier years owing to a change in coding rules.

It is impossible to estimate the proportion of people who might not have died if more treatment facilities had been available. Some of those who died would have been receiving treatment and the majority of cases recorded would not be regarded as treatable because of the presence of other dieases.

Personal Social Services Research Unit, Kent

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all publications produced to date by the personal social services research unit in Kent.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *145*]: A list of the remaining publications by the personal social services research unit has been placed in the Library.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to implement paragraphs 149 of the United Nations Nairobi forward looking

strategies on the advancement of women relating to the increased participation of women in higher professional and managerial positions in health institutions.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *148*]: The National Health Service has been an equal opportunities employer since 1976. Women occupy many senior posts in the Health Service.

The Government do not ascribe to the quota system. Candidates for posts are assessed on their individual merits.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of women who have received cervical cancer screening are under 35 years of age.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the financing arrangements between his Department and the health authorities with regard to the cervical cancer screening programme, with particular reference to the proportionate contribution made by health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: Expenditure by district health authorities on cervical cancer screening is met from within the total resources available to them. There are no special allocations from my Department.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of women who will not die next year as a result of the introduction of computerised systems of call and recall for cervical cancer covering all women in the age group at risk in every area.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: As many factors affect mortality from cervical cancer I am advised that such an estimate cannot sensibly be made.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the health authorities and family practitioner committees which have issued instructions to doctors in clinics or family doctors or both to suspend, delay or reduce the taking of cervical smears because of a backlog in pathology laboratories.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Alphafetoprotein

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a drug called Fetoprotein is used in National Health Service hospitals in the United Kingdom as a monitor for the effectiveness of cancer treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: Alphafetoprotein is a naturally occurring protein which is produced by the body in excess in certain rare kinds of tumour. Its measurement in the blood is used in National Health Service hospitals in the United Kingdom as a monitor for the effectiveness of cancer treatment for those tumours.

EMPLOYMENT

Race Relations Act

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to the answer of 2 December to the hon. Member for Leicester East, *Official Report*, what information he has about *(a)* the level of resources being devoted to positive action under sections 37 and 38 of the Race Relations Act 1967 and *(b)* the particular ethnic minority groups who are under-represented in particular work and the extent to which they are first generation immigrants, *(c)* the extent of their under-representation and *(d)* the particular areas both by category of employment and geographical location, where such under-representation occurs; and if he will give, in each case, the source of his information.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Ten training organisations have been designated under the provisions of section 37 of the Race Relations Act. Designation work under section 37 is undertaken within a small policy section in the Department of Employment headquarters. Encouragement and training initiatives under the provisions of section 38 are undertaken by employers in the light of their particular circumstances. No information is available on the level of resources involved.

Information on the level of under-representation in particular work, the particular racial groups involved and geographical locations cannot be provided in the form requested.

Under section 38 the existence of under-representation in particular work is a matter for the individual employer concerned to assess in the light of his circumstances. An employer would need to be satisfied that at any time within the previous 12 months there were no persons of a particular racial group doing that particular work at his establishment or the proportion of persons of that racial group among those doing that work at the establishment was small in comparison with the proportion of that group either:

(a) all those employed at the establishment; or

(b) the population of the area from which the employer normally recruited for work at the establishment.

In these circumstances it would be lawful for an employer to provide access to training for that work to his employees of the racial group in question only, and he could also lawfully encourage members of that racial group to take advantage of opportunities for doing that work. This exception does not however make it lawful for the employer to discriminate at the point of selection for such work.

Applications for designation under section 37 are considered on an individual basis when applications by training bodies are put to my right hon. and Noble Friend for consideration. For this purpose a racial group would be under-represented in particular work where it appeared to the training body that at any time within the preceeding twelve months there were no persons of that group, or comparatively few, among those doing that work in Great Britain.

In view of my hon. Friend's interest, I am writing to suggest a meeting to discuss our mutual concern that the best person should be chosen for a job without discrimination.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These posts have not been filled by inviting applications from staff. Existing staff in personnel units have been designated as equal opportunity officers on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. Equal opportunity matters are not their sole responsibility.

Gravesham

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the numbers of persons unemployed, by ward, in the constituency of Gravesham.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the numbers of unemployed claimants in the wards of the Gravesham parliamentary constituency as at 10 October 1985.

	Number
Central	323
Chalk	79
Cobham and Luddesdown	42
Coldharbour	256
Higham	113
Istead	112
Meopham North	125
Meopham South	121
Northfleet East	349
Northfleet West	411
Painters Ash	168
Pelham	479
Riverside	500
Riverview	268
Shorne	73
Singlewell	444
Westcourt	477
Whitehill	350
Woodlands	288

Advertising

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Paymaster General what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details of campaigns carried out in the last 10 years are only available at disproportionate cost. This reply covers the last five financial years. In this period two agencies, appointed through the Central Office of Information, have handled campaigns for the Department. These were Freemans (previously Freeman Matthews and Milne and Freeman Matthews Treasure) until July 1983 and Davidson Pearce since that date.

The campaigns and expenditure were as follows:

	£
1980-81	
Job release scheme	268,879
Temporary short-time working compensation scheme	48,271
1981-82	
Job release scheme	202,149
Young workers scheme	197,956
1982-83	
Closed shop compensation	35,295
Job splitting scheme	321,330
Job release scheme	131,928
1983-84	
Closed shop compensation	17,874
Young workers scheme	87,604
Job release schemes	331,827
Job splitting scheme	49,736
1984-85	
No campaigns	—

Long-term Unemployed (Pilot Scheme)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what level of finance he intends to allocate to the Manpower Services Commission to enable it to administer its proposed pilot scheme to help the long-term unemployed; and what amount will be allocated to the west midland region.

Mr. Alan Clark: No specific budgets have been allocated to the nine pilot areas. Given the limited total coverage of the pilot schemes, the costs can be met from within current resources without affecting existing programmes run by the Manpower Services Commission.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General (1) what were the unemployment figures and percentages for the Batley and Spen constituency in September 1983, September 1984 and September 1985, respectively;

(2) if he will give the percentage by which unemployment in the Batley and Spen constituency has changed since June 1983;

(3) what trend the unemployment figures from September 1983 to September 1985 reveal for the constituency of Batley and Spen.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The numbers of unemployed claimants in the Batley and Spen parliamentary constituency are as follows:

	Number
September 1983	4,986
September 1984	5,317
September 1985	5,375

Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Between September 1983 and September 1985 unemployment in the area rose by 389 or 7·8 per cent. Between June 1983 and November 1985 unemployment in the area rose by 241 or 4·9 per cent., but this comparison will be affected by seasonal factors.

Wages Inspectors

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many wages inspectors are currently employed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 1 November 1985 there were 115 wages inspectors in post; five vacant posts were in the process of being filled.

Wages Inspectorate

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what arrangements exist for the use of interpreters by the Wages Inspectorate when it interviews workers who do not speak English.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Wages inspectors can use interpreters whenever the need arises.

Construction Industry

Mr. Robert Parry asked the Paymaster General how many workers were employed in the construction industry in England and Wales in June 1979; and what were the figures at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: In June 1979 there were 1,052,000 employees in employment in the construction industry in England and Wales. In September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) the number was 813,000.

Factory Inspectors (North-West)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* for *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the Stretford constituency (i) the number of inspections by factory inspectors for 1984, 1983 and 1982, (ii) the number of visits by field inspectors to workplaces for 1985, 1984, 1983 and 1982, (iii) the number of deaths, injuries and illnesses due to accidents at work for 1984, 1983, 1982 and (iv) any estimate he has of the loss of output due to accidents at work for 1984 to 1982.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The north-west region covers three areas of the Health and Safety Executive: Greater Manchester (Manchester), north-west (Preston) and Merseyside (Liverpool). The information requested is as follows:

North West region	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Number of inspections (visits) by factory inspectors	29,948	30,372	*32,670	†20,720
Provisional—Number of injuries (non-fatal)	53,428	28,926	24,903	—
Number of notifiable diseases	7	5	6	—
Number of deaths	65	84	88	—

* Covers the 15 month period 1 January 1984 to 1 April 1985.
† Covers the period from 2 April 1985 to 3 December 1985.
No estimates have been made on the loss of output due to accidents at work.
Information on the Stretford constituency is not availble.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General if he will now take steps to increase the number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors by 50 per cent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Decisions on the number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive are a matter for the executive, subject to the limits set by the Government on its total salary expenditure and manpower.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rates, including school leavers, as at October and November for *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table gives, for the regions requested, the unadjusted unemployment rates for October and November 1985.

	10 October 1985	*14 November 1985*
England	12·9	12·8
Scotland	15·6	15·6
Wales	17·2	17·0
Northern Ireland	21·0	20·7

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General if he will list for each constituency in the north-west region the change in the number of employees in employment between June 1979 and June 1985 for *(a)* all industries and *(b)* manufacturing industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: I regret that the information is not available.

Statistics of the numbers employed in local areas are obtained from censuses of employment taken triennally since 1978 and the latest results are for 1981. Census estimates for constituencies were not compiled for years prior to 1981 but net changes between 1981 and 1984 will become available following publication of the September 1984 census of employment in the spring of 1986.

Abbeystead Pumping Station (Explosion)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General if he will place in the Library a copy of the text of the statement that was made on the question of Government financial aid to the victims of the Abbeystead pumping station explosion by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) at a meeting with 24 residents of St. Michael's-in-Wyre, in their village hall on 30 May 1984.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No record of this private meeting was taken by the Department.

Long-term Unemployment (Government Experiment)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General if he will give the following details on the proposed experiment for the long-term unemployed in Billingham and seven other areas *(a)* type of jobs to be included in the experiment and *(b)* average weekly amount of Government subsidy to be received by each worker and *(c)* average weekly amount of Government subsidy to be received by each Government worker.

Mr. Alan Clark: Any full-time jobs filled in the six months from 6 January by long-term unemployed people resident in the nine pilot areas will qualify for the jobstart allowance provided that earnings from those jobs are less than £80 a week. All types of jobs are eligible, whether in the public or private sector, except for jobs in domestic service and in the community programme. In all cases the allowance will be £20 a week. For further details of the scheme I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on 28 November at columns *633-34*.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received concerning the proposed experiment for the long-term unemployed in Billingham and seven other areas in Britain.

Mr. Alan Clark: To date my Ministerial colleagues and I have answered nine parliamentary questions from hon. Members concerning the pilot schemes for the long-term unemployed which will operate in nine areas of Great Britain from 6 January 1986. We have also received seven letters from hon. Members and 10 letters from members of the public.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General what funds he is providing for the youth training scheme to continue the special quality of supervision and training hitherto associated with mode B of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Mode B1 of the current youth training scheme comprises community projects, training workshops and information technology centres. Under the two-year youth training scheme from April 1986, community projects and training workshops will generally be eligible for the premium rate of funding, totalling £270 per trainee per month, in addition to the standard annual managing agent's fee of £110 per contracted place. They may also be eligible for transitional funding of up to £70 per filled premium place per month in 1986-87. The funding of information technology centres is the subject of a separate review.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General if he will amend the rules of eligibility of the job release scheme to cover departmental reorganisations, such as the substitution of a teacher in business studies by a teacher in technical subjects in a school.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. The job release scheme is designed not to encourage Departmental reorganisation but to induce older workers who are close to state retirement pension age to leave employment and so release jobs for unemployed workers.

Labour Mobility

Mr. Soames asked the Paymaster General what steps his Department is taking to improve mobility in the labour market.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Manpower Services Commission supports a wide range of training measures to help employers meet skill needs and improve the employability of individuals, which contribute to the improvement of occupational mobility within the labour market. Overall MSC spending on training is likely to be £1·2 billion this year as compared with £380 million in 1979.

To facilitate geographical mobility, there is a range of measures for making jobseekers aware through the jobcentre network of vacancies in other parts of the country and in addition the Commission operates three schemes which provide financial assistance for people moving to take hard to fill jobs in other areas. Trials are currently being undertaken to see if the effectiveness of these measures can be improved.

Gas Installation (Safety)

Mr. Jim Lester asked the Paymaster General what action he intends to take to seek to ensure that levels of safety in gas installations are improved after privatisation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Commission has already begun work on an approved code of practice on standards of training for gas installers. It hopes to publish a consultative document early next year.

There is a need for an independent, representative body to promote safety in gas installation. I am asking the commission and the current Council of the Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers to develop proposals for such a body.

CIVIL SERVICE

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many positions the Civil Service plans to make available for youth training scheme trainees from the new two-year youth training scheme from 1 April.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally. We are, however, examining with Departments the scope for Civil Service participation in the new arrangements, and I shall reply to my hon. Friend with details of departmental plans for the two-year youth training scheme as soon as the information is available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue (Enforcement Powers)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish his consultation document on the enforcement powers of the Inland Revenue; and if it remains his intention to include provisions on those matters in the Finance Bill 1986.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation Revenue

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the additional income to the Exchequer if *(a)* all present tax allowances and *(b)* those tax reliefs for which estimates can be made are set against the standard rate of tax only.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Musical Entertainment (Expenditure)

35. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Minister for the Arts how much has been spent from the arts budget on musical entertainment in the present year and in each of the past 10 years; what expenditure is proposed for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The relevant figures are as follows. They demonstrate that the Arts Council's expenditure on music, exclusive of opera, was over £10 million in 1984-85 and that this represented an increase in real terms of 11·9 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1984-85.

Arts Council and Regional Arts Associations expenditure on music

	£
1975-76	3,087,764
1976-77	3,814,155
1977-78	4,388,230
1978-79	5,182,233
1979-80	5,893,189
1980-81	6,778,703
1981-82	8,004,884
1982-83	9,555,884
1983-84	9,571,900
1984-85	10,079,100

These figures exclude Arts Council provision for opera. No separate figure for music in 1985-86 is yet available.

Disabled People

36. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the accessibility of the arts to disabled people and the steps his Department is taking to improve accessibility.

Mr. Luce: I have read with great interest the Attenborough report, commissioned by the Carnegie Trust, which made recommendations on this subject: I commended it to the Arts Council, British Film Institute and Crafts Council, and I am pleased to note that all three have acted upon the report. The public libraries, museums and galleries for which I am responsible have for many years made special efforts, within the resources available, to facilitate visits by disabled individuals.

Funding

37. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has had any discussions with the organisers of the National Campaign for the Arts about the level of funding for the arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The organisers of the campaign have not made any approaches directly to me since I took office. I am, however, aware of their recently published "Programme for the Arts". I announced the Arts Council's grant for 1986-87 on 14 November and will shortly be announcing the allocations of the rest of the arts budget.

Libraries (Audit Commission Recommendations)

38. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has received any recommendations from the Audit Commission on libraries within his responsibility and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No, I have not received any recommendations from the Audit Commission.

National Museums and Galleries

39. **Sir David Price** asked the Minister for the Arts whether, in view of the major structural problems faced by a number of national museums and galleries, he will equip them with capital funds as well as current grants.

Mr. Luce: Building and maintenance work for the national museums and galleries, including major capital projects, is at present carried out by the Property Services Agency with funds separately allocated to the agency from the Arts and Libraries budget. The Government are reviewing the arrangements for the control and funding of such work.

Business Sponsorship

40. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Minister for the Arts if he plans to make available additional funds in 1985-86 to encourage businessmen to support the arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have recently provided an additional £¼ million for the business sponsorship incentive scheme by reallocating funds within my budget to meet the demand.

Southern Arts

41. **Mr. Soames** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the level of funding for Southern Arts for 1986-87.

Mr. Luce: The funding of Southern Arts is a matter for the Arts Council, which has not yet announced its allocations to regional arts associations for 1986-87.

DEFENCE

Royal Aircraft Establishment, Oakhanger

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any developments are planned at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Oakhanger.

Mr. Lee: Yes. We have approved a joint Anglo-American project to establish a further tracking dish at Oakhanger. The purpose of this development is to enhance further the existing co-operation between ourselves and the United States in the field of satellite communications. An application for planning clearance will be made shortly.

Service Men's Children (Education)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated expenditure in this financial year on the education of children of service men whose schooling is either paid for or subsidised by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the information given in table 6.12 of the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1985-86". About one third of the total expenditure on education, as shown, is assessed to be in respect of service children's education authority schools. About £85 million in 1985-86 is expected to be spent on education allowances and associated costs.

Westland Helicopters

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of orders placed by Her Majesty's Government for products or supplies from Westland Helicopters between January 1977 and February 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The total value of orders placed by Her Majesty's Government for products or supplies (including orders for repair and overhaul) from Westland Helicopters between January 1977 and February 1985 was about £750 million.

Royal Dockyards (Privatisation)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the work at the general naval stores based in Portsmouth will be lost by the privatisation of the dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth.

Mr. Lee: Many factors affect the work load of the naval stores organisation at Portsmouth. It is not expected that the introduction of commercial management into the dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth will have a significant impact on this work load.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any assessment of the implications for employment in the Portsmouth area of the proposed privatisation of the dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Civilian Pay and Records Office Department, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the projected increase in staff at the civilian pay and records office Department in Portsmouth still holds valid.

Mr. Lee: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Nimrod Advanced Early Warning Project

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current position and available options on the Nimrod advanced early warning project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have completed our technical evaluation of the options for the further development of the Nimrod AEW mission system avionics to an acceptable standard of operation. We are currently evaluating GEC Avionics' proposals to cover this work.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the cost to the Government of cancellation of the Nimrod advanced early warning project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We are currently evaluating GEC Avionics' proposals for the completion of the Nimrod AEW mission system avionics to an acceptable standard of operation. In the event of cancellation the question of cancellation charges would be a matter for negotiation with the contractors. I cannot say in advance of such negotiations what those charges might be.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what negotiations he has had with *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* foreign aircraft manufacturers about alternatives to the Nimrod advanced early warning system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

South Africa

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any members of the Parachute regiment have visited South Africa to take part in training or to observe South African security force operations, or for any other purposes; whether members of any other units of Her Majesty's armed forces have visited South Africa for similar reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Since the present Government took office, no members of Her Majesty's armed forces have visited South Africa to take part in training or to observe South African security force operations. Members of the armed forces occasionally pass through South Africa on the way to neighbouring countries, and may make private visits to the country unconnected with their duties.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether South African service men have visited Great Britain to take part in military training or the instruction of British service men; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No South African service men have been given military training in the United Kingdom or given instruction to British service men since 1976.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of the South African security services have been permitted to visit Northern Ireland to observe or take part in training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations with interested parties he proposes to hold before making decisions on the Sharp-Hansford report on the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Lee: Consultations with interested parties will take place as appropriate before recommendations of the report are implemented.

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence to which outside individuals or bodies he has already circulated copies of the Sharp-Hansford report on the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Lee: Messrs Sharp-Hansford's inquiries included consultation with my Department, Her Majesty's Treasury, the Department of Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority and the British Aviation Standing Conference, as well as the Meteorological Office itself. Copies of the final report have been sent by my Department to these bodies as part of the decision-making process.

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to announce decisions on the recommendations of the Sharp-Hansford report on the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Lee: I hope to be in a position to announce decisions early next year.

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the Sharp-Hansford report on the Meteorological Office was submitted to him.

Mr. Lee: On 12 August 1985.

Procurement Contracts and Projects

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which current procurement contracts and projects have not been completed within the due period;

(2) with which contractors his Department is negotiating in respect of overdue procurement contracts and projects;

(3) if he will list the current procurement projects and contracts whose terms and conditions he is reviewing.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

BARPLAN

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list those groups of ports in the United Kingdom for which there exist contingency plans analogous to the one contained in BARPLAN for Barry, Cardiff and Newport;

(2) whether the BARPLAN document takes into account the transition-to-war measures contained in the 1983 United States — United Kingdom lines of communication agreement;

(3) if he will describe the status of the BARPLAN document sent to certain officers working for South Glamorgan and Gwent county councils by the Navy Flag Officer, Plymouth.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 December 1985, c. 279]: The document referred to is a classified document, relating to contingency plans for the defence of certain ports in a time of crisis or war. It would not be in the public interest to comment on the details of such plans or to list all locations for which such contingency plans exist.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 December 1985

ENVIRONMENT

Control of Pollution (Report)

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now completed his consideration of the report of the joint review committee on the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government have completed their consideration of the report of the joint committee on the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations. They have taken into account comments received on the report and in particular those expressed in the sixth report of the Select Committee on Science and Technology in another place. They have also carefully considered the views of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution. I am happy to say that the conclusions reached on the principal issues are broadly in line with the commission's approach.

The Committee's report raises important issues not only on the control of those hazardous wastes ranking as "special", but on the control of industrial and commercial waste generally. The Government accept its central conclusion, which is also reflected in the first report of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate, that action is needed to ensure the more consistent and effective application of existing controls over disposals. Meetings have already taken place with representatives of both local authority associations and industry to discuss the immediate action needed by all concerned.

But action to improve the application of the law as it stands will not be enough. We also have to improve the framework of control while avoiding the creation of new claims on resources. The Government propose therefore to bring forward amendments to the regulations, on the lines recommended, which will ensure that these cover all substances representing a significant risk to human life. In addition, we shall want to consider extending these to cover particular substances, which while not dangerous to human life in the terms defined, are of substantial concern to the public on wide environmental grounds. I propose to invite the local authority associations and industry to join in setting up a small expert group which will advise on the specific changes needed and keep the scope and application of the regulations under regular review. Any changes will also be the subject of wider consultation with environmental organisations.

The Government also accept the need to strengthen and supplement the wider framework of control over disposal of industrial and commercial waste. First, it is proposed to enhance the responsibilities of producers of waste so that they have a general obligation to take all reasonable steps open to them to secure its satisfactory disposal. It is right that all producers of waste who hand it over to others for disposal should be expected to show the same concern for its proper handling that responsibly minded producers already display

Secondly, it is proposed to extend the powers of the licensing authorities for operators of heavy goods vehicles so that they can take into account offences under the Control of Pollution Act, for example, illicit dumping, when exercising their functions of granting or reviewing licences. Similarly, we propose to extend the powers of local authorities so that they can take into account previous relevant offences when deciding applications for site licences. Thirdly, it is proposed to strengthen the powers of local authorities to secure proper aftercare of waste disposal sites and to facilitate prosecution for breaches of licence conditions.

There remain two important issues on which there have been conflicting representations; whether all producers of industrial and commercial waste should be required to register with waste disposal authorities and whether all transporters and other handlers of such waste should be licensable by them.

The Government are not convinced that a requirement for registration of producers would be justified. It would be expensive both for industry and authorities and it is considered that it would not significantly improve enforcement of controls. It is nevertheless proposed to review the information needs and sources of authorities and I am accordingly inviting the local authority associations to join me in establishing a small working party to carry out this review in consultation with industrial interests.

It is also accepted that further steps are needed to curtail illicit disposal operations. The Government do not believe that it would be justifiable to introduce a system of licensing for all waste handlers. This could impose significant costs, and would create a confusion of jurisdiction with the arrangements for licensing operators of heavy goods vehicles. They do, however, consider it right to legislate for a simpler requirement that all handlers of waste should have to register with each waste disposal authority in which they have an operating centre. I propose to seek the views of the local authority associations and bodies representing industry on the details of such a scheme.

All these changes require primary legislation and proposals for it will be brought forward at the earliest suitable opportunity. The opportunity will be taken also to make certain other amendments of the law, principally to put the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate on a statutory footing and to empower waste disposal authorities to charge costs of control of licensed waste disposers. This will ensure proper funding of the measures of control needed and will be consistent with the polluter pays principle.

I believe that the proposals which I have announced today together with our current initiative to get better standards of operational practice and enforcement, will make a substantial and lasting contribution to the more effective control over waste disposal and to the protection of the environment.

ENVIRONMENT

Inner Cities (Nursery Provision)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage extra nursery provision in those inner city areas, such as the London borough of Newham, with an above average number of one-parent families.

Sir George Young: Individual authorities are responsible for determining the balance of their expenditure within and between services, in the light of their own priorities and their judgment of local needs. The education component of each local authority's grant related expenditure assessment, which influences an authority's total block grant entitlement, includes an allowance for the additional costs of educating children with special needs arising from their social or economic backgrounds. Relevant factors include the number of children who were born, or live in households whose head was born outside the UK, Ireland, USA and Old Commonwealth; those in poor housing conditions; those in large or in one-parent families; those from low socio-economic groups; and those from families receiving supplementary benefit. These factors are taken into account at nursery, as well as primary and secondary level, reflecting the policy of the Government to concentrate nursery provision in areas of social need.

The Government also assist nursery provision in inner city areas through the urban programme. The total value of nursery projects approved under the UP for 1984-85 was £12·6 million.

Dog Licence

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce a decision on the future of the dog licence.

Mrs. Rumbold: As soon as possible.

Water Industry

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to include in any measure to implement privatisation of the water industry a requirement that all meetings shall be held in public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The question does not arise at this stage.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a general direction to regional water authorities to hold their meetings as if they were covered by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1959.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Common Land (Access Rights)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has plans to introduce further legislation to clarify the position in relation to rights of access to common land and its management.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will consider the situation in the light of the report of the Common Land Forum, which is expected to be presented to the Countryside Commission in March 1986.

Business Rate

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to consult in the near future representatives of non-domestic ratepayers concerning a uniform business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We shall be consulting all those concerned with the future of the non-domestic rate after we publish our consultative document on this, and the other aspects of local government finance, in the new year.

Cement Industry

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has on the current maximum production capacity of the United Kingdom cement industry;

(2) what information he has on the current percentage of capacity in use in the United Kingdom cement industry;

(3) what information he has on the current production for home consumption of the United Kingdom cement industry;

(4) what information he has on the current production for export of the United Kingdom cement industry.

Sir George Young: The capacity of the United Kingdom cement manufacturing industry is approximately 15·8 million tonnes pa. Some 85 per cent. of this capacity is currently in use. Out of the total production of 13,195,849 tonnes in the year 1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985, 115,438 tonnes were exported.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state, at 1985 prices, the total amount of rate support grant for local authorities in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86 inclusive.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on Tuesday 3 December 1985, at column 172.

Housing Investment Programme Allocations

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide, at 1985 prices, the total amount of housing investment programme allocations for local authorities in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside for 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Sir George Young: The total housing investment programme allocations for local authorities in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86 are as follows. Since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to add to their spending power by drawing on the prescribed proportion of their housing capital receipts.

	£ thousands 1985-86 prices
1979-80	345,048
1980-81	256,101
1981-82	206,331
1982-83	246,911
1983-84	231,392
1984-85	176,289
1985-86	139,521

Housing Expenditure (Nottingham)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount spent by Nottingham city council on capital expenditure (housing) for 1984-85 and 1985-86 (first six months).

Sir George Young: Nottingham city council's capital expenditure on housing for 1984-85 was £23·384 million and for the first six months of 1985-86 was £10·742 million.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify the nature of the proposed development threatening those eight sites identified as meriting designation as special protection areas under directive 79/409, which the Nature Conservancy Council considers to be at risk.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the proposed or approved developments for the eight sites are as follows:

Caenlochan—downhill ski development
Drumochter Hills—downhill ski development
Firth of Forth—land reclamation
Islay—peat extraction
Loch Ken—recreational boating
Teesmouth Flats & Marshes—land reclamation
Humber Flats—reclamation for industrial development
Stour/Orwell Estuary—Felixstowe dock expansion

Local Authority Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of *(a)* gross and *(b)* net capital expenditure by local authorities at (i) plan and (ii) estimated out-turn in each year from 1981-82 and 1986-87.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985]: The following table gives the information requested for the main cash limit on local authority capital expenditure, DOE/LAI. The outturn figures for 1981-82 to 1984-85 are as reported by local authorities. The position for 1985-86 is very uncertain. Latest projections on the basis of the second quarter expenditure returns suggest an overspend against the cash limit of about £¾ billion. Any eventual overspend would be met from the public expenditure reserve. It would be most unwelcome but, on the basis of current forecasts of other claims on the reserve, it is expected that it can be contained within the estimated outturn for the planning total shown in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure Against DOE/LAI: England

	Plan*		Outturn*	
	Gross	Net	Gross	Net
1981-82	4,007	3,139	3,945	2,610
1982-83	4,541	3,385	4,750	2,515
1983-84	4,729	2,935	5,580	3,350
1984-85†	4,438	2,453	5,581	3,394
1985-86†	4,031	1,911	‡(4,764)	‡(2,676)
1986-87†	4,329	2,366		

* Net plan is the DOE/LAI cash limit. Gross plan is net plan plus the estimate of recipts underlying gross provision.

† The figures for 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 exclude local authority capital expenditure on urban aid which is included in the DOE/LAI cash limit for these years with provision of £283 million, £289 million, and £261 million. Estimated outturn in 1984-85 was £260 million.

‡ Forecast.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Solicitor-General (Meeting)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the circumstances and purpose of the Solicitor-General's meeting on 2 December with Mr. Boyd, of counsel, and others.

The Solicitor-General: The meeting was requested on 2 December by the assistant solicitor instructing counsel (Mr. Boyd) on behalf of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise for the prosecution in the case of Peljeric and Ropret at the Crown court, Reading. It took place at 7 pm in the Attorney-General's room at the House of Commons.

The purpose was to acquaint me with the fact that the trial judge had that day been requested on behalf of the defendants to order that the name of an alleged informant in the case be disclosed in open court; to inform me of the importance and value of informers to the investigative functions of the Customs and Excise regarding controlled drugs; and to seek my approval for the withdrawal of the prosecution in the event that the judge acceded to the defence request. Mr. M. Jones, the investigating officer in charge of the case, was present. Counsel, whether for the prosecution or the defence, and representatives of any Government Department, are entitled at any stage of a criminal trial in which they are participating to seek to consult a Law Officer of the Crown on any matter affecting them which they believe gives rise to a serious question concerning the public interest or their professional duty. The request for the meeting which took place on 2 December was made in accordance with the standard practice of the solicitor to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in such circumstances.

On learning that a substantial proportion of the drugs seized each year by the Customs and Excise is found through informers, and of the great importance of protecting the identity of such informers, I gave advice as to the submission that might be made to the learned judge the next day by Mr. Boyd, and gave my approval to the withdrawal of the prosecution in the event that disclosure of the name was ordered.

It is important to note that, while it is the general rule that the courts shall protect the identity of informers, exceptionally circumstances can exist which may require the disclosure of identity to be ordered. Whether that is so in a particular case is a matter for the trial judge to determine in accordance with principles established by

law. In a case where disclosure is ordered it is for the prosecutor to decide whether or not to proceed further with the prosecution.

Judiciary (Freemasonry)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will make it his policy to require a declaration of interest by judges and justices of the peace as to whether they are masons.

The Solicitor-General: No. This would be a very dangerous infraction of personal privacy and personal freedom, and there is no evidence to justify the discrimination between freemasonry and other forms of voluntary association. In the case of justices of the peace, they are also free to join political associations and campaigning bodies so long as they remain within the law, behave in a manner not calculated or bring the magistracy into disrepute and disqualify themselves from sitting in cases in which it might reasonably be supposed that they were emotionally or personally involved.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if he will issue instructions to the Crown Prosecution Service that prosecuting counsel shall not without the consent of defence counsel, conduct a conference with a police officer involved in the trial whilst the officer is under oath as a witness; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: No. Counsel who conduct prosecutions on behalf of the Crown Prosecution Service will be members of an independent profession in private practice. The question raised by the hon. and learned Member relates to a matter of professional conduct and etiquette and is a matter for direction by the professional conduct committee of the Bar Council and not by the Crown Prosecution Service. The relevant principles are currently set out in paragraph 142 and annex 12 of the Code of Conduct for the Bar of England and Wales (3rd Edition).

Rony Kevin Dunbar (Trial)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if the trial of Rony Kevin Dunbar at Knightsbridge crown court between 5 and 8 August, indictment No. 851029, was held wholly or partly in camera; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: During the trial referred to by the hon. and learned Member, an application was made by counsel for the defendant that evidence on the defendant's behalf should be received in camera, and the trial judge acceded to this application.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Airports Authority

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the British Airports Authority will be published.

Mr. Howard: The report is published today.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission was asked to investigate the efficiency and costs and standard of service of the commercial activities of the British Airports Authority. Its report concludes that the authority has shown a generally satisfactory standard of performance although there is room for improvement.

In the course of its inquiries the commission made a detailed study of the various elements of the authority's commercial activities including concessions, licences, leases, rents and property and the implications for competition and quality of service. The commission recognises that the authority is continually faced with the need to decide between competing demands for limited facilities and support the view expressed by the chairman of the authority, who told it that the duty to provide proper operation facilities for passengers and cargo shippers must take precedence over commercial activities. The commission says that in practice an airport constitutes a closed market in which monopolistic exploitation would be practicable and that such general considerations must be borne in mind in any attempt to assess how well—or badly — the authority carries on its commercial activities.

The commission recommends an increase in the size of the board to allow a member with retailing experience to be appointed, and that the board should pay a more active role in ensuring that when decisions on the provision and allocation of space at new and redeveloped terminals are needed a full range of feasible commercial possibilities is considered.

The commission recommends that planning guidelines be updated more frequently, that more challenging targets for commercial performance and budgets be set and notes the authority's awareness of deficiencies in the property mangement information systems.

The Commission also recommends that a distinction continue to be drawn in the authority's accounts between air traffic operations and commercial activities. Other recommendations concern regular tendering for concessions, fuel arrangements at Gatwick, and quality of service and performance indicators.

The commission explains that competition at point of sale is limited by the lack of space at terminals, but considers that even where competition would be possible the authority's policy sometimes restricts or prevents it. While the authority believes that it has an obligation to protect concessionaires' interests, it also believes that in some areas consumer choice is better secured through a variety of products for sale than through duplication of suppliers and tries to ensure by price regulation and other controls over concessionaires that customers get value for money. The commission did not find these arrangements fully effective and offered several recommendations to increase competition.

As is usual in such references, the commission was asked to consider whether the authority is pursuing a course of conduct contrary to the public interest. It concludes that while there is scope for improvement in the service provided by the authority in its commercial activities, it is not, in relation to those activities, pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest. In a note of dissent one commission member found that the attitude of the BAA in effectively restricting or preventing competition to its concessionaires operated against the public interest and that a partial remedy would be for the authority to be obliged to implement the relevant recommendations in the report.

While the report necessarily deals with the present position at BAA airports, the commission notes that in the context of the White Paper "Airports Policy" it will be necessary for the authority's successor to assess the extent to which commercial opportunities may reasonably be pursued.

The authority will be producing its preliminary response to the commission's findings in three to four months and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make a statement on this response at that time.

Grants (Paisley)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many industrial and commercial schemes in Paisley, North have received financial assistance from his Department during the current financial year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During the current financial year (from 1 April—30 November 1985) 39 offers totalling £1,689,000 have been made to companies in Paisley, North under the new regional development grants scheme or regional selective assistance.

I am afraid that information relating to other forms of assistance are not available on a constituency basis.

Motor Car Production

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the relative hours of labour required to produce a motor car in the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: There are no industry-wide comparisons available even in the United Kingdom.

Insurance Companies

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the practice of insurance companies offering an immediate cash settlement of a claim in return for a reduction in that claim; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Medicines (Patents)

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what representations he has had advocating measures to protect patents for new medicines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to introduce measures to protect patents for new medicines.

Mr. Pattie: I have received representations from individual pharmaceutical companies and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry for repeal of the licences of right provisions contained in the 1977 Patents Act affecting patents granted under the previous 1949 Act and for extension of the present 20-year patent term. On the licences of right issue, I am awaiting further data relevant to the pharmaceutical industry's case from the ABPI and the Department of Health and Social Security. With regard to extension of patent term, Community members resolved in 1975 to bring their national patent laws into conformity, as far as practicable, with provisions of the European patent convention. This was done in the United Kingdom by the Patents Act 1977, which provided inter alia for the extension of patent terms from 16 to 20 years in line with the European patent convention. There are no immediate plans for common action with other Community states to extend the term further. However, I am considering whether a United Kingdom initiative might be appropriate.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he anticipates a loss to public funds arising from the proposed sale of the Millshaw Park factory of Systime plc.

Mr. Butcher: It is difficult at this stage to anticipate the effect on Systime of the proposed sale and therefore its implications for public funds.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further grant recoveries he anticipates making from Systime plc in addition to those shown in Systime's recent accounts.

Mr. Butcher: Detailed information about grants is a matter of commercial confidentiality between the Department and companies involved. I am therefore unable to comment on individual cases.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Control Data Corporation of the United States of America gave an undertaking to his Department or to the British Technology Group to make available a sum of £20 million for Systime plc in spring 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: There is no question of CDC having given any undertaking in the terms suggested.

Book Piracy

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the meeting between the Minister of State for Industry and the hon. Member for Christchurch, together with a delegation from the Publishers' Association, concerning the problem of book piracy and its effects on the exports of British publishers.

Mr. Pattie: The Government have noted with concern, representations made at the meeting about the severe effects of book piracy in overseas markets. I stressed that we would continue to support the efforts of all sectors of industry to combat this sort of problem by pressing for comprehensive and enforceable copyright law in countries which lack it, and by participating in international initiatives against piracy and counterfeiting, for example, within the general agreement on tariffs and trade, the World Intellectual Property Organisation, and the European Community.

I am concerned that our support should be as effective as possible and we shall be looking at ways in which it might be made more so. Industry can help by keeping us well-informed about the nature and scale of the problem and its effect on United Kingdom exports, and I was grateful for the evidence provided at the meeting.

Regional Aid

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list, at 1985 prices, the amount of regional grants paid to Yorkshire and Humberside under *(a)* section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and *(b)* under Part II of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for the financial years 1979-80 to 1983-84 inclusive;

(2) if he will estimate the amount of regional assistance to be allocated to Yorkshire and Humberside during the 1985-86 financial year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will publish a table showing the total amount of money paid to Britain in European regional development fund grants in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total European Economic Community budget;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the ratio of European regional development fund payments to total regional policy expenditure for each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will estimate the ratios for the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The available information is given in the following table:

£m

Year	*ERDF Payments to UK—Actual*	*ERDF Payments to UK at 1985 prices*	*ERDF Payments to UK as percentage of total payments from European Community Budget*
1979	107.251	178.10	1.00
1980	136.423	188.946	1.65
1981	143.161	177.192	1.64
1982	119.460	137.647	1.24
1983	176.816	193.896	1.41
1984	214.930	225.856	—
1979-1984	924.354		

Footnotes:

1. Current price expenditure has been converted to 1985 prices by use of an estimated GDP deflator.
2. Figures of payments from the EEC budget in 1984 as certified by the Court of Auditors are not yet available.

Expenditure in Great Britain on regional development grant and regional selective assistance in the financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85 totalled £3,536 million in Great Britain and on standard capital grant and regional selective assistance in Northern Ireland for the same period £871 million. The majority of receipts from the European regional development fund were in respect of capital investments in infrastructure, but there is no definition of "regional policy expenditure" to form the basis of the other table requested.

Gas Cookers (Installation)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce legislation requiring all gas cookers to be installed with flues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

No. The Gas Safety (Intallation and Use) Regulations 1984 already require gas installers to ensure that piped gas appliances can be used without endangering persons or property. Most gas cooking appliances are designed not to need flues when properly installed.

SCOTLAND

Expenditure Plans

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of his spending plans for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Younger: Total expenditure on the programmes within my responsiblity will by £7,565 million in 1986-87, £7,410 million in 1987-88 and £7,430 million in 1988-89. The figure of £7,565 million which I have now provided for 1986-87 is £225 million higher than the figure for that year published in the 1985 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) and £407 million—5·7 per cent.—higher than the planned figure for the current year. Outturn for 1985-86 is currently expected to be about £7,356 million. That excess over provision largely reflects continued revenue spending by local authorities above the levels provided for. The outturn figure is likely to change as firmer information becomes available.

The lower totals in 1987-88 and 1988-89 are largely due to the completion of the Torness nuclear power station which allows the South of Scotland Electricity Board's external financing limit to be substantially reduced in each year. In addition, as in England and Wales, no decision has been taken on provision for local authority current expenditure for 1987-88 and 1988-89. The figures for those years included in the programme totals therefore simply repeat those for 1986-87. They will be reconsidered during next year's public expenditure survey.

As I announced on 3 December, I will shortly be completing my consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities about the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 and will then lay before the House the relevant rate support grant order. Subject to those consultations, the order will provide for a total relevant expenditure of £3,574·6 million and aggregate Exchequer grant of £2,005 million. A further addition will be made to both of these figures to take into account the transfer of financial responsibility for list D schools to local authorities as from 1 April 1986.

The proposed provision for relevant expenditure is, excluding loans charges, interest receipts and the list D schools transfer, 3·9 per cent. above the figure for 1985-86 and £59 million above the provision in the White Paper (Cmnd. 9428).

I thought it right to continue the revaluation rebates scheme for domestic and commercial ratepayers although relief next year will be 75 per cent. of the amounts presently available. The cost of the relief in 1986-87 will be about £20 million part of which will be provided by a transfer of resources from my block.

The figures for each of the services within my responsibility are given in the table; the following particular points should be noted:

Agriculture and Fisheries

The totals reflect the higher rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances announced on 28 November which raise the total paid through these allowances from £38 million to £43 million in a full year. The 1985-86 outturn includes £7·7 million for the emergency weather aid announced at the same time. Provision is also made for the purchase of an offshore aerial surveillance aircraft by DAFS in 1986-87.

Industry

Provision for 1986-87 will be about 8 per cent. more than provision for the current years in Cmnd. 9428. As anticipated in that White Paper, provision will decline in 1987-88 to reflect the end of the period in which payments under the former regional development grant (RDG) arrangements are being made alongside payments under the revised RDG arrangements introduced in November 1984. After this transitional adjustment, provision is planned to increase again in 1988-89. Provision for grant-in-aid in respect of net expenditure by the SDA and HIDB will continue at broadly the same level as in the current year to maintain the important work of these bodies.

Transport

The provision for transport in 1986-87 will be about £14 million more than was planned for the current year after taking account of technical adjustments. Further progress will be made on important trunk road bypasses, dual carriageways and other improvements. Strategic routes covered will include the A75 to Stranraer and main roads linking Aberdeen to Dundee and Inverness. The Government will also continue to honour their commitment to subsidise certain shipping and civil aviation services.

Housing

In 1986-87 total net provision for housing will be £645 million, an increase of £47 million over Cmnd. 9428 provision for the current year. Further growth in the net housing baseline is planned for future years with total net provision being set at £670 million for 1987-88 rising to £700 million in 1988-89. It remains my aim to concentrate resources on capital investment. Net capital expenditure will be about 64·4 per cent. of the total planned provision for the current year. I intend that this proportion should rise still further in later years. Once investment financed by net capital receipts is taken into account the programme will allow for gross capital investment next year of £636 million, an increase of about £55 million over the current year. This additional provision will enable local authorities to meet more of the needs for renovation and repair of their own stock. It will also allow some increase in the local authority non-HRA allocations for improvement grants to the private sector. As a consequence of concentrating the increased resources in the local authority sector, the gross capital expenditure provision for the other housing agencies next year will be broadly the same in cash terms as that allowed for this year.

Other Environmental Services

Provision for 1986-87 will be about £32 million higher than provision for the current year. Much of the increase relates to local authority expenditure but increased priority is also being given to capital expenditure on water and sewerage services, which is planned to increase by almost 20 per cent. over the current level during the survey period. This underlines the Government's commitment to the improvement, maintenance and renewal of the fabric of important infrastructure services.

Law, Order and Protective Services

The Government remain firmly committed to making adequate provision for the maintenance of law and order. My expenditure plans will meet the cost of the police service and permit a modest increase in police manpower to meet priority requirements. They allow also for the number of prison service officers to be increased by a further 125 over the next three years mainly to accommodate the opening of a new prison at Shotts.

Education

The bulk of this programme consists of local authority current expenditure. For the remaining elements which are within my direct control my highest priority remains the commitment I announced last year to increase the availability of engineering and IT courses within higher education. I have also been able to increase provision for higher education by some £10 million in 1986-87. This will help to meet costs associated with the transfer of Napier college and Glasgow college of technology to central institution status, including the acquisition of Craiglockhart for Napier college and to maintain access to higher education through students awards.

Arts and Libraries

In order to enable the trustees to develop the Royal Museum of Scotland I have made additional funds available to them for new posts and other improvements. In addition to the provision for this programme within my block I have made £600,000 available in each year to my hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts to enable the Scottish Arts Council to maintain its partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities over the funding of the Scottish national companies following changes in local government organisations.

Health

The Health Service in Scotland remains a high priority. I plan to increase cash provision for 1986-87 to £2,080 million, over £120 million more than this year's expected level of spending. Over the forthcoming three years to 1988-89 my plans are to increase spending on the NHS by over £300 million, or 15 per cent.

From the extra cash for 1986-87, I am setting aside £93 million for hospitals and community health services, to increase cash provision for this main programme by 6·8 per cent. For the following two years allocations to this programme are to increase by 1 per cent. more than the level of forecast inflation for each year. Over the three years to 1988-89 planned expenditure on hospital services and community health is therefore set to increase by £220 million or 16 per cent. Health boards will also be able to retain resources released within their own budgets by cost improvements and efficiency measures.

The resources set aside for the family practitioner services provide for the expected rise in public demand for these services.

The decisions I have taken reflect the Government's determination to keep public expenditure under firm control while ensuring that adequate resources are available for worthwhile expenditure. The Scottish block arrangements have again ensured that my programme receives its fair share of resources and have provided me with the flexibility to take Scotland's needs and circumstances properly into account.

£ million

	1985-86		1986-87		1987-88		1988-89
	*Cmnd. 9428 Provision	Est. outturn	*Cmnd. 9428 Provision	†Revised Provision	*Cmnd. 9428 Provision	†Revised Provision	†Provision
Agriculture	176	209	172	190	170	190	190
Industry	275	296	309	302	240	230	240
Tourism	12	12	13	13	10	10	10
Transport	529	555	564	587	570	600	600
Housing	598	618	619	645	640	670	700
Other Environmental Services	556	587	595	588	600	600	600
Law, Order and Protective Services	511	516	536	563	560	570	580
Education	1,696	1,821	1,754	1,793	1,770	1,800	1,800
Arts and Libraries	68	76	71	75	70	70	70
Health and Social Work	2,308	2,311	2,424	2,443	2,520	2,530	2,620
Other public services	104	104	108	110	110	110	110
LA current expenditure not allocated to Services	81	—	—	19	—	20	20
Nationalised industries' external financing	245	251	167	239	40	0	−120
	7,158	7,356	7,332	7,565	7,310	7,410	7,430

Note: Figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are rounded to the nearest £10 million.
* White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) figures adjusted for reallocation of local authority current provision.
† Figures take account of pre-survey and survey changes. Some figures may be subject to detailed technical amendment.

Hip Replacement Operations

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the average waiting time in each health board area for the hip replacement operation.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 12 July 1985 at column *244*.

Citizens Band Radio Equipment (Misuse)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the nature and place of all convictions in Scotland for offences relating to the misuse of citizens band radio equipment for the first nine months of 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The offences for which information is requested cannot be separately identified in the classification of crimes and offences used by the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Kinnell Estate, Killin

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the approval by the Forestry Commission for planting grant of an application in respect of 1,000 acres of Kinnell estate, Killin, which had previously been turned down by the regional advisory committee of the commission.

Mr. John MacKay: During 1983 and the early part of 1984 the Forestry Commission considered two applications for grant aid under the forestry grant scheme for planting part of the hill land of Acharn farm on the Kinnell estate. The first of these applications was turned down on the grounds that the proposed planting would leave an unviable hill sheep farm. However, a subsequent sale of the Kinnell estate resulted in the Acharn farm buildings and some lower land passing into a different ownership from that of the hill land. Because of this change of circumstance, the continuing viability of the farm was no longer a key issue when the new owner of the hill land submitted his planting proposals, and these were approved for grant aid.

Cumbernauld and Kilsyth

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the buildings in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth which have been listed as being of architectural or historic interest.

Mr. Ancram: I am arranging to send the hon. Member the information he seeks.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many acres of land available for development in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth are owned by *(a)* Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council and *(b)* Cumbernauld development corporation.

Mr. Ancram: Information on the amount of land available for development owned by district councils is not held centrally and should be sought from the district council. Cumbernauld development corporation owns approximately 1,100 acres of land available for development, permission for development on about 290 acres of which has been granted under section 6 of the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968.

Inner City Regeneration

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* current programmes funded by his Department for inner city regeneration in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A wide range of programmes contribute to our objective of inner city regeneration. The main ones are as follows:

(a) the urban programme provides 75 per cent. grant support to local authority and voluntary projects which tackle multiple deprivation in urban areas;

(b) the local enterprise grants for urban projects (LEG-UP) scheme administered by the Scottish Development Agency provides funding to lever desirable private sector investment into urban areas;

(c) in addition, the Scottish Development Agency has wide ranging powers to tackle the economic and environmental aspects of urban renewal. Specifically, it has nine local economic initiatives under way which are intended to regenerate the local urban economy and environment;

(d) housing associations (through the Housing Corporation) and the Scottish Special Housing Association contribute to urban regeneration through the rehabilitation and development of urban housing;

(e) regional assistance programmes (regional development grant and regional selective assistance) provide funding to support new economic activity in assisted areas.

In addition, many Government programmes assist urban areas, although not specifically targeted on them.

The Government remain committed to tackling the problems of urban decay and disadvantage through determined focusing of a wide range of resources, by central and local government, other agencies and the voluntary and private sectors.

Steel Industry

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Church representatives on the future of the steel industry in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have received a number of written representations from the Churches, but they have not asked to meet me.

Teachers' Pay (Dispute)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Church leaders on the teachers' pay dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the Churches on 29 November. He was interested to hear the Churches' views on the dispute and undertook to consider carefully any further initiatives which might help to bring an end to it. He still firmly believes, however, that pay cannot be considered in isolation from the duties for which teachers are paid and that the best way of moving forward is for negotiations to begin between teachers and their employers on both salaries and conditions of service.

Herring Fishing

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what controls applied to Scottish and Norwegian fishermen, respectively, in the herring fishery in the north and central North sea during 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: Scottish fishermen have been permitted to fish only in the European Community zone of the northern and central North sea this year. Their activities have been regulated by the relevant Community quota, conservation, control and marketing regulations. In addition, under United Kingdom fisheries legislation vessels over 10 m long require a North sea herring licence.

Norwegian herring fishermen also fished only in their own zone in 1985 and so were subject only to their domestic controls which include catch limits and conservation measures.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the European Commission's proposal that 40 per cent. of the total allowable catch of herring from the northern and central sector of the North sea should be allocated to Norway for 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: We have made clear to the Commission that we are not wholly satisfied with the agreement negotiated with Norway, and have reserved our position on it. The Fisheries Council will consider the matter on 16 December.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average percentage share of the herring fishing in the northern and central sector of the North sea that was taken by Norway in the 10 years immediately before the closure of that fishery.

Mr. John MacKay: Papers submitted to the International Council for the exploration of the sea herring assessment working group indicate that Norwegian catches of herring from the North sea in the period from 1967 to 1976 were about 36 per cent. by weight of the total catch by fishermen from Norway and European Community countries.

Crofting Townships Roads Programmes

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why no new applications will be accepted by him in respect of crofting townships roads programmes; why no applications already lodged under the programme will be approved; what is the total estimated cost of the townships road unapproved programme submitted by the Highlands regional council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In 1983 the five local authorities concerned were advised that the crofting township roads scheme would end at 31 March 1987; that new applications would be accepted up to 30 September 1986; and that total funds available for the scheme would be about £350,000 per annum. Since then the number of applications, and the cost of the projects, have both risen faster than anticipated. Outstanding grant approvals will absorb all the available funds and, to allow for grant on these projects to be paid in full before the scheme ends, it has been decided that no further applications can be approved. The estimated total cost of projects submitted by Highland regional council which will not now qualify for approval under the scheme is £363,420.

Ewe Premium

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to seek to ensure that the ewe premium will be payable on untupped gimmers.

Mr. John MacKay: In accordance with European Community legislation sheep annual premium is payable only on female sheep which have been put to the tup for the first time or which have lambed at least once. The Government are continuing to press in the Council of Ministers for agreement that untupped gimmers should also be eligible for premium.

Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to bring into force section 35 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985.

Mr. Younger: I have made an order bringing this section, which contains provisions as to the rights of persons detained or arrested in respect of terrorism, into force on 1 January 1986.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Veterinary Medicine

78. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive from the University Grants Committee its proposals for the reorganisation of the teaching of veterinary medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The University Grants Committee and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons have set up a joint working party to consider the organisation of the training of veterinary medicine in the light of the report of the Manpower Review of the Veterinary Profession in the United Kingdom, which was published in August; it is not expected to report for several months.

University Grants

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the additional £25 million which he has announced for increases in university grants takes into account the projected increase in student numbers.

Mr. Chris Patten: The grants for the universities announced by my right hon. Friend on 12 November, at columns 104-8, take into account the costs arising from the additional students entering universities under the engineering and technology programme.

University Grants Committee

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if moneys granted to the University Grants Committee under the medical subhead are not spent in the financial year in respect of which they were granted, may be spent for other purposes; and how he monitors the use of these resources after allocation.

Mr. Chris Patten: From the current financial year the medical subhead forms part of one major capital subhead for the universities. Moneys allocated for major medical projects are therefore interchangeable with moneys for major non-medical projects. If funds for major capital projects are not spent, part of the underspend can normally be transferred forward to the next financial year under the end-year flexibility arrangements for capital works. Any remaining provision is either returned to the Exchequer or, with Treasury approval, vired to other subheads within the universities' vote. Detailed control of expenditure is a matter for the University Grants Committee, but outturn figures by university are published each year in the *Official Report*—most recently on 22 October 1985, at columns 111-18.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been allocated to the University Grants Committee under the medical subhead; upon what conditions these moneys are granted; and for what purposes they may be allocated by the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Chris Patten: The allocation to the University Grants Committee for the medical subhead A2(2) in the financial year 1985-86 was £12·87 million plus £0·66 million carried forward from the 1984-85 financial year. These moneys are provided to cover the construction and furnishing of teaching facilities for medical and dental schools in teaching hospitals or where the cost is shared with the National Health Service. The money can be used only for projects where the university share is estimated to cost £1 million or more. The selection of individual projects and the control of expenditure are undertaken by the University Grants Committee.

"Better Schools"

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about his proposals for the government of schools following the publication of the document, "Better Schools".

Mr. Chris Patten: The proposals for the reform of school government set out in chapter 9 of "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) are aimed at re-invigorating governing bodies as a force for good in the life of individual schools. As announced in the Gracious Speech, the necessary legislation will be introduced this Session.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent on the assisted places scheme in each local education authority in 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. Dunn: Figures for the school year 1984-85 are not yet available. The information requested for the school year 1983-84 is as follows:

Local Education Authority	*Total expenditure £*
Barking and Dagenham	Nil
Barnet	121,097
Bexley	Nil
Brent	Nil
Bromley	153,605
Croydon	326,818
Ealing	101,613
Enfield	Nil
Haringey	53,355
Harrow	*122,433
Havering	Nil
Hillingdon	24,123
Hounslow	Nil
Kingston-upon-Thames	90,183
Merton	122,247
Newham	Nil
Redbridge	124,811
Richmond-upon-Thames	230,477
Sutton	44,136
Waltham Forest	105,593
Inner London Education Authority	1,984,323
Birmingham	287,007
Coventry	135,909
Dudley	Nil
Sandwell	Nil
Solihull	Nil

Local Education Authority	Total expenditure £
Walsall	Nil
Wolverhampton	193,207
Knowsley	Nil
Liverpool	424,779
St. Helens	Nil
Sefton	313,791
Wirral	377,575
Bolton	231,679
Bury	163,534
Manchester	540,340
Oldham	189,960
Rochdale	Nil
Salford	Nil
Stockport	206,827
Tameside	Nil
Trafford	81,886
Wigan	Nil
Barnsley	Nil
Doncaster	Nil
Rotherham	Nil
Sheffield	57,977
Bradford	129,947
Calderdale	Nil
Kirklees	108,969
Leeds	304,892
Wakefield	173,769
Gateshead	Nil
Newcastle Upon Tyne	445,553
North Tyneside	Nil
South Tyneside	Nil
Sunderland	Nil
Avon	891,372
Bedfordshire	590,496
Berkshire	184,515
Buckinghamshire	13,438
Cambridgeshire	239,608
Cheshire	*224,818
Cleveland	Nil
Cornwall	125,586
Cumbria	158,527
Derbyshire	217,583
Devon	416,163
Dorset	150,365
Durham	Nil
East Sussex	207,303
Essex	321,341
Gloucestershire	64,080
Hampshire	756,809
Hereford and Worcester	383,845
Hertfordshire	565,659
Humberside	160,648
Isles of Scilly	Nil
Isle of Wight	Nil
Kent	264,666
Lancashire	491,456
Leicestershire	170,359
Lincolnshire	89,224
Norfolk	196,432
North Yorkshire	96,561
Northamptonshire	204,055
Northumberland	Nil
Nottinghamshire	95,740
Oxfordshire	352,134
Shropshire	47,133
Somerset	415,698
Staffordshire	377,833
Suffolk	288,852
Surrey	618,637
Warwickshire	163,797
West Sussex	Nil
Wiltshire	59,720

* Estimated.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the level of parental contributions to the fees of pupils in the assisted places scheme in 1986-87.

Sir Keith Joseph: Subject to the usual consultations and to parliamentary approval, the parental contribution scales will be adjusted upwards for the school year 1986-87 as follows:

Part of relevant income to which specified percentage applies	Only assisted pupil per cent.	Each of two assisted pupils per cent.	Each of three assisted pupils per cent.
That part which exceeds £6,640 but does not exceed £7,220	9	6·75	5·25
That part (if any) which exceeds £7,220 but does not exceed £7,810	12	9	7
That part (if any) which exceeds £7,810 but does not exceed £8,980	15	11·25	8·75
That part (if any) which exceeds £8,980 but does not exceed £10,780	21	15·75	12·25
That part (if any) which exceeds £10,780 but does not exceed £13,130	24	18	14
That part (if any) which exceeds £13,130	33	24·75	19·25

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the preparation of teachers for the new general certificate of secondary education examination courses.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government funded, national programme of preparation for the GCSE involves all teachers in introductory training seminars during 1986. These seminars will provide a general introduction to the GCSE and its assessment methods, particularly with application to the teacher's own specific subject. As GCSE courses begin, however, and teachers experience the inevitable difficulties associated with turning principles into practice, they will require further help and preparation related to the specific syllabuses that they are following and the assessment and moderation techniques involved. This further in-service training will need to be flexible and offered intermittently during the first two years of the new examination courses. The four examining groups in England are already drawing up plans for this further training and have estimated that their costs will be of the order of £4 million, of which £600,000 will be needed for the preparation of training materials. I have today written to the secretary to the joint council for the GCSE to say that the Department of Education and Science is prepared, subject to the approval of Parliament, to fund the

production of these materials by means of a special grant of £600,000 to the Secondary Examinations Council for onward transmission to the examining groups in England.

One half of this sum, £300,000, would be payable in the financial year 1986-87 and the other half in the following year, on receipt of a satisfactory progress report about the first year's activities. The examining groups will each be considering the best means of providing training, based on these new materials, for teachers using their syllabuses. Both the examining groups and the Department are in no doubt of the importance of this further in-service training for the GCSE, which should be of very great help to the teachers concerned.

WALES

South Wales Coalfield (Coal Movements)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his decision on section 8 grant applications to facilitate coal movements from the south Wales coalfield.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has decided not to approve the application submitted by Cawoods of Northern Ireland Limited and has so informed the company. No further consideration can now be given to the related applications submitted by the National Coal Board.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales owning *(a)* more than 40,000 dwellings, *(b)* between 20,000 and 30,000 dwellings and *(c)* between 30,000 and 40,000 dwellings, indicating the number for each authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The only local authority in Wales owning more than 20,000 dwellings is Cardiff. (22,800 dwellings).

No authority owns more than 30,000 dwellings.

Domestic Water Rates

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage increase in domestic water rates in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) on 21 November, at column 281.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total increase in domestic water rates in Wales between 1979 and 1985 in both real and cash terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The total increase in the average domestic water bill in Wales between 1979 and 1985 in both real and cash terms is £15·43 and £54·83 respectively.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many fatalities have occurred in the past two years on motorways in Wales; and how many of these accidents occurred at places where lanes have been restricted due to repair work.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: During the two years ending 15 August this year there have been 14 fatalities on the M4 in Wales. One of these fatalities occurred where lanes were restricted due to repair work being carried out.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births for children *(a)* under one year, *(b)* under four weeks, *(c)* under one week and *(d)* under 24 hours for each Welsh health authority in 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the table. The asterisked rates are based on less than 20 events and in such cases the apparently large changes from year to year are not statistically significant.

Infant mortality rates†

	Under one year		*Under four weeks*		*Under one week*		*Under 24 hours*	
	1983	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*
Clwyd	8·3	11·1	5·0	7·3	*3·7	5·9	*1·9	*3·8
East Dyfed	9·0	*7·6	*6·5	*5·2	*4·1	*5·2	*0·8	*2·4
Pembrokeshire	*13·2	*7·3	*8·8	*5·8	*8·8	*4·4	*5·9	*3·6
Gwent	11·1	8·7	6·2	5·2	5·3	4·3	*2·2	*2·3
Gwynedd	10·6	*4·8	*6·6	*2·6	*4·7	*1·5	*2·6	*1·1
Mid Glamorgan	12·8	9·7	8·4	6·6	7·3	5·8	3·6	3·4
Powys	*8·8	15·9	*5·6	*10·3	*4·8	*8·7	*4·0	*4·8
South Glamorgan	12·0	8·8	6·8	5·0	5·1	4·3	*2·4	*2·4
West Glamorgan	8·3	6·1	6·1	4·6	4·8	*3·7	*4·0	*2·0
WALES	10·7	8·8	6·7	5·7	5·4	4·8	2·8	2·8

* Denotes a rate calculated from less than 20 events.
† Rates per 1,000 live births.

PRIME MINISTER

South East Asia

18. **Mr. Michael Morris** asked the Prime Minister when next she expects to visit south east Asia.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Falklands War (Cabinet Leaks)

22. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if staff at No. 10 Downing street or at the Cabinet Office have been

questioned by the police on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions as to the authenticity of the purported leaks of Falklands War Cabinet deliberations alleged to have been made to Miss Sarah Keays by the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson); and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Iran (Baha'i Community)

23. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to press for a debate at the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation regarding the plight of the Baha'i community in Iran.

The Prime Minister: The human rights situation in Iran has just been considered by the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The United Kingdom voted for the adoption of a resolution on 6 December which expressed concern at allegations of human rights violations in Iran, urged the Government of Iran to respect their international human rights obligations and decided to consider human rights in Iran, including the situation of minority groups such as the Baha'is, at its next session.

Chiltern Hundreds

60. **Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop** asked the Prime Minister whether she will recommend to Her Majesty that she create six offices of profit under the Crown by establishing for each of Her Majesty's three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough and Burnham separate posts of steward and bailiff.

The Prime Minister: No. The present two stewardships, of the three Hundreds of Chiltern and the Manor of Northstead, adequately meet the requirements of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975, and that of hon. Members.

European Assembly

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement setting out the additional areas of responsibility and powers of consultation which will be available to the European Assembly in consequence of the agreement made in Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December.

The Prime Minister: It was agreed that the European Assembly should be consulted on the Council's initial view of commission proposals for legislation in a limited number of areas (some internal market, technology and environment matters). It would be able, by an absolute majority of its members, to suggest amendments to such proposals. The last word would remain with the Council. The Assembly's assent would be required for new accessions to the Community and for new association agreements with third countries or groups of countries.

Value Added Tax (Luxembourg Summit)

Mr. Grylls asked the Prime Minister whether any decisions were taken at the European Council meeting at Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December on the threshold for value added tax; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No, but I made the United Kingdom's position quite clear to the Commission in the context of our discussions on deregulation. I understand that it will be making new proposals in the near future. The Government will continue to press for member states to have greater flexibility in determining their threshold.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with Secretary of State Shultz. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Government Departments (Efficiency)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Prime Minister what plans she has to increase the efficiency of Government Departments.

The Prime Minister: I and all my colleagues are determined to get better value for every single pound of the taxpayers' money. This means making essential services better and reducing costs.

We are continuing and strengthening the programme of financial management and personnel reforms. With the help of Sir Robin Ibbs, Ministers are setting value for money targets as a means to secure improvements. The Efficiency Unit is currently studying how targets can be best used in departments.

There is a strong programme of efficiency scrutinies being carried out in association with Sir Robin Ibbs and the Efficiency Unit this financial year. The programme so far is as follows:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- Administration of policies for the protection of agricultural land

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
- Legal Services and the Solicitor's Office

Ministry of Defence
- Ship acceptance procedures
- Ammunition Procurement

Department of Education and Science
- Architects and Building Branch
- Efficiency in public sector Higher Education

Department of Employment
- Handling of European Social Fund Business
- Use of Paper in (MSC)
- Community Programme (DE and MSC)

Department of the Environment
- Speeding Planning Appeals
- Slum Clearance Grant
- Co-ordination arrangements for environmentally related research

Joint DOE/DE
- Arrangements for the control and inspection of pollution and hazardous waste

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Output measurement
- Security of missions

Department of Health and Social Security
- "Liable relatives" procedures
- "Agency" benefit arrangements for low income families
- Legal Services

Cabinet Office (MPO)
- Occupational Health Services provided by Civil Service

DHSS (Northern Ireland)
- Balance of health and social care

Office of Arts and Libraries
- British Library Preservation Service

Property Services Agency
- Identification, management and disposal of surplus space and land

Scottish Office
- Central Advisory Service (Social Work)

A number of further candidates are being discussed with Departments.

I and my ministerial colleagues are determined to keep up the momentum for improving value for money, which we have established so strongly.

Heads of Government (Entertainment Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister what has been the total cost of entertaining foreign heads of Government for each of the past six years.

The Prime Minister: During the past six years the total cost of entertaining foreign Heads of Government has been as follows:

Year (April to March)	*Cost at outturn prices £*
1979-80	189,238
1980-81	97,183
1981-82	109,576
1982-83	158,433
1983-84	56,183
1984-85	194,787

Prime Ministerial Travel (Aircraft Use)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1979 Ministry of Defence aircraft have been used for Prime Ministerial foreign travel; on how many occasions civil aircraft were used: and what was the cost in each case.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 December 1985, c. *325*]: I have not used civil aircraft for foreign travel on official business. The costs to the Prime Minister's Office of the use of Ministry of Defence aircraft for foreign travel since 1979 have been:

Year	*Destination*	*Cost £*
1979		
June	France	1,050
June	France	720
June/July	Japan/Australia	43,600
August	Zambia	49,290
October	Germany	400
October	Luxembourg	690
October	Italy	680
November	Republic of Ireland	920
December	United States of America	1,685
1980		
April	Luxembourg	800
May	Yugoslavia	No charge
June	Italy (two visits)	12,140
September	France	2,730
September	Yugoslavia/Greece	16,330
November	Germany	1,130
November	Italy	2,080
December	Republic of Ireland	620
December	Luxembourg	1,030
1981		
February	United States of America	19,750
February	Netherlands	820
March	Netherlands	2,110
April	India and Middle East	147,430
June	Luxembourg	2,960
July	Canada	43,030
Sept/Oct	Middle East/Australia/Pakistan	176,340
October	Mexico	33,500
November	Germany	1,730
December	France	3,320
1982		
March	Belgium	1,810
June	France	2,200
June	Germany	2,260
June	Belgium	2,870
June	United States of America	30,500
July	Italy	12,460
September	Far East	108,380
October	Germany	6,860
November	France	1,620
December	Denmark	6,050
1983		
January	Falklands	150,000
March	Belgium	1,800
May	United States of America	1,897
June	Germany	6,190
July	Switzerland	2,980
July	Canada/United States of America	4,906
September	Netherlands/Germany	26,200
November	India	57,990
November	Germany	24,140
December	Greece	13,130
1984		
January	Italy	2,150
January	France	1,090
February	Hungary	8,530
February	USSR	28,331
March	Belgium	1,700
April	Portugal	29,401
May	France	1,412
June	France	2,160
July	Switzerland/Austria	6,760
November	India	80,727
Nov/Dec	France	8,000
December	Hong Kong/China/United States of America	61,770
December	Republic of Ireland	4,610
1985		
January	Germany	3,916
February	United States of America	35,000

Year	*Destination*	*Cost £*
March	Belgium	3,502
March	USSR	27,073
April	South East Asia	99,300
May	Germany	5,000
June	Italy	16,000
July	United States of America	40,000
August	Austria	5,300
September	Egypt/Jordon	26,600
October	Bahamas/United States of America	70,000
November	Germany	4,500
November	Belgium	3,000
December	Luxembourg	Not yet available

1. When on security advice I travel by RAF aircraft other than on official business, arrangements are made for a payment to public funds of the equivalent of first class airfare, or where there is no such commercial airfare, the equivalent of the tourist class airfare. These arrangements are similar to those which have applied under previous governments.

2. For the period up to 31 March 1981 Ministry of Defence aircraft were provided on an allied service basis. The costs shown are therefore notional.

3. On a number of occasions other Ministers have accompanied me on the journeys shown. The cost of their travel is borne by their Departments. The costs of flights undertaken during 1985 are estimates pending decisions on recoveries from other Government Departments.

Pensioners Charter

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the latest estimate of the cost of implementing the pensioners' charter of the National Pensioners' Convention, in the manner of the answer of 22 March 1983, *Official Report*, columns *384-86*.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *421*]: Some of the proposals are insufficiently specific for any costings to be made, but the following table sets out the proposals in summary form and the latest available costings:

Proposal	*Comment*	*Additional annual cost to public expenditure £ million*
1. Pension of half and one-third gross average earnings for couple and single person respectively.	Cost also includes other linked long-term benefits. The national insurance implications alone (£12,500 million) would increase the Class 1 national insurance contribution by £16·00 a week for male employees on male average earnings of £200 a week.	16,000
2. Six monthly uprating on a permanent basis.	Each 1 per cent. increase in pension and other long-term national insurance benefits brought forward by 6 months would cost £110 million (1985-86).	110
3. Adequate heating allowance covering all fuel.	Examples: *(a)* The cost of extending the basic rate heating addition to all pensioners on housing benefit would be about	300
	(b) The cost of extending it to all pensioners who are householders would be in the order of	or 500
4. Index-linked Christmas bonus of £20.	Each additional £1 on the bonus costs over £11 million.	110
5. Reducing pension age to 60 and abolition of the earnings rule.	Estimate based on 1983-84 benefit rates. Costs arising longer term. Net costs to central Government funds at least—	*2,600
	Net cost to central Government for abolition of the earnings rule on present pension age around £85 million*	190
6. Adequate death grant.	Estimate for restoring death grant to original value in respect of all deaths—£230.	135
7. Free health.	Unquantifiable.	—
8. Availability of community and personal social services.	Unquantifiable.	—
9. Appropriate accommodation including choice.	Unquantifiable.	—
10. National scheme of free off peak travel on local buses. Concessions for people of pensionable age.	Estimate is the minimum.	400
11. Access to education and leisure facilities.	Unquantifiable.	—
		†20,000

* Net cost to central Government funds.
†Rounded and absolute minimum.

EMPLOYMENT

Skill Shortages

Mr. Golding asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry in respect of shortages of skill; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My ministerial colleagues and I are in regular contact with the Confederation of British Industry about a wide range of issues. We have not received any direct representations from the confederation specifically in respect of skill shortages. However, in December 1984 the CBI conducted, on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission, a special survey of skill shortages to determine the effects on output and investment and to identify the occupations affected. The survey is to be repeated this month and we look forward to continued co-operation in this important area.

The commission's adult training programmes are now much more closely directed towards responding to local labour market needs; but the primary responsibility for training must rest with employers.

Lambeth

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General how many people in Lambeth have been unemployed between one and two years, between two and three years, between three and four years and more than four years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the number of claimants in the London borough of Lambeth who, on 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, had been unemployed for the durations requested.

	Number
Over one and up to two years	5,208
Over two and up to three years	2,734
Over three and up to four years	1,781
Over four years	1,926

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General what evidence he has that employees within the Welwyn Hatfield constituency are registered as unemployed in other areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: A recent fraud drive in the Hertfordshire-Bedfordshire area has revealed that some people do work in one locality while drawing benefit in another. The number of known cases is small and I have no specific information about any in the Welwyn Hatfield constituency.

Area Manpower Board (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what plans he has for an area manpower board covering Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Following a recent review of area manpower boards, the Manpower Services Commission has decided that the board which now covers Leicestershire and Northamptonshire should be divided into two county-based boards. This change will take effect from 1 July 1986 when the boards are due to be reconstituted. Copies of the review report are held in the Library.

EC Social Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the total amount of money paid to Britain under the European Economic Community social fund in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the drop-out rate of those involved with the enterprise allowance scheme; and how many businesses are still operating one year after starting on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Currently about 13 per cent. of those who join the enterprise allowance scheme do not complete 12 months on the scheme and therefore 87 per cent. are still operating a year after starting.

"Burdens on Business"

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many of the proposals listed in "Burdens on Business" he has implemented since the release of the White Paper; and what steps he has taken to implement these proposals.

Mr. Trippier: The White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) published in July records progress made in implementing many of the proposals set out in "Burdens of Business", as well as identifying further areas for action. these include establishing an enterprise and deregulation unit reporting to my right hon. and noble Friend, and procedures for monitoring the impact of new regulations on business.

Among other steps taken to reduce the burdens on business identified in the earlier report are the increase in employers' qualifying periods in unfair dismissal cases, the introduction of simplified planning zones and new building regulations, and proposals for amending legislation on wages councils and women's hours of work.

the Government intend to publish a White Paper reporting further progress on deregulation next spring.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of jobs created as a result of progress in implementation of the "Burdens on Business" proposals.

Mr. Trippier: The burdens on business report and the subsequent White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) contained a wide range of proposals designed to remove unnecessary constraints on businesses and reduce the costs to business of complying with Government regulations. As the White Paper indicated, it is not possible to prove a direct causal relationship between deregulation and job creation, and no reliable estimate can

therefore be given of the effect on jobs of progress to date. The available evidence suggests however that there is a link between deregulation and jobs through stimulating economic activity.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Officers (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been disciplined for racially discriminatory behaviour under the police discipline code.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to the hon. Member when I have received from chief constables the statistical returns relating to discipline cases for the period to 31 December 1985.

Immigrants (Detention)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will explain his criteria for continuing to detain an immigrant following representations from an hon. Member that that immigrant should be released from detention whilst the Minister considers the evidence relating to that immigrant's case.

Mr. Waddington: The criteria employed are those set out in the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 9 December. When representations are made against continued detention the case is reviewed at the level of immigration inspector.

Immigration Rules

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will propose amendments to the immigration rules to allow review by an adjudicator in cases where his decision was not made within the immigration rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No. The action the hon. Member proposes could be achieved only by a change to the Immigration Act 1971 and this is not contemplated.

Police (Property Entry)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of occasions in each of the last three years on which police have used keys, lawfully in the possession of detained persons, to enter property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available.

Community Radio

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy and introductory time scale for the commencement of Greek-speaking and Afro-Caribbean community radio in London.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There have been over 180 applications from groups with a wide range of interests and ethnic backgrounds for the five experimental community radio licences available in London. The applications are now being considered by the Advisory panel on community Radio. We hope to announce the successful applicants in the New Year.

Hijacking Incidents

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer of 4 December to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, he will indicate for each hijacking incident the approximate number of police involved.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is not readily available: even approximate figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tactical Options Manual

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 4 December, if he will seek to obtain from the Association of Chief Police Officers a copy of the tactical options manual with a view to placing it in the Library.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Participating Informers (Guidelines)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines issued to police officers concerning the use of participating informers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Guidance to the police on the safeguards which are needed before using an informant who is taking part in crime are set out in paragraph 1.92 of the consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters. A copy of the circular is in the Library.

Police and Court Cells (Detained Persons)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of persons held in police and court cells overnight in the Metropolitan police district for the period January 1985 to date for *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* juveniles.

Mr. Mellor: The average number of prisoners held overnight in police court cells in the metropolitan police district from 1 January to 1 December 1985 is 21 adult males, five females and seven male young offenders. These figures are affected by high numbers held at various times this year as a result of industrial action at certain establishments.

Criminal Damage

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and the percentage increase in the number of offences of criminal damage recorded by the Metropolitan police between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Figures for 1979 are not directly comparable with those for 1984 because of changes made by the new counting rules which were introduced at the beginning of 1980. The increase in the numbers of offences of criminal damage recorded by the Metropolitan police between 1980 and 1984 was 25,900, or 34 per cent.

The numbers of such offences have been published in the "Criminal Statistics Supplementary Tables" volume 3 (table S3.1).

Black People (Attacks)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase and the absolute number of attacks, alleged to have a racist element, against black people in each year since recording began, in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The only available information relates to racial incidents in the Metropolitan police district and is given in the table: comparative figures for other forces are not available.

Racial incidents recorded in the Metropolitan police area

	Racial Incidents Recorded
1983	1,280
1984	1,515
*1985	1,733

* Provisional figures to 30 November.

Women (Violence)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and percentage increase in violent offences against women recorded in the Metropolitan police district between 1979 and 1984; and what new and additional resources have been used to tackle this problem.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Immigration

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fiancées have been granted admission to the United Kingdom since the change in August of the immigration rules requiring fiancées to have entry clearance; how many fiancées have been granted admission although they had not been granted entry clearance; and if the passports of such fiancées have been suitably endorsed in all cases.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. 26]: The latest available information relates to September and October, when about 150 fiancées were given leave to enter the United Kingdom, of whom a small proportion were granted admission although they had not been granted entry clearance. An additional number who did not hold entry clearances were refused leave to enter but are receiving further consideration in the light of hon. Members' representations.

All non-EC passengers given leave to enter the country have their passports endorsed at the port of entry giving the date, port of entry and conditions, if any.

Untaxed Vehicles (Prosecutions)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have arisen following information on untaxed vehicles given to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre as a result of reports from the police and traffic wardens.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

The following table gives the number of prosecutions following reports on the unlicensed use of vehicles over the last three years. It also provides the number of cases where the evader agreed in lieu to settle out-of-court by payment of a penalty.

	Prosecutions	*Out of Court Settlements*
1982-83	126,000	91,000
1983-84	167,000	102,000
1984-85	167,000	123,000
1985-86*	120,000	90,000

* April to November

TRANSPORT

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much public dividend capital has been allocated to each of the nationalised industries for which he is responsible in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Only British Airways among the transport industries has been allocated public dividend capital during the period in question. I therefore refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 2 December at column *110* to his previous question concerning the allocation of public dividend capital to British Airways.

Heathrow Airport (Signposting)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the signposting for motorists travelling from Heathrow airport who wish to join the M4, M25 and M1 without entering London via the north circular road.

Mrs. Chalker: The M25-M4 interchange will be fully opened to traffic shortly and arrangements are already in hand to signpost the route from Heathrow to M1 via the M25 thereafter.

Cross-Channel Services

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate how many 700 passenger carrying unit ferries would be needed to meet the projected demand for cross-Channel services by 1995; what they would cost in aggregate; and how this cost compares with those of the various projected fixed links.

Mr. David Mitchell: This matter is being covered in the Government's assessment of fixed link proposals that is at present underway.

Channel Fixed Link

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the estimated cement tonnage to be used in each of the proposed Channel tunnel or bridge schemes in each of the years of construction.

Mr. David Mitchell: The fixed link proposals now being assessed by my Department remain confidential to the promoters, and it is for them to decide upon the release of such information.

Sealink Ferries (Belgian Ports)

Mr. Peter Rees asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations have been made to the Belgian Minister for Transport about access for Sealink ferries sailing from Dover to the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he will take if the Belgian authorities persist in their decision to exclude Sealink ferries from sailing from Dover to the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: British Ferries Sealink have said that a result of the cessation of their commercial arrangements with the Belgian state maritime company could be their exclusion from the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge. My officials, together with officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Office of Fair Trading, are today meeting Belgian officials to establish the facts on access to Belgian ports and the intentions of the Belgian authorities, and to make clear our concern about competition and access to Belgian ports before we decide on our next steps.

Helicopters (Offshore Diversions)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Civil Aviation Authority has reached any conclusions about the use of offshore diversions for helicopters.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer this question shortly.

British Airports Authority

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in view of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the British Airports Authority, he proposes that the British Airports Authority should continue to use revenue from its commercial activities to subsidise its traffic operations; what measures he has in miud to prevent the British Airports Authority using its monopoly power to exploit commercial activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I welcome the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the publication of which was announced today by my hon. and learned Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I welcome in particular the Commission's conclusion that in respect of its commercial activities the British Airports Authority is not pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest. It is a very detailed and comprehensive report which I shall wish to consider carefully, and discuss with the British Airports Authority, before deciding what specific actions are required. I shall report to the House in due course.

I have made clear that to prevent any abuse of its monopoly power when in the private sector the British Airports Authority's successor will be subject to regulation. This will include periodic investigations by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of all of its airport-related activities.

On the question of cross-subsidy I should point out that revenue from commercial activities makes an important contribution to the overall finances of the BAA, and to the extent that this cross subsidises traffic operations, allows traffic charges and thus air fares to be lower than they would be otherwise. We have made clear that we shall wish to ensure that, insofar as our international obligations require us to do so, airports's commercial activities (duty-free and tax-free shops, airport restaurants, car parks etc) will continue to contribute towards meeting airport costs.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* all current bilateral aid programme schemes being carried out in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: British bilateral aid supports schemes of three main kinds in sub-Saharan Africa. First there are some 300 current bilateral projects in the region. They are included in a list entitled "Projects by Country and Sector at 31 December 1984" a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House. Secondly under non-project or programme aid we provide British goods and equipment for Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Thirdly our technical cooperation includes schemes in areas such as consultancies, the supply of manpower and training, and related equipment. A general description of their nature and purpose is to be found in "British Overseas Aid 1984", copies of which are in the Library of the House. Further bilateral aid is given in the form of food, and, in cooperation with voluntary agencies, under such schemes as the British volunteer programme and the joint funding arrangements.

Hearing-impaired People (Aid)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 22 November, *Official Report*, column *311*, if there is any action he will be taking to increase the £28,000 spent from the aid programme in 1984-85 on help specifically for the deaf and hearing-impaired in developing countries.

Mr. Raison: We do not set aside a specific sum from the aid programme for projects to help the deaf and hearing-impaired in developing countries. I am certainly willing to consider requests for assistance in this field but it is primarily for aid-recipient Governments to decide whether they wish to put forward such requests. Applications from British charities for help with eligible projects can be considered under the joint funding scheme.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animals (Transportation)

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he plans to implement European Economic Community Council directive 77/489/EC on the protection of animals during international transit.

Mrs. Fenner: There is already extensive legislation to protect the welfare of animals in transit, which implements the provisions of this directive.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the total amount of money paid to Britain under the European Economic Community common agricultural policy in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Regional Land Drainage Committees

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the members, and their occupations, of each of the regional land drainage committees.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has made of the impact on the British fishing fleet of the possibility of Japan becoming self-sufficient in squid as a result of access to the fisheries within a 200-mile limit of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: In recent years the arrangements for the purchase by East European factory ships of mackerel and herring caught by British fishermen have included barter deals for squid caught by East European trawlers and delivered to Japan and other markets. To the extent that Japan's import requirements were to be reduced as a result of increased catches by her own fishermen in the South Atlantic or elsewhere, this would clearly reduce the opportunity for the barter trade in this particular commodity. It is however impossible to estimate with any confidence to what extent, if at all, this would reduce the effective demand from the East European countries for our mackerel and herring.

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has made of the effect on revenue to the Government and the British fishing industry since 1983, of the Government not imposing a 200-mile fishing limit around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: It is difficult to give a categorical answer to what is essentially a hypothetical question, but it seems very unlikely that the revenue of the British fishing industry since 1983 has been significantly affected by the absence of an extended fishery limit around the Falkland Islands. The question of the effect, if any, on Government revenue is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Aggregate Dredging (North Sea)

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the enforcement of the code of practice for aggregate dredging in the southern North sea in order to protect fishing grounds and spawning areas.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: I am always ready to investigate breaches of the code of practice if firm evidence is provided.

Freezer Vessel Fleet

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's longer-term policy regarding the capacity of the British freezer vessel fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: On matters affecting the structure of the United Kingdom fishing fleet the Government's general aim is to promote a satisfactory balance between catching capacity and the available fishing opportunities. In recent years the United Kingdom's distant water white fish opportunities under agreements between the European Community and third countries, such as Norway, Canada, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, have not been fully taken up and licences are available for freezer trawlers or other vessels wishing to do so. The licensing arrangements for the pelagic fisheries in the North sea and Western waters, including those for the licensing of freezer trawlers, are currently being reviewed, taking into account current and prospective fishing opportunities.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that the common fisheries policy control system is currently working fully in the interests of the British fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: I am satisfied that it is in the interests of the British fishing fleet that the rules of the common fisheries policy as agreed in 1983 should be fully applied and enforced throughout the Community. As a result of the work of the Commission's inspectorate of inspectorates it is clear that substantial progress has been made in tightening up control arrangements in all Member states. But there is inevitably room for further improvement at this stage and I am satisfied that the Commission are working to achieve this. The United Kingdom will continue to be at the forefront of those seeking effective control.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has received any applications from Marples International Ltd. for a licence to dump at sea toxic waste, including asbestos, cadmium and mercury, from the Glory Hole, Portsmouth;

(2) if Marples International Ltd. appealed against the last decision not to allow dumping of toxic waste at sea.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985]: My Department indicated in July 1984 that it would not grant a licence for the disposal at sea of contaminated material excavated from the Glory Hole, Portsmouth. No appeal was lodged against this decision. A subsequent application for a licence to dispose at sea of naturally occurring materials taken from beneath Glory Hole has now been received. No decision will be taken on the issue of a licence until the content of the waste has been established.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from individuals and organisations opposed to the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: As at 3 December 1985 the Prime Minister and I had together received comments from 387 individuals and organisations in response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The majority of these expressed reservations about or opposition to the agreement and came mainly from correspondents in Northern Ireland.

Construction Industry

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to seek to reduce unemployment in the construction industry in the Province.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *443*]: Public expenditure plans for the current financial year envisage over £400 million worth of work being generated in the Northern Ireland construction industry by direct public sector spending on capital projects and maintenance. In addition, Government grants and loans to the private sector are expected to give rise to a further £313 million of construction work.

Last year private sector house starts were at their highest level for 20 years.

ENERGY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been undertaken since 1979 and what studies are now being carried out into the use of lead containers for nuclear waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

Lead is not regarded as the most suitable containment material for nuclear waste. No studies have been carried out by my Department or by NIREX on lead containers. Mild steel and stainless steel containers are currently being studied.

Plutonium

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *61*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the details of the European Communities ministerial declaration of 20 November 1984; and for each country in the European Community what is the total amount of plutonium transferred from the United Kingdom for civil end use.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The answer the hon. Member refers to was given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton).

I am arranging for a copy of the declaration of 20 November 1984, together with an informal translation, to be placed in the Library.

With regard to the information requested about transfers of plutonium to EC member states, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 15 July at columns 32-3.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to renegotiate the status of Gibraltar with regard to the European Economic Community and the implementation of European Economic Community directives affecting the financial and company sector in Gibraltar.

Mr. Rifkind: No. The Gibraltar Government have made no request for a renegotiation of Gibraltar's status in the Community. Preparations are well under way for Gibraltar to give effect to European Community directives on insurance and company law, taking into account where possible Gibraltar's special circumstances.

Defence Attachés

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the work of defence attachés at British embassies and high commissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are most grateful for the positive contribution made by defence attachés in the work of Diplomatic Service posts overseas.

Soviet Jews (Emigration)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the United States Administration since the United States of America/Union of Soviet Socialist Republics summit talks in Geneva about the intentions of the Soviet Government with regard to pleas by those Soviet Jews who wish to emigrate to Israel and who have been refused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) on 6 December, at column 367.

Boarding School Allowances

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent in each of the last three years on boarding school allowances for members of the Diplomatic Service and for civil servants seconded abroad.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 28 October, at column 359. The figures provided included the cost for Home Civil Servants on secondment overseas with the Diplomatic Service.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what areas of decision making in the EEC affecting his financial and taxation responsibilities will

now be subject to majority voting in the Council of Ministers in consequence of the agreement at Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December.

Mr. Brooke: Articles 2(2) and (3) of the internal market text in the European Council conclusions provide that unanimity should be retained for all matters dealing with taxation.

Article 2(1) provides that measures under certain articles of the EEC treaty, which were previously decided by unanimity, should in future be decided by qualified majority. These articles include Article 57(2) (concerning the taking up and pursuit of activities of self-employed persons), which covers measures concerned with the protection of savings, in particular with the granting of credit and the exercise of the banking profession. They also include Article 70(1), which covers the progressive co-ordination of the exchange policies of member states in respect of the movement of capital between those states and third countries.

The new monetary articles do not provide for any qualified majority voting. Institutional changes resulting from further developments in the field of economic and monetary policy will require treaty amendment and thus the unanimous ratification of member states in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

The treaty reform proposals are still subject to an overall reserve from Denmark and Italy.

Participating Informers (Guidelines)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines issued to investigating officers of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise concerning the use of participating informers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise issue instructions to their officers about the use of participating informants. I do not propose to place a copy in the Library.

Participating informers are used only with the express authority of senior management within customs who are required to know the proper identity of the informant and are able to consult the solicitor's office of customs, as necessary. Operations of this nature are invariably undertaken by specialist investigators.

EC (Contributions)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the net contribution paid by Britain to the European Economic Community in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Small Businesses (VAT)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to reduce the value added tax requirements on small businesses including steps towards implementation of those proposals listed in "Burdens on Business".

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise has set up a deregulation unit which, amongst other duties, will examine the Department's policy towards small businesses and the practicability of any further special arrangements for them. With regard to the recommendations listed in "Burdens on Business" and the subsequent White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571), these have been accepted in full or part and their implementation is being actively pursued.

Taxes Act 1979

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many applications have been made to the Board of Inland Revenue for the out-of-time admission of an election under the provisions of section 154(2) of the Taxes Act 1970; in how many cases the late election was accepted; and in what circumstances such late elections are accepted;

(2) how many applications have been made to the Board of Inland Revenue for the out-of-time admission of a claim under the provisions of section 264 of the Taxes Act 1970; in how many cases the late claim was accepted; and in what circumstances such late claims are accepted.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his replies*, 6 December 1985, c. *355-56*]: About 150 applications are made annually for the out-of-time admission of elections under section 154(2) of the Taxes Act 1970; of these about half are accepted. In relation to claims under section 264 of the Taxes Act 1970, the comparable figure is about 50 applications annually of which about one third are accepted.

In cases where no statutory discretion is given to the Board of Inland Revenue to extend a time limit for a claim or election, it must be assumed that Parliament's intention is that the limit should be applied strictly, and the number of cases in which it would be appropriate to exercise discretion under the board's powers of care and management (provided in the Taxes Management Act 1970) is correspondingly limited. Every such case has to be considered individually on its own merits, and in the light of all the factors relevant to the circumstances in which the claim was made late. However, there would be a presumption in favour of admitting a late claim where there has been a relevant error on the part of the Inland Revenue, and the claim is made shortly after the error has been drawn to the taxpayer's attention; where a taxpayer has given clear notice of his intention to claim, but before the time limit expires he has not completed any statutory requirement or specified the claim in sufficient detail; or where the reason for the delay in making the claim was clearly beyond the taxpayer's control (for example because he — or in the case of a company the only individual who had the relevant information and experience—was seriously ill and there was no one else who could reasonably be expected to stand in his shoes).

DEFENCE

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the applicants for the post of equal opportunities officer in his Department were *(a)* white

males, *(b)* white females, *(c)* males of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin or *(d)* females of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. Lee: It is not the practice in my Department to fill posts of this nature by inviting staff to apply for them. The departmental equal opportunities officer, and the associated network of officers in our civilian personnel divisions, have been designated on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. These officers are responsible for other personnel matters in addition to equal opportunities.

Advertising

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member in the near future.

Service Personnel (Boarding School Allowances)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on boarding school allowances for services personnel in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	66·3
1983-84	76·5
1984-85	78·0

Service Personnel (Signals Regiments)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the two members of 9 Signals Regiment currently in the process of being discharged prior to completion of their engagement have been asked to leave the Service;

(2) whether the two members of 9 Signals Regiment currently in the process of being discharged, prior to completion of their engagement, have asked to leave the Service.

Mr. Lee: Both are female personnel. One is being discharged at her own request on marriage and the other is to be discharged on pregnancy.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the five members of 9 Signals Regiment, who have applied for discharge prior to completion of their engagement, have been asked to leave the Service by their superiors.

Mr. Lee: No.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the two members of 14 Signals Regiment who are currently being considered for discharge before completion of their engagements, have asked to leave the Service.

Mr. Lee: One has applied to be discharged and one may be discharged administratively following a civil conviction.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of the 81 service men of 14 Signals Regiment discharged since 3 February 1984 upon completion of their engagement applied to and were not permitted to extend their service;

(2) how many of the 121 service men of 9 Signals Regiment discharged since 3 February 1984 upon completion of their engagement applied to and were not permitted to extend their service.

Mr. Lee: This information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of the 50 service men of 14 Signals Regiment, who have been discharged prematurely since 3 February 1984, have had to reimburse the Ministry of Defence for not completing their engagement;

(2) how many of the 83 service men of 9 Signals Regiment, who have been prematurely discharged since 3 February 1984, have had to reimburse the Ministry of Defence for not completing their engagement.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of 14 Signals Regiment have been subject to interrogation by military or civil police since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any former members of 9 Signals Regiment have had their passports withheld.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 83 service men of 9 Signals Regiment who have been discharged since 3 February 1984, prior to completion of their engagement, were asked to leave the service by their superiors; and for what reasons.

Mr. Lee: This information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown of the rank and trade and length of service of the 83 service men of 9 Signals Regiment who have been discharged since 3 February 1984, prior to completion of their engagement.

Mr. Lee: This information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown of the rank and trade and length of service of the 50 service men of 14 Signals Regiment who have been discharged since 3 February 1984 prior to completion of their engagement.

Mr. Lee: This information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 50 service men of 14 Signals

Regiment, who have been discharged since 3 February 1984 prior to completion of their engagement, were asked to leave the service by their superiors.

Mr. Lee: This information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any former members of 14 Signals Regiment have had their passports withheld.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging Regulations

13. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received about the recently introduced board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Major: We have received about 300 letters since the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No. 2) Regulations 1985 were laid on 11 November 1985.

Herbal Medicines

14. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will report progress on his Department's negotiations with the natural medicines group on the review of licences for herbal medicines under the Medicines Act procedures.

Mr. Whitney: Following consultation, the Department issued guidance on arrangements for reviewing herbal products on 21 October. Since then more discussions have been held with the British Herbal Medicine Association —the body which represents herbal manufacturers—on the operational detail and the Association has expressed satisfaction with progress made so far. When the review of herbal remedies, now in progress, is completed, consumers will be able to buy products which have been assessed on an up to date basis as to their safety, efficacy and quality.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessments have been made by the medicines division of his Department as to the effects of herbal medicines and synthetic drugs on the condition of patients; and to what extent its findings were taken into account when the Medicines Act information sheet of October 1985 was prepared by the medicines division.

Mr. Whitney: When product licences are sought under the Medicines Act, it is for the manufacturers to provide information about the safety, efficacy and quality of each product in question. The Department then assesses that information again in respect of each product. We do not assess in general terms as this question implies. That is not a requirement of the Medicines Act. Judgments about the relative values of different philosophies of medicine for patients are for the professions at large and not for the Department.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has made to the representations from the Natural Medicines Society concerning the effects of guidelines issued in the Medicines Act information sheet of October 1985 on the availability to the public of herbal medicines.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has received a number of letters from members of the Natural Medicines society. The letters deal generally with freedom of choice in health care and not specifically with the Department's Information Sheet for manufacturers. In replies we have assured correspondents that the Medicines Act will not be used to restrict the general availability of alternative medicines such as herbal and homoepathic remedies.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give a breakdown of the professional people or bodies which have been appointed by his Department to advise him on the theory and practice of natural medicine;

(2) whether any expert in the theory and practice of natural medicine has been appointed to serve on any committee or body of advisers reporting or making recommendations to him on questions of licensing in respect of natural medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the operation of the Medicines Act. The Medicines Commission and the advisory committees between them provide expert advice on all aspects of medicines. No one body specialises in natural medicines although it is the Committee on the Review of Medicines that has the major interest because it is concerned with existing rather than new medicines.

Professional members of Medicines Act bodies are not appointed to represent particular interests, but rather for their individual capacity for sound and impartial judgment based upon expertise and wide experience in a field relevant to the administration of the Medicines Act 1968. The Department is particularly fortunate in having an expert on the pharmacy of plant materials both on the Medicines Commission and the Committee on the Review of Medicines. In addition two further experts in the same field are members of one of the main Medicines Act sub-committees. There have also been fruitful informal discussions with various organisations representing manufacturers of alternative medicines, such as the British Herbal Medicines Association.

As to the future, Ministers have wide powers to add to the membership of existing Medicines Act bodies either temporarily or permanently as the need arises and we shall keep the matter under careful scrutiny in the period ahead.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent his decision to review licensing procedures in respect of herbal products takes into account directives issued by the European Community.

Mr. Whitney: Directive 75/319/EEC requires all member countries to review for safety, efficacy etc. proprietary medicinal products which were on the market when the Directive came into force (20 May 1975) within 15 years. Herbal products are not excluded from this requirement. We are proceeding with the review of these products with a view to completing the task within the EC timetable. Review of these products is in any event consistent with our own legislation—the Medicines Act 1968.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many meetings he and his Department officials have had with representatives of the Natural Medicines Society; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: None. We can trace no requests for a meeting from the Natural Medicines Society.

Mrs Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he decided that the licensing authority should when considering herbal medicines be provided with details of all clinical trials that have taken place, including patient selection criteria, randomisation process, composition of placebo control and clinical assessment parameters.

Mr. Whitney: It is the Department's normal practice as Medicines Act Licensing Authority to require the information outlined in the hon. Member's question in respect of medicines intended for serious conditions. This we must do to protect patients from ineffective and harmful medicines. Herbal products for serious conditions are not excluded from this requirement. If manufacturers have difficulty in producing the necessary information, the Department's officials are happy to dicuss with them modifications to their therapeutic claims to make them consistent with the available evidence. Such detailed information would not normally be required when claims are limited to the symptomatic relief of minor disorders thought appropriate for self-diagnosis and treatment.

Local Office, Deeside

15. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of the proposed Deeside, Flint integrated local office of his Department.

Mr. Major: It has for several years been the Department's intention to open a new integrated local office to serve the Deeside area.

A building in Flint has been leased by the Property Services Agency and I regret the delay in bringing this property into use. We are currently discussing with PSA the work necessary to adapt these premises and hope to conclude these discussions early in the new year. Subject to the availability of funds we hope to provide a new office to serve the Deeside area.

Contraceptives

16. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to announce the revised guidelines for the prescription of contraceptives to girls under 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I hope to be able to announce revised guidance shortly.

Disabled People

18. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in favour of his proposals for the disabled.

Mr. Newton: Responses to the Green Paper proposals are not generally in a form which can sensibly be used to provide a simple breakdown of numbers for or against particular aspects of the proposals.

Regional Health Authorities

19. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department takes to monitor the efficiency of regional health authorities.

Mr. Whitney: We monitor the efficiency of regional health authorities in a range of ways including statutory audit, regular reports on aspects of performance and statistical returns.

Care in the Community

20. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet a delegation of members of the North-West Association of Social Services Authorities to discuss the adequacy of funding for care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no plans to meet this delegation. I can only repeat what has already been said in correspondence with the hon. Member, that particular issues of funding between social services authorities and health authorities in the north-west are best resolved locally.

24. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to respond to the Social Services Committee report on care in the community.

Mr. Whitney: The Government's response was published on 20 November. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on that date to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) at column *219*.

NHS (Capital Spending)

21. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what percentage capital spending in the National Health Service has increased since 1978-79; and if he will make a statement on future plans.

Mr. Whitney: Between 1978-79 and 1984-85, capital spending in the National Health Service increased by 117 per cent. in cash terms; an increase of 30 per cent. over and above increases in general construction industry prices.

The Government plan to increase cash provision to £794 million in 1986-87 and to £835 million by 1988-89. Health authorities will also retain the proceeds of land and property sales, which we expect to rise very substantially. This will enable them to carry through major programmes of investment in hospitals and community services.

Pharmacists (Contract)

22. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from retailing organisations about the proposed new National Health Service pharmacists' contract.

76. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from retailing interests concerning the proposed new National Health Service pharmacists' contract.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received representations from two retailing organisations.

Wrightington Hospital (Children's Ward)

23. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make a statement on the future of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital.

Mr. Whitney: Soon, I hope.

Elderly Persons (Residential Care)

25. **Mr Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to arrange the assessment of need for residential care of those entering private homes for the elderly.

Mr. Newton: A joint central and local government working party has examined the scope for improving collaboration between the Department and local authorities over support for residents in private and voluntary residential care homes. They gave particular attention to the assessment of supplementary benefit claimants' need for residential care, and to ensuring that charges met from public funds are reasonable. We have discussed the report with the local authority associations, and I hope to make an announcement shortly about arrangements to examine the possibilities in more detail.

Social Security Reform

28. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish his proposed White Paper on social security reform.

48. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish his White Paper on the reform of social security.

57. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to announce the date on which the White Paper on social security will be published.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper will be published in the next few weeks.

43. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations in favour of abolishing the state earnings-related pension scheme.

46. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he received in favour of abolishing the state earnings-related pension scheme.

71. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he received in favour of making all on supplementary benefit pay 20 per cent. of their rates.

Mr. Newton: Responses to the Green Paper proposals are not generally in a form which can sensibly be used to provide a simple breakdown of numbers for or against particular aspects of the proposals.

Ancillary Services (Privatisation)

29. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the savings so far achieved from the contracting out policy of ancillary services.

37. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress with privatisation in the Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 25 November at columns *499-502*.

Community Care

30. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he is satisfied with the progress being made in developing community care.

Mr. Whitney: I am reasonably satisfied with the progress made so far. Much has been achieved; but there is still a long way to go before a range of services is available to meet the care needs both of people already in the community and of people still in hospital who could benefit from moving into community care. The Government's response (Cmnd. 9674) to the report from the Social Services Committee on community care, published on 20 November, described the task ahead in the development of community services for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people.

Limited List Prescribing

31. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest position regarding the work of the advisory committee on the limited list of drugs available under the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: To date the Committee has met four times and has considered representations from the pharmaceutical industry and medical profession in respect of a number of drugs affected by the Selected List Scheme. In the light of the Committee's recommendations, the status of some drugs under the scheme was changed by Regulations which came into effect on 1 December.

Cold Climate Allowance

32. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce the payment of a cold climate allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on 12 November at column *157*.

Cigarette Smoking

33. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to bring forward any measures during the current Session of Parliament to seek to reduce the incidence of cigarette smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: There are at present no plans to introduce legislation. The Government are committed to reducing the incidence of cigarette smoking by way of voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry, and we are currently having discussions with the tobacco industry about a new voluntary agreement to control the advertising of tobacco products. Other measures being taken include a £1 million campaign to test the effect of media advertising in discouraging teenagers from smoking and a new health promotional drive in the schools organised by the Health Education Council.

Benefit Claimants (Diet)

34. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that supplementary benefit and family income supplement give adequate moneys to allow claimants to conform to the dietary guidelines used by his Department.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 December at column *132*. The Department has not issued dietary guidelines for individuals.

Parallel Imports

35. **Mr. Michael Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his assessment of the cost to the National Health Service of the increasing incidence of parallel imports.

Mr. Hayhoe: There is a potential saving to the National Health Service in the dispensing of medicines which are cheaper through parallel import but I am not at present able to quantify this.

Hospitals (Hygiene)

36. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding action he has taken in connection with unhygienic conditions in hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: In recent months, there have been two deputations on the issue of hygiene in hospitals and more than 50 letters have been received on the subject. The views expressed will be taken into account in drawing up additional measures to ensure good standards of hygiene are achieved throughout the National Health Service.

NHS Expenditure

38. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the level of National Health Service spending per capita for the last available year.

Mr. Hayhoe: National Health Service spending, as measured in the national accounts but excluding patients charges, is estimated to have been about £305 per head of population in the United Kingdom in 1984.

Hospices

39. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will increase the resources available to hospices for the terminally ill.

Mr. Hayhoe: Most hospices are run by voluntary groups and it is for individual health authorities to consider what financial support is appropriate for each hospice. I am encouraging health authorities to collaborate with the voluntary sector in the planning and provision of all services for the dying.

NHS (Bed Occupancy)

40. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, on average, how many National Health Service hospital beds are unoccupied on each day of the week.

Mr. Whitney: In 1984, the latest year for which information is available centrally, there was a daily average of 65,188 beds recorded as being available but not occupied in National Health Service hospitals in England. Bed occupancy figures are based on a midnight count and do not therefore reflect the use of beds by patients who do not stay overnight.

Heart Bypass Operations

44. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what progress is being made in the provision of heart bypass operations.

Mr. Whitney: We have asked health authorities to develop coronary artery surgery as a priority in the acute sector. Since 1977 there has been a steady growth in the number of operations performed and annual totals for the United Kingdom, according to information supplied by the United Kingdom Cardiac Surgical Register of the Society of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons, were as follows:

	Number	*Percentage increase over previous year*
1977	2,875	*
1978	3,191	11·0
1979	3,538	10·9
1980	4,859	37·3
1981	5,951	22·5
1982	6,766	13·7
1983	9,443	39·6

* Not available

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients are awaiting cardiac bypass treatment; and how long is their average wait.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Mentally Ill People

47. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department is spending on mentally ill people living in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: National Health Service expenditure on mentally ill people living in the community is not separately identified. Local authority gross current expenditure, including joint finance, on residential and day care services for the mentally ill is estimated to have been some £36 million in 1983-84.

Hip Replacement Operations

49. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for a hip replacement operation.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to a National Health Service hospital for total hip replacement or other arthroplasty of hip in England in 1983, the latest year for which information is available centrally, was 24 weeks.

Severe Weather Payment Scheme

50. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the severe weather payment scheme.

66. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken to improve the operation of payments for heating in exceptionally severe weather.

73. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for making exceptional severe weather payments this winter.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 6 December at column *400-401*.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the further guidance to adjudication officers on claims for exceptionally severe weather payments to be issued.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the Chief Adjudication officer issued guidance on such claims on 6 December, and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the temperature that triggers exceptionally severe weather payments in *(a)* Truro, *(b)* Bermondsey, *(c)* Brecon, *(d)* Wisbech, *(e)* Leeds, *(f)* Berwick upon Tweed, *(g)* Selkirk, *(h)* Inverurie, *(i)* Aviemore and *(j)* Lerwick.

Mr. Newton: A tribunal of social security commissioners has recently ruled that eligibility for exceptionally severe weather payments should not be decided by reference to predetermined trigger points based on temperature levels, and such an approach is not now being used. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 6 December at columns *400-401*.

Energy Conservation

51. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings have been achieved by energy conservation measures in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: In England the National Health Service has cumulatively saved over £400 million by energy saving measures between 1972-73 and 1983-84, the latest date for which figures are available.

Without these measures, in 1983-84 the energy fuel bill would have been £80 million greater.

Fuel Poverty

53. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he has had with officers of the citizens advice bureaux service on the problems caused to people by fuel poverty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussions with officers of the citizens advice bureaux service about fuel poverty.

Nurses

54. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses have been asked to leave or been given notice to quit *(a)* nurses homes and *(b)* self-contained houses rented from their employing authority, since July 1985 under the terms of the Department of Health and Social Security circular HC(85)19.

68. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses have been asked to leave or been given notices to quit *(a)* nurses homes and *(b)* self-contained houses rented from their employing authority, since July 1985, under the terms of DHSS circular HC(85)19.

Mr. Hayhoe: No nurses have been so evicted. Staff who are no longer to be offered accommodation will either have the chance to buy at a discount the property they currently live in, or be given at least a year to make alternative arrangements.

Housing Benefit

56. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any evidence of abuse of the housing benefit scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The housing benefits review indicated that there was little hard information about the nature and extent of abuse of the housing benefits scheme, but expressed concern about the potential for abuse by both claimants and landlords. This concern has also been voiced by others, including individual local authorities and the Audit Commission. The Green Paper, Reform of Social Security (Cmnd. 9518) included proposals for strengthening safeguards against abuse of the scheme.

Family Income

58. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children are currently living in families whose income is at or below his Department's defined poverty levels; and how this figure compares with the figures for 1979.

Mr. Major: The Department does not have defined poverty levels on which to base such a calculation.

In Vitro Fertilisation

59. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the current distribution of clinics providing in vitro fertilisation within the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: National Health Service provision for in vitro fertilisation is for health authorities, who have to take account of other demands on available resources.

Invalid Care Allowance

60. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the invalid care allowance will continue to be paid in his revised social security scheme.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to change invalid care allowance.

Ambulances

61. **Mr. Andrew Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the provision of ambulance services for emergencies during the current restrictions on overtime worked by ambulance men in many areas.

Mr. Whitney: We have no evidence that any restrictions on overtime worked by ambulance men are leading to unsatisfactory provision of service.

Severe Disablement Allowance

62. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to change the qualifying conditions for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: None at present.

Pensions

63. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average net additional weekly amount which will be received by *(a)* a single pensioner and *(b)* a married pensioner couple as a result of the combined effects of the recent benefits uprating and the measures announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Major: As a result of the recent benefits uprating the standard rate of basic retirement pension has been increased by £2·50 for a single pensioner and by £4·00 for a married pensioner couple. Increased amounts of additional pension and graduated retirement benefit may also be payable, but the exact amounts will depend upon the pensioner's individual circumstances.

The Chancellor's recent autumn statement announced no measures which affected pensioner incomes: it outlined Government spending plans for the forthcoming year.

Child Benefit

64. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the recent increase in child benefit.

Mr. Newton: About 130 representations have been received most of which expressed dissatisfaction with the recent increase in child benefit.

Bloomsbury Health District

65. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the current allocation of funds to the Bloomsbury health district.

Mr. Hayhoe: Allocation of funds to district health authorities is the responsibility of the regional health authority; for Bloomsbury the North-East Thames regional health authority.

Birth Statistics

67. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of babies born in the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority area in each of the last five years and in the constituency of Basildon.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of live births during each of the five years 1980 to 1984 to mothers usually resident in the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority and in the Basildon parliamentary constituency were as follows:

Year	*Basildon and Thurrock district health authority**	*Basildon parliamentary constituency†*
1980	4,225	‡1,490
1981	4,042	1,411
1982	3,827	1,418
1983	3,901	1,435
1984	4,010	1,420

* As constituted under the National Health Service restructuring of 1 April 1982.
† As constituted at the general election of June 1983.
‡ Estimate.

Privatisation

69. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposal by some health authorities to invite private enterprise to provide financial sponsorship for hospital beds and wards.

Mr. Hayhoe: I welcome the enterprise shown by a number of health authorities in looking for ways to increase their income for the benefit of patients.

Buildings and Land (Disposal)

72. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made by the regions in advising their plans for the disposal of unnecessary buildings or unused land belonging to the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: The disposal of surplus National Health Service land and property is an ongoing task and health authorities do not routinely submit plans or forecasts of future disposals. As at 31 March 1985 some 4,900 acres had been declared surplus to National Health Service requirements and were in process of disposal. In the year ending 31 March 1985 approximately 1,000 acres were disposed of resulting in proceeds of approximately £49 million all of which was retained by health authorities for re-investment in the service.

75. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for the resources realised from the sale of surplus land belonging to the Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities have been advised that, in general, they will retain the proceeds of their disposals for funding future health service developments.

Mobility Allowance

74. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to extend the scope of mobility allowance to cover cases where there is only an ability to walk if supervised and cases where public transport is established to be unsuitable and including specifically, children suffering from Raynaud's disease.

Mr. Newton: The main medical condition for mobility allowance is that a person must be unable or virtually unable to walk because of physical disablement. The test for the allowance is always one of walking ability and there is no specific diagnostic condition which gives automatic entitlement. We have no present plans either to change the nature of the qualifying conditions for the allowance or to extend its scope.

Children (Specialist Units)

77. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specialist units for physically and sexually abused children are now open or are planning to open within the next three years.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally. The provision of services for physically and sexually

abused children is a matter for local authority social services departments, health authorities and voluntary organisations concerned with child protection. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children provide specialist services in their units; and I am aware of the work being done at Great Ormond street hospital for sick children, and know that there are a number of other local initiatives.

Social Fund

17. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has discussed the Social Fund proposals with the local authority associations.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) earlier today.

70. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in support of his proposals for a social fund.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 13 November at columns *209-10*.

SERPS

27. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the results of his consultations on the future of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Newton: The Government's conclusions about the future of the state earnings related pension scheme will be announced in a White Paper to be published shortly.

Social Security Reviews

41. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further representations he has received regarding the proposed social security reviews.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Gummer) on Tuesday 12 November at column *417*.

Students (Benefit)

42. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received regarding students' entitlement to benefit.

Mr. Newton: About 100.

Embryo Research

45. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the number of organisations and individuals who have responded to the Warnock report on embryo research; and how many were in favour of the committee's recommendations.

Mr. Hayhoe: Comments from 180 organisations about the Warnock report recommendations on embryo research have been received. Of these, 105 were broadly in favour of the recommendations and 75 against. Over 4,000 letters about the report have been received from individuals, nearly all of which express concern about research on human embryos. Copies of evidence and responses to the report from organisations have been placed in the Library, where the organisation has consented.

Private Residential Care

52. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage increase in total Department of Health and Social Security payments to elderly people in private residential care between 1978 and 1985, or the latest figures available.

Mr. Newton: The latest available information relates to elderly people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes and shows an increase of nearly 3,000 per cent. between total expenditure in 1978 and total estimated expenditure in 1984.

Hypothermia

55. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the action he intends to take to seek to prevent old people dying from hypothermia.

Mr. Newton: The Government provide considerable help with the heating costs of the least well off through weekly rates of supplementary benefit. Many elderly people and others who may need to spend more on heating also receive extra weekly help known as heating additions. Spending on these has risen to some £400 million in the last financial year—£140 million more in real terms than in 1978-79. All heating additions were uprated again recently. We have indicated that expenditure on heating additions would be included in the income support scheme proposed in the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", and that the pattern of such additions would be taken into account in setting the income support premiums for pensioners and other groups such as the disabled.

In addition to cash help, it is important that elderly people and those who care for them should know the best ways to combat the effects of cold. The Department has co-operated with the Health Education Council in producing "Warmth in Winter", a leaflet containing simple, practical advice on keeping warm. In addition, a pack of information and training materials on this subject for those in contact with elderly people is being developed by the Council and will be available next year.

Infants (Congenital Anomalies)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children were born in each of the last three years for which figures are available with severe congenital anomalies requiring complete hospital care.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Pensions Funds (Annual Reports and Statements)

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the content of regulations governing disclosure in pension fund annual reports and statements to members.

Mr. Newton: The Department has received a total of 75 submissions on the proposals for regulations on disclosure of information by occupational pension schemes.

Contact Lenses

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the extent of corneal damage or destruction caused by soft contact lenses.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand from evidence from the United States of America that some soft contact lenses for extended wear can cause corneal ulcers. However, there is as yet insufficient information on this problem to determine its prevalence in the United Kingdom. I have extended the yellow card system for reporting adverse reactions on a pilot basis to include ophthalmic opticians so that if corneal ulcers are found the Department would be told, and I have arranged for consultant ophthalmologists to be reminded to use the existing yellow card system for this purpose. I am considering the provision of funds for research into the relationship between corneal ulceration and contact lens wear. I am also arranging with the manufacturers the provision of adequate written instructions to all wearers of contact lenses.

Vaccination

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he is considering halting the routine vaccination procedure for school children.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to halt routine childhood vaccination in general.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 6 December at column *395*, which dealt with BCG immunisation.

Tuberculosis (Vaccination)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to provide a detailed analysis of the costs and benefits of his proposal for a selective vaccination policy against tuberculosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 6 December at column *395*. The joint committee on vaccination and immunisation will continue to monitor data on the incidence of the disease and will reconsider the benefits of a switch to a selective vaccination policy before 1990.

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to introduce legislation to implement the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee contract.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) on 28 October at column *373*.

Hospital Services (Contracting-Out)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate has been made of savings to the National Health Service resulting from the contracting-out of hospital services.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 25 November at columns *499-502*.

Druglink

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the amount and purpose of his Department's grant to Druglink, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

Mr. Whitney: A grant totalling £79,706 over three years has been approved under the Department's drugs initiative for a Druglink—West Herts project to develop a community support programme under which volunteers will be recruited and trained to provide an advisory and education service for professionals and for drug misusers and their families.

Hip Replacement

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to meet the demand for hip replacements.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities have been informed that Ministers regard joint replacement as one of the main priorities for the development of services in the acute sector. The latest available statistics show that in 1983 there were some 9,000 more hip replacement operations than in 1978, an increase of over 30 per cent.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients needing hip replacement are awaiting treatment; and what is the average length of wait.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the numbers of people awaiting admission to National Health Service hospitals for particular operations is not available centrally. The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to a National Health Service hospital for total hip replacement or other arthroplasty of hip in England in 1983, the latest year for which informaton is available centrally, was 24 weeks.

Spectacles (Prices)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to conduct a survey of the price of glasses following the abolition of the National Health Service supply.

Mr. Hayhoe: At present I see no need for any more elaborate arrangements than the collection of general informaton on the market prices of budget spectacles.

Child Nutrition

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies into child nutrition have been undertaken by or for his Department since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has undertaken three such studies for the Department since 1979: a survey of infant feeding practice

in 1980, a dietary survey of schoolchildren, the fieldwork for which was done in 1983, and a 1985 survey of infant feeding practice, for which fieldwork is currently in hand.

NHS (Cost Improvement Programmes)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he arrived at the total of £150 million anticipated to be saved by cost improvement programmes in the National Health Service in 1985-86 mentioned in his National Health Service annual report 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services told the House on 22 April at columns 629-30, regional health authorities' plans for 1985-86 included proposals for cost improvement totalling £150 million. These proposals are the basis of the figures quoted on page 2 of the National Health Service annual report 1985.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from health authorities about the scope for savings from cost improvement programmes in 1985-86 compared with 1984-85.

Mr. Hayhoe: Regional health authorities themselves put forward proposals for cost improvement totalling £150 million, compared with the £100 million proposed for and achieved in 1984-85, in their short-term programmes for 1985-86, which were approved in April.

School Health Service

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the current state of the school health service.

Mr. Whitney: A total of 59 per cent. of the whole maintained school population was seen by school nurses during child health surveillance programmes in 1984 compared with 47 per cent. in 1979, and this reflects the increase in the number of school nurses employed in the health services in recent years. We are, through the community nursing review and other studies, looking at ways in which community child health services, including the school health service, may be improved.

Voluntary Sector Funding

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment has been made by his Department of the impact on voluntary services in health and social services of the reduction in funding for the voluntary sector which will result from the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the Greater London council.

Mr. Whitney: We believe that adequate arrangements have been made by central Government to enable the boroughs and districts to support worthwhile voluntary sector activity following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council. Decisions on the most effective use of available resources are for the local authorities concerned.

Inpatient Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence his Department has on patient attitudes to the reduction in inpatient average stays for hospital maternity services, acute surgical and geriatric services, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: We are not aware of any national surveys covering this point but the patient's attitude, clinical condition and home circumstances would all be important considerations for any consultant in reaching a decision upon the date of discharge.

NHS (Staff Numbers)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the number of administrative staff in the National Health Service increased by 10,000 between September 1978 and September 1984;

(2) why the number of ancillary staff in the National Health Service decreased by 20,000 between September 1978 and September 1984;

(3) why the number of technical and professional staff in the National Health Service increased by 20,000 between September 1978 and September 1984.

Mr. Whitney: The changes in the staff groups referred to are as follows:

England—Whole-Time Equivalent

	September 1978	*September 1984*	*Change*
Administrative and Clerical	100,300	110,300	10,000
Ancillary	172,200	152,200	−20,000
Professional and Technical (excluding works)	57,200	72,700	15,400

Recruitment and deployment of individual staff and decisions on the staff mix are a matter for health authorities themselves, in the light of local circumstances and service needs. Factors which have influenced the changes in manpower levels over the period in question include, the general increase in hospital activity; the emphasis on improved care for elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped people; the introduction of manpower targets in 1983, under which health authorities were asked to reduce overall staffing levels and to improve the proportion of staff involved directly in patient care (medical and dental, nursing and midwifery, and professional and technical staff); improved productivity following the introduction of incentive bonus schemes for ancillary staff; the impact of the Government's initiative on cost improvement, including competitive tendering; and the transfer of 2,700 operating department assistants from the ancillary staffs Whitley Council to the professional and technical 'B' Whitley Council from 1 April 1984.

NHS (Staff Pay)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average pay of an ancillary worker, technician or professional and administrative worker, respectively, in 1984-85.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in the form requested. The following average gross weekly earnings for full-time staff in 1984-85 are estimated from returns supplied by 10 English regions.

	£
Ancillary Staff	111·67
Administrative and Clerical Staff	123·92
Professional and Technical Staff*	146·36

* Includes scientists, technicians, speech therapists, opticians, pharmacists and professions allied to medicine.

NHS (Capital Schemes)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those capital schemes mentioned in appendix D of his National Health Service annual report 1985 which were commenced or committed before June 1979.

Mr. Whitney: Following is a list of those hospital developments shown in appendix D of the National Health Service annual report 1985 which were commenced or committed before June 1979.

Region and Scheme

Northern
Furness (Barrow) DGH Scheme 1 Phase 1.
Royal Victoria Infirmary Scheme 1 Phase 4.
South Cleveland General Scheme 1 Phase 1.
Yorkshire
Grimsby DGH Phase 1.
Leeds General Infirmary Phase 1.
Pontefract General Infirmary.
Trent
Chesterfield DGH Phase 1.
Leicester Royal Infirmary Phase 3.
Queen's Medical Centre Development Phase 2.
East Anglian
Great Yarmouth DGH Phase 1.
St. John's Peterborough.
Kings Lynn Phase 2.
North West Thames
Luton & Dunstable Ward Block & Boiler House.
North East Thames
London Hospital Clinical Building Phase 1.
South West Thames
Crawley Hospital Stages 3A & 3B
Redhill DGH (Nucleus)
St. Georges Block G1 Phase 2.
Wessex
Southampton General Phase 5 West Ward Block.
Southampton General Hospital Phase 5.
South Western
Derriford DGH Phase 1.
West Midlands
Dudley DGH (Russell's Hall) Phase 3A.
Stafford DGH Phase 4 Main Hospital.
Mersey
Royal Liverpool Phases 2 & 3.
Arrowe Park New DGH.
Countess of Chester-Nucleus (West Cheshire).
North Western
Preston New Hospital Phase 1.
Preston New Hospital Phase 2.
Non RHA
Great Ormond Street Cardiac Block.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of the capital schemes listed in appendix D to his National Health Service annual report 1985 are not in full use.

Mr. Whitney: The cardiac block at the hospital for sick children, Great Ormond street was not brought into use because remedial works became necessary. Of the other 66 capital schemes costing more than £2 million completed between 1979 and the end of 1984 listed in appendix D to the annual report on the National Health Service for 1985, a total of 59 are fully in use. The remainder have elements which have yet to be brought into use, and details are as follows:

Queen's Medical Centre Development Phase 3:—166 beds will be brought into use following planned changes in patterns of services elsewhere in district.

Queen Mary's—Roehampton—Phase 1:—Commissioning of four theatres is to be completed in January 1986.

Southampton General Hospital Phase 5:—28 Geriatric beds awaiting identification of revenue funds.

Derriford DGH Phase 1:—Occupation of the hospital is progressive and will be complete by 1989 following planned changes to the pattern of services elsewhere in district: 270 beds of a total of 570 have been brought into use.

New Cross Wolverhampton Wards and Theatres (Nucleus):—10 beds will be opened when problems in recruiting staff are resolved.

Stafford DGH Phase 4 Main Hospital:—14 obstetric beds are being converted for use as gynaecology beds because of lack of demand.

Royal Liverpool Hospital:—10 beds designated for renal services will be brought into use following changes in overall pattern of services as part of development of regional strategy.

Ambulance Drivers

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether ambulance drivers have to undergo special training before being allowed to drive ambulances on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Training, including the scope and content of courses, for all health service staff is the responsibility of the National Health Service training authority. Qualified ambulancemen and ambulancewomen are required to undertake a specific course of ambulance driver training at a recognised regional ambulance training centre but this is concerned with driving the vehicle in all circumstances, not specifically on motorways.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all health authorities with a backlog of more than one month, two months, and three months, respectively, in the processing of cervical smears through pathology laboratories.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what recent information his Department has considered on the recommended interval of five years between cervical smears;

(2) if it remains his policy to support the advice of the Committee on Gynaecological Cytology on the five-year interval between cervical smears.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is advised on all aspects of the cervical screening programme by the independent committee on gynaecological cytology.

Current policy on age and frequency follows its advice. The committee reviews regularly all the relevant scientific and epidemiological evidence available, including information on the frequency of cervical screening. At its last meeting on 22 November it concluded that it should not amend its previous advice that five years is the appropriate interval between smears.

London Health Services

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he remains satisfied that the funds allocated to health authorities in Greater London ensure that the same levels of service are available throughout London.

Mr. Hayhoe: Although there has been considerable progress towards achieving equality of access to services, not only in London but throughout the whole country, more needs to be done. The four Thames regional health authorities, who are the responsible planning authorities for London, have prepared strategies, and progress towards reducing disparities in access will be taken into account in considering their plans and programmes.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of compiling, preparing, printing, circulating, publicising and updating the information package on London's health services proposal by the regional liaison council of his Department; and who will bear the cost.

Mr. Hayhoe: Although some preliminary consideration has been given by officials to the desirability of producing such an information package, I have made no decision about it.

Benefit Entitlement (Earnings Disregard)

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase the earnings disregard for benefit entitlement to £18 per week for the long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Under the Government's Green Paper proposals for the introduction of income support to replace supplementary benefit, the earnings disregard for couples who are unemployed for two years or more would be increased to £15 per week.

Supplementary Benefit Claims (Walthamstow)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of supplementary benefit claimants in Walthamstow in each of the past six years.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's office at Walthamstow on 30 July 1985 — the latest figures available and at comparable dates in the preceding five years.

	Numbers
July 1985	13,486
July 1984	13,160
July 1983	13,081
July 1982	12,401
July 1981	10,840
July 1980	9,557

Polyunsaturated Margarines

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to increase the availability of margarines high in polyunsaturates in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's Catering and Dietetic Branch devoted Issue No. 10 of the Health Service Catering Bulletin (August 1985) to healthy food in hospitals, and this included the suggestion that margarines high in polyunsaturates should be more widely available. Further advice on healthy food in hospitals will be given in the next edition of the Branch's publication "Nutrition and Modified Diets" which will be published early next year.

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department was first aware that acquired immune deficiency syndrome infected blood supplies from abroad could be dangerous to those suffering from blood disorders; and what action was then taken to seek to combat the danger.

Mr. Hayhoe: Supplies of whole blood are not imported since the United Kingdom is self sufficient in its needs for blood for transfusions; it is only certain blood products which are imported.

In 1983 evidence emerged that in the United States of America haemophiliacs were contracting AIDS. Although the mechanism of infection was not known, it was presumed that it had been transmitted through use of blood products such as Factor VIII. Once the virus HTLV III had been identified as the causative agent (first reported in April 1984) and it had been characterised, experimental evidence suggested that heat-treatment processes could inactivate the virus and could be employed to reduce the risk of transmission. Even before product licences were granted earlier this year, clinicians were free to prescribe imported commercial heat-treated products such as Factor VIII on a named patient basis. All Factor VIII now released for use in the United Kingdom is heat-treated.

Unemployment Pay

26. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the working of the regulations which terminate an individual's right to unemployment pay after three years of working just during the summer.

Mr. Newton: For unemployment benefit purposes a seasonal worker is a person who works for only part of the year (whether just the summer or a longer period) at about the same time each year for long enough to establish a seasonal work pattern, which usually means for each of the last three years. Such a person may receive unemployment benefit during his off season if he can show that he has had or can reasonably expect to obtain a substantial amount of work during that off season. There is no practical way of distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary seasonal workers and the regulation applies to all. I am satisfied that the rule achieves its purpose. The regulation does not apply to supplementary benefit and an unemployed seasonal worker can receive that benefit if otherwise eligible, though there are special rules about income earned during the on season.

Organ Donations

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, columns *160-61*, when he hopes to complete his consideration of further measures to maintain the momentum of his 1984 campaign to increase organ donation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are constantly looking for new ways of increasing the number of organs becoming available for transplantation and of promoting the donor card scheme, and we continue to support local campaigns and initiatives. A meeting has been arranged in January for representatives of 12 organisations concerned with the promotion of organ donation to discuss possible future initiatives.

Dental Fees

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is currently reviewing the appropriate level of fees within the fee structures of the dental National Health Service for the use of *(a)* light-cured anterior restoratives and *(b)* occlusin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. Dentists' fees are normally reviewed in the summer of each year.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the number of ordinary board and lodging claimants with dependent children under 18 years of age in Wales.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 2 December at columns *129-130*.

Voluntary Organisations (Direct Services)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all current or proposed short-term funding initiatives by his Department which include an element of direct services to clients by voluntary organisations which are also within the competence of local social service authorities.

Mr. Whitney: We believe that local authority social service departments are in general best placed to decide on the most effective means of meeting the priority needs in their areas, and that this will often include partnerships with the voluntary sector. The Department's funding for local voluntary sector activity is designed either to explore or demonstrate new or experimental types of services. The short term initiatives are:

Intermediate treatment fund
Intermediate treatment initiative
Under 5s initiative
Helping the Community to Care
Drugs misuse initiative
Tadworth Court

Social Workers (Bolton)

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional resources Her Majesty's Government will make available to district councils covering Bolton and surrounding areas to implement recommendations relating to administration, staffing and training of social workers arising from the inquiry into the death of Jasmine Beckford.

Mr. Whitney: It is for local authorities themselves to decide the priority they should give in allocating resources to particular parts of their responsibilities, but we shall be considering very carefully the recommendations of the inquiry into the death of Jasmine Beckford within the programme of work the Government have in hand to help prevent child abuse cases and improve their handling.

Children in Care

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many children were placed under supervision in each year from 1979 to 1984 on grounds of child abuse or neglect;

(2) how many children were in local authority care in each of the years from 1979 to 1984;

(3) how many children were admitted to care in each year from 1979 to 1984 as a result of child abuse or neglect.

Mr. Whitney: Children subject to abuse or neglect can be admitted to care by a variety of legal routes and are not separately identifiable in the statistics held centrally. The information available on children admitted to care for 1979 to 1983 is given in table 1 of "Children in Care of Local Authorities, Year Ending 31 March 1983, England" (A/F83/12), copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for 1984 are given in the table. Information on the number of children in care in England at 31 March from 1979 to 1983 is given in table 2 of the same volume; the number in 1984 is 74,845.

Information is not available centrally on the reasons why supervision orders are made.

Number of children admitted to care in England and circumstances in which they were admitted during the year ending 31 March 1984

Reason for entering care	*Number of children admitted**
Received into care under Section 2 of the Child Care Act 1980†	
Short term illness of parent or guardian	4,851
Long term illness or incapacity of parent or guardian	365
Confinement of mother	742
Family homeless	244
Parents are dead/no guardian	119
Abandoned or lost	472
Death of parent	243
Deserted by parent	1,662
Parent or guardian in prison or remanded to custody	464
Unsatisfactory home conditions	3,678
Other reasons	6,233
Sub-total	19,073
Committed into care by order of the courts	
On remand or committed for trial/sentence or detained in care	2,204
Subject to an interim care order	2,100
Committed by care orders made under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969	
under Section	
1(2)*(a)*	1,542
1(2)*(b)*	146
1(2)*(bb)*	23
1(2)*(c)*	138
1(2)*(d)*	571

Reason for entering care	Number of children admitted*
1(2)(e)	608
1(2)(f)/7(7)	1,322
15(1)	213
25(1)/26(2)	6
Sub-Total	4,569
Committed by care orders made under other Acts	
Section 43(1) of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973	330
Section 10(1) of the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Courts Act 1978‡	21
Section 7(2) of the Family Law Reform Act 1969	235
Section 2(2)(b) of the Guardianship Act 1973	91
Section 17(1)(b) of the Children Act 1975	2
Others	127
Total	28,752

* Includes estimates for those authorities who were not able to return any data.

† Or previously under Section 1 of the Children Act 1948.
‡ Or previously under the Matrimonial Proceedings (Magistrates Courts) Act 1960.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births for children *(a)* under one year, *(b)* under four weeks, *(c)* under one week and *(d)* under 24 hours for the Leeds Western district health authority for 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Whitney: The information is shown in the table. The rates are based on small numbers and are therefore liable to chance variation from year to year.

*Numbers and rates *for (a) infant, (b) neonatal, (c) early neonatal and (d) deaths under 24 hours for children in Leeds Western Health Authority 1982-84*

Period of deaths	1982		1983		1984	
	Numbers	Rates	Numbers	Rates	Numbers	Rates
(a) Infant	40	9·23	47	10·70	35	8·19
(b) Neonatal	26	6·00	31	7·06	19	4·45
(c) Early neonatal	21	4·85	28	6·38	13	3·04
(d) Under 24 hours	12	2·77	21	4·78	8	1·87

* Rates per 1,000 live births.

Definitions:
(a) Infant—deaths of children aged under 1 year.
(b) Neonatal—deaths of children aged under 4 weeks.
(c) Early neonatal—deaths of children aged under 1 week.

Speech Therapists

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average take-home pay of a basic-grade speech therapist working in the National Health Service; and how this compares in real terms with average take-home pay in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1983.

Mr. Whitney: We do not have information about take-home pay, which varies with an individual's personal circumstances. New entrant speech therapists normally join the National Health Service in the senior II grade. The pay scales for that grade for the years requested are as follows:

	1 April 1980 £	1 April 1983 £	1 April 1985 £
Minimum	5,330	6,345	6,955
Maximum	6,274	7,468	8,187

These rates do not include London weighting or any other allowances which may be earned.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many vacancies exist for speech therapists in the National Health Service in England and Wales; and what are the equivalent figures for 1980 and 1983.

Mr. Whitney: We do not collect this information centrally.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many speech therapists there are per 1,000 population in England and Wales; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The figures are as follows:

Speech therapists at 30 September	England and Wales Whole time equivalent per 1,000 population		
	1980	1983	1984
England	0·036	0·042	0·046
Wales	0·026	0·033	0·037

Notes:
1. Excludes helpers.
2. Figures for 30 September 1984 are the latest available.

Private Practice

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979, and for each region, the total number of authorised pay beds, the total number of deaths and discharges of private patients occupying those beds and the average daily occupation of those beds by private patients.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *482-84*]: I regret that the figure for average daily number of beds occupied by private patients in National Health Service hospitals in south-western region for 1983

was erroneously given as 53, and the England total as 1,264. The correct figures should be 42 and 1,253, respectively.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list such information as is available to him, by National Health Service institution, as to the numbers of staff engaged in full or part-time teaching on courses leading to an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy; and if he will give any information he has as to whether their contracts are with the National Health Service or with some other employer.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985, c. *609-10*]: Of the 21 academic staff employed at the National Hospital's college of speech sciences, 20 hold contracts with the National Health Service and one with another employer. All contracts are full-time.

Repatriation Assistance

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to the granting of assistance for the repatriation back to their country of origin of applicants who have had their supplementary benefit converted to special hardship allowance.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1985, c. *276*]: A single payment may be made in limited circumstances to enable certain people who are receiving supplementary benefit to return to their country of origin. It is unlikely that someone receiving special hardship allowance would also be entitled to supplementary benefit, and receipt of special hardship allowance alone does not confer eligibility for help with repatriation expenses under the supplementary benefits scheme. However, most applications for this assistance are now dealt with under a scheme operated by International Social Service of Great Britain. This scheme does not require that the applicant for assistance is in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 11 December 1985

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Technology Group

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the present performance and future role of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Pattie: The role of the British Technology Group (BTG — the name under which the National Research Development Corporation and the National Enterprise Board have been co-operating since 1981) was set out by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in 1983. The BTG now concentrates its efforts on technology transfer, helping British industry to exploit technology mainly derived from United Kingdom public sector sources. This task is intended to be carried out in such a manner as to become self-financing.

The 1983 statement also required a high priority to be given to the disposal of the group's portfolio of equity investments inherited from the NEB. The corporate plan to carry out these objectives was agreed with Ministers in 1984 and updated in 1985. The BTG has been very successful in meeting these objectives.

On the NRDC side, revenues from technology transfer were significantly better than forecast and the NRDC paid dividends of £2 million to the Exchequer from surplus funds for both 1983-84 and 1984-85. It has also now been agreed that in future NRDC will pay dividends equal to 50 per cent. of the post-tax profits for the previous year, although this would not necessarily be regarded as the upper limit, if the corporation enjoyed a "windfall" profit. It remains a major objective for the NRDC to generate increased revenue from a wider range of inventions than in the past.

On the NEB side, progress on the disposal of equity investments has been very good. The rate of disposals and their value has exceeded expectations and from the disposal proceeds a total of £168 million was paid to the Exchequer as a refund of public dividend capital in 1984-85. A further £22 million has been paid so far in the current financial year. The BTG also repaid outstanding loans of £2 million to the Exchequer in 1984-85.

For the future, the Government regard technology transfer of great importance to British industry, leading to the starting up of new industries and new product lines, with consequential job creation. Mr Ian Harvey, a qualified engineer with experience of industry, the World Bank and consultancy, was appointed chief executive of the BTG in October 1985, to develop the BTG's technology transfer role. This has been accompanied by a reorganisation of the group, to place increased emphasis on technology transfer.

Civil Aviation (Anti-trust Laws)

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in the light of the recently announced provisional settlement of the class action relating to the collapse of Laker Airways, what is the Government's policy towards the application of the United States anti-trust laws to civil aviation.

Mr. Brittan: The Government have consistently maintained the view that in so far as the activities of airlines are authorised and regulated in accordance with an air services agreement, the domestic laws of a contracting party may not be used to constrain or regulate those activities, unless that is provided for expressly, or is necessary in order to implement the agreement, or the laws can be applied in a manner which is compatible with the agreement. Regulation under the agreement by the contracting parties jointly of matters such as market access, capacity and tariffs necessarily displaces the unilateral application of the domestic competition laws of each party which implements the national economic philosophy of each country and are not designed to deal with the special characteristics and needs of international civil aviation.

In particular, the Government's view is that the unilateral application of United States anti-trust law to air services operated under the United Kingdom-United States air services agreement (Bermuda 2) is not only incompatible with the United Kingdom's rights under the agreement, but is damaging to the trading interests of the United Kingdom. In 1983 the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry exercised his powers under the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 to prohibit compliance by persons carrying on business in the United Kingdom with requirements for the enforcement of United States anti-trust laws in relation to activities of United Kingdom airlines and concerning the operation of air services under Bermuda 2.

Our policy is unchanged, and I therefore intend to exercise powers unde that Act to whatever extent is necessary if proceedings under the anti-trust laws were to be begun in the future in United States courts against any United Kingdom airline in relation to air services operated by it under Bermuda 2, and would not envisage consenting to requests to comply with discovery orders made by United States courts in such cases.

While maintaining this position, the Government's longer-term objective is to reach mutually acceptable arrangements as appropriate with foreign Governments to deal with anti competitive behaviour by airlines. As a first step we have indicated to the United States Government that we are ready to discuss these issues with them.

Register of Companies

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made by the Companies Registration Office towards meeting the target for improving the reliability of the register of companies.

Mr. Howard: As was reported to the Public Accounts Committee on 20 June 1984, the Registrar of Companies is aiming to achieve compliance by 80 per cent. of the companies on the register by the middle of 1986.

In May 1984 an estimated 457,000 companies were in default. Only 60,000 of those defaults remain unrectified and the majority of the companies concerned are likely to be struck from the register as defunct. Since then, the Registrar has sent out over 1 million letters to defaulting companies and their directors, has prosecuted over 1,500

directors for failure to deliver accounts and-or returns and has struck off 64,000 companies identified as defunct. In addition, a programme of reminders has begun with the aim of bringing to the attention of directors of companies their filing obligations before companies go into default. A total of 286,000 such letters has been despatched.

Of the 1,004,000 companies on the register at 29 November 1985, 66,000 are in liquidation and will ultimately be removed from the register. A further 143,000 are in the course of being struck off the register. There remain 795,000 active companies; 592,000 (74 per cent.) of these are currently up to date with filing accounts and 631,000 (79 per cent) are up to date with their annual returns. A total of 541,000 (68 per cent.) are in full compliance, some 165,000 more than in May 1984.

The proportion of companies in default for long periods has also decreased. In May 1984 an estimated 400,000 companies were in default for more than six months, compared with the present figure of 150,000.

With over 1 million companies now on the register, the 80 per cent. compliance target effectively means that over 800,000 companies would have to be up-to-date with their filing of both accounts and returns. As there are currently over 200,000 companies in liquidation or in the course of dissolution, I think it more sensible to express the target in terms of the number of active companies and, in addition, to require the Registrar to give particular priority to eliminating the number of companies in default for more than six months.

Progress has so far been considerable. Full compliance now stands at 68 per cent. of active companies. 80 per cent. by mid-1986 is an ambitious target and I am satisfied that the Registrar and his staff are making every effort to reduce the amount of arrears with the continuing co-operation of the accountancy profession, which I gratefully acknowledge.

Life Policies and Unit Trusts

Sir John Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the present number of individuals selling life policies and selling unit trusts who would have to be licensed for part-time as well as full-time work if his proposed legislation came into effect.

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, before deciding whether to compel all individuals selling life policies and all individuals selling unit trusts to become licensed, he will estimate the present number of such persons who would have to be licensed for part-time as well as full-time work.

Mr. Howard: When the Marketing of Investments Board organising committee makes a detailed case to me for the inclusion of licensing in the forth-coming Financial Services Bill, I shall look at all relevant aspects of the case, including what information the committee has on the number of salesmen likely to be covered by such a licensing scheme. It is very difficult to produce firm estimates of the numbers involved, particularly because it ranges from those involved in selling such products on a full-time basis to an even larger number who occasionally sell such products.

Computers and Electronics

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of his staff are directly assisting computer and electronics exporters from the United Kingdom; and what direct funding he is making to such programmes.

Mr. Howard: Staff in my Department engaged in running BOTB export services deal with companies from all industries and details are not available to illustrate how total staff effort, or total export promotion expenditure, breaks down by sector.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what forms of assistance are available to retail developments opting to trade in designated assisted areas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Retail firms both inside and outside the assisted areas may be able to benefit from the loan guarantee scheme, enterprise allowances and the small firms service. However, regional assistance is not generally available to retail developments serving only the immediate locality because of the net effect of such developments on competitors and jobs in the assisted region.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has appointed merchant bank advisers for the privatisation of Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Pattie: Following my announcement on 4 June, Samuel Montagu and Co. Limited was appointed to give preliminary advice in connection with the privatisation of Rolls-Royce Limited. On 8 November, I indicated that I had received Samuel Montagu's advice, and I confirmed that, subject to market conditions, the Government intended to privatise Rolls-Royce before the end of the present Parliament. I have now decided to appoint Samuel Montagu as the Government's merchant bank adviser for the privatisation itself.

Textiles and Clothing

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funds have been made available from the European Community Social Fund for purposes connected with the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The social fund has made the following allocations of funds for the training of workers and former workers in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries:

	£
1977	2,756,753
1978	5,036,766
1979	1,922,296
1980	1,201,469
1981	1,960,891
1982	3,138,630
1983	3,761,840

With the introduction in 1984 of new social fund rules, the separate budgets for textile and clothing workers and for various other categories were abolished from 1984. The information is therefore not available in the form requested.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Ocean Drilling Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on British participation in the ocean drilling programme.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 November 1985, c. *522*]: The United Kingdom is to join the ocean drilling programme (ODP) as a full member. The United Kingdom will be represented through the Natural Environment Research Council, and its Secretary, Dr. John Bowman, has written today to the National Science Foundation of the United States of America applying for membership in the ODP. A group of United Kingdom oil producers—BP, Britoil, Burmah, Enterprise, Shell UK and Tricentrol—have agreed to contribute to the annual subscription of US $2·5 million as have the Departments of Energy, (which will contribute 20 per cent.), Environment, and Trade and Industry. The NERC regards this programme as high priority and will contribute the balance of almost £1 million per annum. The NERC will also provide support to British scientists participating in the cruises and subsequent research.

The involvement of the Government, the NERC and industry underlines the Government's keeness to encourage joint funding in partnership with industry of strategic research projects such as ODP which traditionally have been funded from the public sector.

Her Majesty's Inspectors (Voluntary Colleges)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average period which elapses between visits by Her Majesty's inspectors to voluntary colleges and the publication of their subsequent reports; what steps he is taking to reduce this period of time; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Visits by Her Majesty's inspectors to educational establishments, including the voluntary colleges, have a variety of purposes. The majority are informal visits to enable Her Majesty's inspectors to keep in touch with developments in the particular institution. Her Majesty's inspectors report orally to the staff concerned on what they find, but these visits do not lead to published reports. In the academic year 1984-85 all the voluntary colleges in England received at least two such visits and most were visited each term. Formal inspections leading to published Her Majesty's inspectors reports are less frequent. Since 1 January 1983 there have been four such reports on provision in voluntary colleges, in each case initial teacher training in a particular institution. The average time between inspection and publication has been nearly 10 months. It remains the aim of the Department and Her Majesty's Inspectorate, as set out in the 1983 policy statement "The Work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate in England and Wales", that reports be issued to individual institutions within six months of the inspection; ways of accelerating current procedures are being considered.

Eye Disease Research (Grant-aid)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of grant aid the Medical Research Council makes available to Moorfields eye hospital and the Institution of Ophthalmology for the purposes of research into the inherited eye disease, retinitis pigmentosa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I understand that in the financial year 1984-85 the Medical Research Council spent £74,000 on research into the inherited eye disease retinitis pigmentosa, at the Moorfields eye hospital institute of ophthalmology. The council's overall expenditure in the same financial year on research into this disease amounted to £197,000. The Medical Research Council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: The teachers' panel of the Burnham committee met on 5 December and resolved to seek an early resumption of negotiations. The management panel is to meet today. The Government will continue to work for a settlement of this damaging and unnecessary dispute of a kind which would secure progress towards its objectives for better schools.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the latest offer to teachers is made known to school governors and to individual teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The offer made by the management panel on 12 September, and constructed on the Government's conditional willingness to see an extra £1,250 million spent on teachers' pay in the four years 1986-87 to 1989-90, was rejected by the unions after just 20 minutes. That offer is no longer on the table, although the Government's conditional offer of additional resources still stands. The holder of my office does not employ the teachers and I was not in a position to write to them direct about the 12 September offer. However, it is my judgment that most teachers did learn about the content of the offer through their unions, their employers or the educational press.

Children (Special Educational Needs)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the implications for his policy on the education of those with special educational needs of the recent judgment of Mr. Justice Taylor on the education of a dyslexic child from Southampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is awaiting the transcript of the judgment in this case.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the proportion of schools which have been modified since 1981 with aids to assist handicapped pupils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available centrally. However, the Department's building bulletin 61 "Designing for Children with Special Educational Needs — Ordinary Schools", published last year, included guidance on how existing school buildings could be used or adapted for the purpose.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the proportion of children assessed as to their special educational needs and the proportion of children in special schools on whom statements have been prepared, under the terms of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: According to returns submitted to the Department by all LEAs in January 1985 as part of the annual statistical exercise, a total of 127,889 children have statements of special educational needs under the 1981 Act. Overall, this represents 1·6 per cent. of all the school population. It is not possible to identify from the returns the proportion of children in special schools with statements.

The figures for individual LEAs are as follows:

Proportion of children with statements of special educational needs England—(as at 17 January 1985)

	Number of children with statements	*Percentage of school population*
Avon	617	0·4
Barking	384	1·5
Barnet	644	1·3
Barnsley	443	1·1
Bedfordshire	1,529	1·6
Berkshire	2,121	1·6
Bexley	713	2·1
Birmingham	3,478	1·9
Bolton	675	1·4
Bradford	1,391	1·6
Brent	Nil	—
Bromley	766	1·7
Buckinghamshire	2,859	2·7
Bury	507	1·7
Calderdale	338	1·0
Cambridgeshire	1,252	1·2
Cheshire	3,468	2·1
Cleveland	2,290	2·1
Cornwall	965	1·3
Coventry	1,232	2·2
Croydon	791	1·5
Cumbria	1,353	1·6
Derbyshire	2,698	1·7
Devon	2,807	1·9
Doncaster	14	0·0
Dorset	1,590	1·7
Dudley	908	2·0
Durham	1,569	1·5
Ealing	513	1·0
East Sussex	1,766	1·8
Enfield	779	1·9
Essex	4,555	1·8
Gateshead	598	1·8
Gloucestershire	483	0·6
Hampshire	5,252	2·1
Haringey	556	1·8
Harrow	596	1·9
Havering	626	1·6
Hereford and Worcester	14	0·0
Hertfordshire	3,472	1·9
Hillingdon	698	1·8
Hounslow	12	0·0
Humberside	2,417	1·6
Inner London Education Authority	7,349	2·2
Isle of Wight	317	1·7
Isles of Scilly	Nil	—
Kent	5,137	2·0
Kingston upon Thames	340	1·7
Kirklees	929	1·3
Knowsley	348	1·1
Lancashire	4,708	2·0
Leeds	1,038	0·9
Leicestershire	1,797	1·2
Lincolnshire	2,001	2·2
Liverpool	1,663	1·9
Manchester	345	0·4
Merton	160	0·6
Newcastle upon Tyne	882	1·9
Newham	755	2·0
Norfolk	1,494	1·3
North Tyneside	604	1·8
North Yorkshire	1,723	1·6
Northamptonshire	1,858	1·8
Northumberland	806	1·6
Nottinghamshire	2,617	1·5
Oldham	661	1·6
Oxfordshire	1,046	1·2
Redbridge	724	2·1
Richmond upon Thames	305	1·3
Rochdale	618	1·6
Rotherham	844	1·8
St. Helens	647	1·9
Salford	815	1·9
Sandwell	1,103	2·0
Sefton	581	1·1
Sheffield	1,383	1·6
Shropshire	780	1·1
Solihull	84	0·2
Somerset	1,320	1·8
South Tyneside	467	1·8
Staffordshire	2,671	1·5
Stockport	862	1·7
Suffolk	1,532	1·4
Sunderland	1,000	1·8
Surrey	3,384	2·0
Sutton	190	0·8
Tameside	669	1·8
Trafford	278	0·8
Wakefield	981	1·7
Walsall	777	1·5
Waltham Forest	716	2·0
Warwickshire	1,547	1·8
West Sussex	1,394	1·3
Wigan	108	0·2
Wiltshire	1,795	2·0
Wirral	1,277	1·1
Wolverhampton	720	1·5
Total: England	127,889	1·6

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each local education authority in England, at the latest available date, the number and proportion of children of compulsory school age in (i) mainstream, maintained schools and (ii) special schools whose education is governed by a statement under the provisions of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 December 1985 c. *158*]: The number and proportion of children with statements of special educational needs in maintained primary, middle and secondary schools and in maintained and non-maintained special schools in each LEA in January 1985 were as follows:

	Number of pupils with statements in special schools	Number of pupils with statements in primary, middle and secondary schools	All pupils with statements	Percentage of pupils with statements in special schools	Percentage of pupils with statements in primary, middle and secondary schools
Barking	279	32	311	89·7	10·3
Barnet	426	75	501	85·0	15·0
Bexley	355	94	449	79·1	20·9
Brent	537	60	597	89·9	10·1
Bromley	533	187	720	74·0	26·0
Croydon	613	91	704	87·1	12·9
Ealing	584	141	725	80·6	19·4
Enfield	494	34	528	93·6	6·4
Haringey	424	88	512	82·8	17·2
Harrow	269	100	369	72·9	27·1
Havering	450	74	524	85·9	14·1
Hillingdon	531	53	584	90·9	9·1
Hounslow	610	—	610	100	—
Kingston-upon-Thames	255	54	309	82·5	17·5
Merton	313	54	367	85·3	14·7
Newham	611	65	676	90·4	9·6
Redbridge	465	33	498	93·4	6·6
Richmond-upon-Thames	186	23	209	89·0	11·0
Sutton	293	34	327	89·6	10·4
Waltham Forest	851	146	997	85·4	14·6
Inner London	7,338	1,195	8,533	86·0	14·0
Birmingham	3,138	416	3,554	88·3	11·7
Coventry	966	86	1,052	91·8	8·2
Dudley	645	143	788	81·9	18·1
Sandwell	877	169	1,046	83·8	16·2
Solihull	419	40	459	91·3	8·7
Walsall	696	95	791	88·0	12·0
Wolverhampton	581	129	710	81·8	18·2
Knowsley	622	35	657	94·7	5·3
Liverpool	1,904	171	2,075	91·8	8·2
St. Helens	502	67	569	88·2	11·8
Sefton	672	37	709	94·8	5·2
Wirral	887	202	1,089	81·5	18·5
Bolton	580	14	594	97·6	2·4
Bury	303	71	374	81·0	19·0
Manchester	1,819	57	1,876	97·0	3·0
Oldham	722	94	816	88·5	11·5
Rochdale	570	69	639	89·2	10·8
Salford	947	28	975	97·1	2·9
Stockport	817	156	973	84·0	16·0
Tameside	381	152	533	71·5	28·5
Trafford	437	181	618	70·7	29·3
Wigan	782	110	892	87·7	12·3
Barnsley	365	51	416	87·7	12·3
Doncaster	944	2	946	99·8	0·2
Rotherham	611	156	767	79·7	20·3
Sheffield	1,440	248	1,688	85·3	14·7
Bradford	1,287	118	1,405	91·6	8·4
Calderdale	381	23	404	94·3	5·7
Kirklees	680	131	811	83·8	16·2
Leeds	2,136	435	2,571	83·1	16·9
Wakefield	846	11	857	98·7	1·3
Gateshead	556	89	645	86·2	13·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,001	68	1,069	93·6	6·4
North Tyneside	575	61	636	90·4	9·6
South Tyneside	331	56	387	85·5	14·5
Sunderland	777	272	1,049	74·1	25·9
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	2,316	3,289	5,605	41·3	58·7
Bedfordshire	1,161	370	1,531	75·8	24·2
Berkshire	1,906	859	2,765	68·9	31·1
Buckinghamshire	1,803	534	2,337	77·2	22·8
Cambridgeshire	1,460	494	1,954	74·7	25·3
Cheshire	1,913	1,426	3,339	57·3	42·7
Cleveland	1,934	385	2,319	83·4	16·6
Cornwall	292	575	867	33·7	66·3
Cumbria	632	509	1,141	55·4	44·6
Derbyshire	1,970	693	2,663	74·0	26·0
Devon	2,199	507	2,706	81·3	18·7

	Number of pupils with statements in special schools	Number of pupils with statements in primary, middle and secondary schools	All pupils with statements	Percentage of pupils with statements in special schools	Percentage of pupils with statements in primary, middle and secondary schools
Dorset	1,260	211	1,471	85·7	14·3
Durham	1,154	201	1,355	85·2	14·8
East Sussex	1,791	139	1,930	92·8	7·2
Essex	3,485	505	3,990	87·3	12·7
Gloucestershire	1,380	169	1,549	89·1	10·9
Hampshire	4,204	472	4,676	89·9	10·1
Hereford and Worcester	1,512	76	1,588	95·2	4·8
Hertfordshire	2,543	750	3,293	77·2	22·8
Humberside	1,649	665	2,314	71·3	28·7
Isle of Wight	311	54	365	85·2	14·8
Kent	3,852	941	4,793	80·4	19·6
Lancashire	3,893	348	4,241	91·8	8·2
Leicestershire	1,341	509	1,850	72·5	27·5
Lincolnshire	1,296	552	1,848	70·1	29·9
Norfolk	999	496	1,495	66·8	33·2
North Yorkshire	1,398	242	1,640	85·2	14·8
Northamptonshire	1,607	428	2,035	79·0	21·0
Northumberland	636	76	712	89·3	10·7
Nottinghamshire	2,349	129	2,478	94·8	5·2
Oxfordshire	1,116	65	1,181	94·5	5·5
Shropshire	800	424	1,224	65·4	34·6
Somerset	881	373	1,254	70·3	29·7
Staffordshire	2,272	511	2,783	81·6	18·4
Suffolk	835	613	1,448	57·7	42·3
Surrey	3,003	285	3,288	91·3	8·7
Warwickshire	1,528	69	1,597	95·7	4·3
West Sussex	1,258	148	1,406	89·5	10·5
Wiltshire	842	819	1,661	50·7	49·3
England	114,344	26,787	141,131	81·0	19·0

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the gross capital investment in (i) schools and (ii) higher and further education in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87, expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information is as follows:

£ million (England)

	Schools		Higher and Further Education	
	Cash	1984-85* Real Terms	Cash	1984-85* Real Terms
1970-71	192	927	129	623
1975-76	367	935	180	458
1980-81	401	516	334	430
1984-85	360	360	320	320
1985-86	279	266	281	268
1986-87	294	268	298	272

Note:

* Real terms are the cash expenditure for each year repriced using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator (1984-85=100).

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the percentage change in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1983-84, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant changes in the level of local authority rates additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1983-84, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 December 1985, c. *161*]: The percentage changes in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1983-84 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms measured by the gross domestic product deflator, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in the level of home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, provision for capital in recurrent expenditure, local authority rates and

additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes are as follows. The percentage changes shown will be in part the consequence of the withdrawal of the overseas student subsidy and to the extent that these losses have been made up by increased fee income will not accurately reflect the changes in the universities financial position.

Percentage change in UGC funding (Academic Years)

University	*(a) Cash 1980-81 to 1983-84*	*(b) Real terms 1980-81 to 1983-84*
Aston	−16·6	−31·0
Bath	15·4	− 4·5
Birmingham	3·4	−14·4
Bradford	−17·0	−31·2
Bristol	4·7	−13·4
Brunel	0·7	−16·6
Cambridge	10·8	− 8·2
City	− 3·2	−19·8
Durham	13·9	− 5·7
East Anglia	11·1	− 8·0
Essex	− 3·4	−20·0
Exeter	2·5	−15·1
Hull	0·3	−17·0
Keele	−18·0	−32·1
Kent	− 3·2	−19·8
Lancaster	6·0	−12·3
Leeds	4·6	−13·4
Leicester	12·9	− 6·5
Liverpool	2·4	−15·2
London Graduate School of Business Studies	61·3	+33·6
London University	4·0	−13·9
Loughborough	11·5	− 7·7
Manchester Business School	− 9·8	−25·2
Manchester	2·4	−15·2
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	−13·7	−29·2
Newcastle	10·2	− 8·7
Nottingham	6·5	−11·8
Oxford	9·3	− 9·5
Reading	4·7	−13·3
Salford	−30·3	−42·3
Sheffield	7·2	−11·2
Southampton	8·3	−10·3
Surrey	− 5·5	−21·8
Sussex	− 2·1	−18·9
Warwick	6·1	−12·1
York	18·6	− 1·7
Aberystwyth UC	0·7	−16·6
Bangor UC	4·1	−13·8
Cardiff UC	5·1	−13·0
St. David's, Lampeter	21·6	+ 0·7
Swansea UC	1·1	−16·3
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	1·3	−16·1
Welsh National School of Medicine	12·1	− 7·1
Aberdeen	− 2·4	−19·2
Dundee	2·3	−15·3
Edinburgh	10·3	− 8·6
Glasgow	12·6	− 6·7
Heriot-Watt	9·1	− 9·6
St. Andrews	0·4	−16·9
Stirling	− 5·2	−21·4
Strathclyde	2·8	−14·8

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Exporters

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help is currently given to British exporters by British embassies and high commissions abroad.

Mr. Rifkind: Over a third of the front-line staff of nearly 200 British embassies, high commissions and consular offices in 130 countries are engaged in the promotion and protection of Britain's commercial and economic interests overseas. The help and advice they give in support of exporters is outlined in the recently-produced booklet "Ambassadors for Exports", copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House and given a wide distribution to the business community.

Nuclear Arms Control

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current capacity and state of the art of seismographic verification in nuclear arms control.

Mr. Eggar: In our view there are many questions, of both a theoretical and a practical nature, which must be resolved before an adequate verification regime could be established. These difficulties were outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) in the speech that he made in the House during the Adjournment debate on 7 June at column 617-24. We follow closely developments in seismology to see what contribution, if any, we can make to the resolution of these outstanding difficulties.

South Africa

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to monitor and secure compliance with the United Nations Organisation's ban on arms exports to South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Nations arms embargo is implemented in the United Kingdom by means of the Exports of Goods (Control) Order 1985 (as amended). Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is responsible for implementing the control. Any alleged breaches are fully investigated and, where appropriate, prosecutions follow.

Freedom of Worship (Soviet Union)

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the level of compliance by the Soviet Union with those provisions of the Helsinki final act relating to freedom of worship.

Mr. Rifkind: Despite its United Nations and Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe commitments, the Soviet Union does not permit freedom of religion and belief as we know it. Significant numbers of Soviet citizens do attend religious services, but the Council of Religious Affairs maintains tight controls through the requirement to register a congregation and through controls on the printing and distribution of prayer books, and so on. Unofficial worshippers suffer

discrimination and harassment and there have been several cases in which individuals who persist in the face of official discouragement have been imprisoned.

Hungary (Visas)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the response to the proposal by the Hungarian Government for abolition of visa requirements between Hungary and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Hungarian Government have made no proposal for the abolition of a visa requirement.

Appropriation Accounts (Grant)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the specific purpose of the grant of £1,000 in 1984-85 under class II, Vote 2, section B3 of his Department's appropriation accounts, entitled "Palestine".

Mr. Eggar: The payments were for replacement artificial limbs for pensioners of the former Palestine Government and arise because on termination of the mandate for Palestine in 1948 certain liabilities of the former Palestine Government fell to Her Majesty's Government.

DEFENCE

Capital Construction Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the gross capital construction investment on defence, as defined by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87, expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Cash	*1984-85 prices**
1971-72†	60	263
1975-76	146	370
1980-81	283	364
1984-85	603	603
1985-86	750	714

* Cash figures have been converted to 1984-85 prices using the GDP (market prices) deflator.

† Information is not available prior to 1971-72.

Provision for 1986-87 is not currently available.

PRIME MINISTER

British War Widows and Associates (Correspondence)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what reply she is sending to the letter sent to her on 2 December by the honorary president/secretary of British War Widows and Associates; and if she will seek Mrs. Strange's agreement to publish the exchange of correspondence in the *Official Report*.

The Prime Minister: My office will be replying to the honorary president/secretary of British War Widows and Associates on my behalf shortly. It is not my practice to publish correspondence sent to me by members of the public.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency Year

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what degree of interest has been shown by private companies in energy efficiency year since its launch; and what steps they are taking to support this campaign.

Mr. David Hunt: In the short time since Energy Efficiency Year was announced, private companies have shown a substantial level of interest. Over 170 events have already been planned by individual private sector organisations or companies acting together through their trade or professional associations. This is in addition to the substantial number of events being run by my Department, the nationalised fuel industries, universities, local authorities and chambers of commerce. As planning for the year progresses, we would expect private companies to account for an increasing proportion of events. We also expect the breakfast briefing sessions planned during the year to receive the same high level of support from private companies as the original series which finished in May 1985.

Radioactive Material (Reprocessing)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the percentage of the total amount of radioactive material reprocessed in the B204 plant at Sellafield that arises from electricity board reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: Less than 1 per cent.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list for each year snce the B205 chemical separation plant at Windscale/Sellafield came into operation *(a)* the weight of plutonium separated from the spent nuclear fuel arising from electricity board reactors and *(b)* the tonnage of civil spent nuclear fuel processed.

Mr. Goodlad: The total weight of plutonium derived from the boards' reactors cannot be given for national security reasons as explained in note *(g)* to the answer given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 23 July 1985 at column *473* and by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) on 9 March 1983 at column *401*. However, plutonium production figures such as those given in the answer on 23 July have been provided in each year since 1981.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 May 1977 at column *626* for the tonnages of spent fuel reprocessed in B205. This covered the position from 1970-71 to the end of the financial year 1976-77. The figures for subsequent years are:

Year	Tonnes uranium (TeU)
1977-78	867
1978-79	722
1979-80	858
1980-81	888
1981-82	975
1982-83	1,024
1983-84	1,040
1984-85	781

Information about the tonnages of spent fuel reprocessed in the years up to 1970-71 cannot be disclosed for he reasons given in the reply to the hon. Member for Livingston on 12 May 1983 at columns *377-78*.

Fast Reactor Programme

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many employees are currently engaged by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on the fast reactor programme.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) that as at 31 August this year some 2,300 staff were employed at Dounreay, their principal centre for fast reactor development.

Within the authority overall, in terms of qualified scientific and engineering staff, 715 man-years of effort will be deployed on the fast reactor programme in 1985-86 at Dounreay and at other sites. In addition, more junior technical and other ancillary staff provide support to this and to other UKAEA programmes at these locations.

EMPLOYMENT

Graduates (Industrial Training)

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Paymaster General if he will give details of Her Majesty's Government's measures or proposed measures to help and encourage the training of graduates in private industry.

Mr. Trippier: It is primarily the responsibility of employers to provide suitable training for their graduate employees. As part of the adult training campaign, the Government are encouraging employers to recognise the importance of investing in training to improve the skills of their work force at all levels, including graduates. In addition, employees may benefit from the pump-priming training grants available to industry through the Manpower Services Commission, and from the commission's development programmes. Measures of particular relevance to graduates are the national priority skills scheme, under which support is provided to a number of industrial training organisations to help meet graduate level key skill needs in their industries; the graduate gateway programme which encourages new graduates to consider working in new businesses and owners of small business to consider recruiting graduates; and the management development programme, the aim of which is to develop improved methods of management training and to promote the spread of good practice.

Earnings

Mr. McTaggart asked the Paymaster General what were the average gross male industrial earnings in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest figures for the United Kingdom are as follows:

Average gross weekly earnings (£) of full-time adult male employees in manufacturing industry†*

April	Aged 21 and over	On adult rates
1980	124·1	—
1981	136·9	—
1982	152·3	—
1983	162·9	160·8
1984	—	176·5

Source: New Earnings Survey: Department of Employment, Department of Economic Development (Northern Ireland).

Notes:

* Working a full week.

† Orders III to XIX of Standard Industrial Classification, 1968, for 1980 to 1982, and divisions 2 to 4 of Standard Industrial Classification, 1980 for 1983 to 1984.

Figures for April 1985 for the United Kingdom are not yet available, although figures for Great Britain are published in table 5.6 of *Employment Gazette*, November 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Wages Inspectors

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many of the wages inspectors currently employed are of ethnic origin.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not currently available. All staff are appointed on the basis of their overall suitability irrespective of ethnic minority origin.

Lambeth

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General how many people in Lambeth are employed on special employment and training measures in Lambeth, identifying the numbers in respect of each separate employment or training scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Some 2,000 people were covered by the employment and training measures in Lambeth at the end of November. Because of the various bases on which local information is collated, an unknown proportion will be in areas outside the borough of Lambeth. The numbers in respect of each scheme are as follows:

	Number
Community Industry	108
Community Programme	289
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	1,364
Job Release Schemes	165
Young Workers Schemes	57

Textiles and Clothing

Mr. James Lamond asked the Paymaster General what funds have been made available from the European Community social fund for the training of workers and former workers in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The social fund has made the following allocations of funds for the training of workers and former workers in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries:

Year	Amount £
1977	2,756,753
1978	5,036,766
1979	1,922,296
1980	1,201,469
1981	1,960,891
1982	3,138,630
1983	3,761,840

With the introduction in 1984 of new social fund rules, the separate budgets for textile and clothing workers and for various other categories were abolished from 1984. The information is therefore not available in the form requested.

Business Accounts (Delayed Settlement)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General when he expects to publish a leaflet setting out practical advice for small firms affected through the delayed payment of accounts by larger firms.

Mr. Trippier: We are aiming to issue practical guidance on this subject early in 1986. It is intended to help purchasing and supplying organisations in the public and private sectors.

Ault and Wiborg Paint Factory (Safety)

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column 677, he will specify the nature of the safety improvements being carried out at the Ault and Wiborg paint factory at Perivale; and when the work is expected to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The works being carried out are extensive modifications to the bulk storage facilities and improvements to the distribution system for highly flammable liquids in the factory. The work is due to be completed by the end of 1985.

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what have been the numbers on special employment measures in each of the last six months.

Mr. Alan Clark: Numbers on the employment and training measures were as follows:

Month in 1985	Number
May	587,000
June	600,000
July	630,000
August	635,000
September	671,000
October	675,000

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General if he will provide a breakdown of the number of youth training scheme trainees in the Leeds metropolitan district council area on *(a)* mode A courses and *(b)* mode B courses, by ethnic group.

Mr. Trippier: The following table shows the number of young people in training on the youth training scheme on 31 October 1985 in the Leeds metropolitan district council area, according to the mode of training and ethnic origin:

In-training on 31 October 1985

Ethnic origin	Mode A	Mode B
White	2,763	994
Black/African/Caribbean descent	43	88
Indian sub-continent descent	40	49
Others	22	14
Total	2,868	1,145

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General if he will provide the number and percentage of youth training scheme trainees in the Leeds metropolitan district council area on *(a)* mode A courses and *(b)* mode B courses who leave during the first three months of the course.

Mr. Trippier: Of the young people who joined the youth training scheme in Leeds metropolitan district during the financial year 1984-85, 681 mode A trainees (19 per cent.) and 518 mode B trainees (31 per cent.) left during the first three months of their course. These figures must be treated with caution as they will include young people who may have joined and/or left the scheme more than once during the period.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many loans have been made under the small firms loan guarantee scheme in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: The table shows the number of guarantees issued in each financial year since 1981.

Financial year	Number issued
1981-82	3,351
1982-83	6,045
1983-84	4,890
1984-85	2,084
1985-86*	365

* 31 October 1985.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what has been the value of the guarantee called in under the small firms loan guarantee scheme in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: The table lists the values of guarantees called in each financial year since 1981.

Financial year	Value £ million
1981-82	0·188
1982-83	14·830
1983-84	34·501
1984-85	42·371
1985-86*	25·72

* To date.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many guarantees called in under the small firms loan guarantee scheme have been the subject of criminal investigation.

Mr. Trippier: The investigation of crime is a matter for the police. Loans covered by the guarantee scheme are made to small firms by banks and other financial

institutions, which are entitled to claim under a guarantee following default by the borrower. No claim by a lender under a guarantee has been the subject of a police investigation. Police inquiries into the affairs of a borrower or associated persons have occasionally come to my Department's notice.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates

Mr. John Fraser asked the Attorney-General (1) if he will provide a breakdown of the political opinions of all magistrates appointed to benches in Greater London in each of the last five years;

(2) how many justices of the peace served for more than eight years after their appointment in each of the last five years.

The Solicitor-General: The information required could not be ascertained except at undue cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young Detainees

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people under 18 years of age were in detention centres at the latest available date; how many were in youth custody; and what was the average cost of a detention centre place and a youth custody place, respectively, at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, on 30 September 1985 there were about 690 persons aged under 18 in detention centres, about 1,140 in closed youth custody centres and 280 in open youth custody centres. In addition, about 250 youth custody trainees aged under 18 were being held in prisons and remand centres. The estimated average weekly cost per inmate for 1984-85 was £334 for detention centres, £260 for closed youth custody centres and £294 for open youth custody centres.

Disabled Persons (Prison Sentences)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many registered disabled persons have been sentenced to prison during the last six years for *(a)* theft and *(b)* refusal to pay fines.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available.

Youth Detention Centres and Prisons (Officers)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have been brought to his attention concerning alleged assaults by officers on inmates in youth detention centres and prisons; and what action he has taken as a result of such complaints.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of allegations are not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. All allegations of assaults by officers on inmates in prison department establishments are investigated, at the appropriate level and whenever a criminal offence may have been committed the matter is referred to the police.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers in youth detention centres and prisons have been suspended from duty or dismissed during the last five years; and what were the reasons for their suspension or dismissal.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1 January 1981, nine officers serving in prison department young offender estalishments have been dismissed (five following convictions for criminal offences; four for internal disciplinary reasons) and 23 suspended for a range of managerial reasons.

Crime Statistics

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many robberies and burglaries took place in Lambeth district in 1984; and how this compares with the number in 1979.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information available is as given in the following table. It is not possible to specify all the robberies and burglaries that took place since information is only available on those recorded by the police. Figures for 1979 are not directly comparable with those for 1984 because of changes made by new counting rules which were introduced at the beginning of 1980. For this reason, figures are given for 1980 instead of 1979.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in "L" District (Lambeth) of the Metropolitan Police District

	Offences recorded in:		*Percentage change*
	1984	*1980*	*1980-84*
Robbery	2,015	870	+132
Burglary and going equipped for stealing	10,533	6,640	+59

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners sentenced to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure before 1955 are still so detained.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, on 30 September 1985 two persons were detained during Her Majesty's pleasure in a prison department establishment in England and Wales having been sentenced before 1955. Both had been recalled following release on licence.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners convicted for murder in each year from 1970 to 1977 have since been released from prison; and what was the length of sentence served for each prisoner released.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted murderers released from prison since 1975 have committed murder a second time; and what was the average sentence served for the first offence.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, four sentenced murderers released from prison department establishments in England and Wales since 1975 have been sentenced for further murders committed following release. The average time they spent under sentence in prison department establishments in England and Wales for the first murder was about twelve and a half years.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been sentenced to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure in each year since 1970.

Mr. Mellor: The information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary

Tables": for 1983 and 1984 in volume 2, table S2.1(A) under offence classification 1 (murder) in column (24); and for earlier years in table S2.1(a)(i).

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convictions for manslaughter occurred for each year between 1964 and 1985, resulting in the deaths of children *(a)* under five years, *(b)* aged five years to 10 years and *(c)* aged 11 to 16 years; and what was the average sentence served;

(2) how many children *(a)* aged under five years, *(b)* aged five years to 10 years and *(c)* aged 11 to 16 years have been murdered in each year since 1965.

Mr. Mellor: Information on offences of homicide by age of victim is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales": in table 4.6 of the issue for 1984 (Cmnd. 9621) and in the corresponding tables for earlier years. For victims aged under 16, the available information on convictions for murder and manslaughter is given in the following two tables. Provision of corresponding details for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

TABLE 1

Offences currently recorded as homicide and outcome of proceedings for suspects of victims aged under 16 years England and Wales*

Year and age of victim	*Total victims*	*Total suspects*	*Outcome of proceedings for suspects Convicted of homicide*					*Not convicted of homicide†*	*Not indicted‡*	*Awaiting trial*
			Total	*Murder*	*Section 2 manslaughter*	*Other manslaughter*	*Infanticide*			
1982										
0- 4	55	49	40	3	14	17	6	—	9	—
5-10	13	10	6	2	4	—	—	—	4	—
11-15	22	22	20	12	6	2	—	—	2	—
under 16	90	‖ 78	64	17	22	19	6	—	14	—
1983										
0- 4	50	56	51	[redacted]	9	24	10	1	4	—
5-10	7	6	5	3	1	1	—	—	1	—
11-15	9	8	6	4	1	1	—	—	2	—
under 16	75	70	62	15	11	26	10	1	7	—
1984										
0- 4	54	49	26	2	9	13	2	1	9	13
5-10	17	12	7	2	4	1	—	1	3	1
11-15	15	16	13	2	2	9	—	—	2	1
under 16	86	‖ 74	43	6	13	22	2	2	14	15

* As at 1 June.

† Unfit to plead, not guilty by reason of insanity, acquitted.

‡ Suicide, no proceedings eg on advice of DPP.

‖ The totals for individual age groups may not sum to the overall total because some suspects may have been responsible for homicides of victims in more than one age group.

TABLE 2

Suspects convicted of homicide of victims aged under 16 by type of homicide and sentence England and Wales 1984

Age of victim	*Convicted of*	*Sentence*							
		Total	*Immediate imprisonment‡*				*Hospital/ Restriction order*	*Hospital order*	*Probation*
			Life†	*Over four years up to 10 years*	*Four years or under*	*Detention centre*			
0-4	Murder	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Section 2 manslaughter	9	—	2	1	—	2	2	2
	Other manslaughter	13	—	5	8	—	—	—	—
	Infanticide	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
5-10	Murder	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Section 2 manslaughter	4	—	2	—	—	2	—	—
	Other manslaughter	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
11-15	Murder	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Section 2 manslaughter	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
	Other manslaughter	9	—	5	2	2	—	—	—
Under 16‖	Murder	6	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Section 2 manslaughter	13	—	4	1	—	3	2	3
	Other manslaughter	22	—	10	10	2	—	—	—
	Infanticide	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1

* As at 1 June 1985.
† Including detention under section 53(1) Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and custody for life.
‡ Including detention under section 53(2) Children and Young Persons Act 1933, partly suspended sentence and youth custody.
¶ The totals for individual age groups may not sum to the overall total because some suspects may have been responsible for homicides of victims in more than one age group.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were sentenced to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure for each year between 1955 and 1970; how many have sought a review of their sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested on those sentenced to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Of the 48 so sentenced in the years 1955 to 1970, one prisoner sentenced in 1965, one sentenced in 1968 and one sentenced in 1969 were still in prison department establishments on 30 September 1985. Statistics of how many such prisoners have sought a review of their sentences by way of an appeal or otherwise are not readily available.

City Fraud Squad

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied that the present strength of the city fraud squad is adequate to deal with impending fraud investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The commissioner's commitment to combating fraud is demonstrated by the contribution of 63 detective officers of his force's establishment to the Metropolitan and City company fraud branch. The deployment of additional officers to fraud duties from within the City and Metropolitan forces is a matter for the commissioners.

Keith Lionel Jones

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that Keith Lionel Jones, L37780, a remand prisoner at Pentonville prison is receiving the medical treatment he requires.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. Mr. Jones has been receiving treatment at Pentonville and arrangements are being made for him to be seen by an outside specialist.

Remanded Persons (Court Hearings)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females remanded in custody awaiting trial were not produced at their court hearings at the due date due to shortage of prison staffs in the metropolitan area in each of the months of 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available centrally and could only be collected at disproportionate cost.

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the gross capital investment in (i) prisons, (ii) police stations and (iii) courts in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87, expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Hurd: I set out information about the services for which I am responsible:

£ thousands

	1970-71	*1975-76*	*1980-81*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Prisons						
(a) in cash terms	8,291	31,791	33,571	84,212	105,485	126,611
(b) at 1984-85 prices	40,022	80,953	43,193	84,212	100,461	115,390
Police						
(a) in cash terms	23,858	57,616	61,100	95,202	128,653	116,075
(b) at 1984-85 prices	115,168	146,713	78,613	95,202	122,526	105,787
Magistrates' courts						
(a) in cash terms	6,227	13,406	9,120	13,982	20,473	35,541
(b) at 1984-85 prices	30,058	34,137	11,734	13,982	19,499	32,391

For the years to 1984-85 the figures reflect gross outturn, for 1985-86 the forecast of gross outturn and for 1986-87 the planned gross provision. The totals cover acquisition of land and buildings, construction including staff housing, and vehicles, plant and machinery.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the basic salary, *(b)* average earnings, *(c)* the value of fringe benefits and *(d)* average overtime for each rank in the Metropolitan police force in each year since 1979; and if he will give the percentage rise for police officers by rank using 1980 wage levels as the base line.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Bob Astles

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the conditions on which Mr. Bob Astles has been granted entry into the United Kingdom; for what length of time; whether any restrictions will apply whilst he remains in the United Kingdom, and if he has applied for his British nationality to be reinstated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We agreed to the admission of Mr. Astles to the United Kingdom because he is entitled to, and has applied for, registration as a British citizen under section 10(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981, and the Home Secretary has no discretion to refuse such an application. He travelled to this country on a declaration of identity issued by our high commission in Kampala. He was admitted for three months in the first instance, without other restrictions.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Diligence

48. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what provision he is making for consultations on the Scottish Law Commission report on diligence.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: A consultation paper was issued by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate on 14 November inviting comments on the report from a number of bodies and individuals who were thought to have an interest in the proposed reforms.

Copies of the consultation paper are available in the Library.

High Court (Work Load)

49. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how much the work load of the High Court has increased in each of the last five years, giving figures for each year.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The work load of the High Court breaks down into several categories and figures for each are given in the table. the percentage increase for each category in each year is given as shown and the percentage increase over the whole period is given in the last column.

Category	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*Percentage Increase 1985 over 1981*
1. Solemn Appeals	398	639	576	592	‡550	+38
2. Summary Appeals	717	940	1,067	1,180	‡1,085	+51
3. Bail Appeals	1,255	1,322	1,429	1,622	‖1,723	+37
4. Indictments served under S.102 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975	*n.a	53	84	85	‖110	+108
5. Remits from Sheriff Court†	81	96	62	36	‖49	−39
6. Cases set down for trial in High Court	377	462	432	545	828	+120

Notes

* Not applicable because prior to 1982 the accelerated procedure under s.102 was not available in the High Court.

† These figures are affected by the fact that after 1982 the s.102 procedure became available in the High Court. A more realistic figure can be obtained by adding categories 4 and 5 together.

‡ These figures are to 31 October. Hence the percentage increase is based on a comparison of a ten-month period with a year, and will increase when the figures for November and December are known.

‖ These figures are to 30 November. Hence the percentage increase is based on a comparison of an 11 month period with a year and will increase when the fugures for December are known.

Drunken Driving

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many cases are currently being pursued by procurators fiscal relating to alleged offences of drunken driving; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Statistics recording the information sought by the hon. Member are not kept. However, provisional figures for 1984 indicate that of 14,976 offences recorded, 14,296 were prosecuted and 13,556 were successfully proved, representing a conviction rate in excess of 90 per cent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table to indicate by how much thresholds could be raised on a revenue-neutral basis if a new band of income tax were introduced at 35 per cent. on taxable incomes of *(a)* £6,000, *(b)* £8,000 and *(c)* £10,000.

Mr. Moore: By about 8 per cent., 5 per cent. and 3 per cent. respectively in 1986-87 over and above the indexation of allowances and thresholds illustrated in the Autumn Statement 1985. These estimates assume that the 35 per cent. rate would apply to taxable income between the stated levels and the indexed 40 per cent. threshold of £17,100.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many customs officers were employed in drug detection duties over the past 12 months; and what number he estimates will be so engaged over the forthcoming year;

(2) what steps he is taking to see that customs officers have adequate capital equipment, such as X-ray machines, to assist in the detection of drug imports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Departmental Staffs

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff-in-post in central Government Departments at 1 October.

Mr. MacGregor: At 1 October 1985 there were 595,764 staff-in-post — 495,981 non-industrials and 99,783 industrials.

EC (Budget Contributions)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the net contribution paid by Britain to the EEC in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total EEC budget.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 December 1985]: The figures requested are as follows:

Year	**Cash*	*Constant 1985 prices*	†*Per cent. of Community budget*
1979	947	1,571	10·2
1980	706	977	7·3
1981	397	491	4·0
1982	606	698	5·3
1983	647	711	4·5
1984	656	689	4·1
1985	1,212	1,212	7·2

* United Kingdom showing payments to the total Community budget on a cash flow basis. Budget refunds and abatements are credited to the year in which they are paid.

† Percentage of payments appropriations in Community budget for year in question. Figures for 1981-85 calculated from sterling figures in 1984 and 1985 statements on Community budget (Cmnds. 9174 and 9633). Figures for 1979 derived from budget figures converted at rate of £1=1·55 ecu, and those for 1980 from budget figures converted at £1=1·67 ecu.

Inland Revenue (Enforcement Powers)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish his consultation document on the enforcement powers of the Inland Revenue; and if it remains his intention to include provisions on those matters in the Finance Bill 1986.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *542*]: The Keith committee identified a need to modernise the powers and rights which regulate the day-to-day working relationship between the Inland Revenue, taxpayers and tax advisers. These matters have been the subject of detailed consultation with a number of interested parties over recent months. Although good progress has been made, there remain a number of points which require further examination and the Inland Revenue has therefore been authorised to continue its consultations for a further period. Accordingly, the Government now hope during 1986 to publish draft clauses, representing their conclusions, with a view to legislation in 1987.

The Inland Revenue will also be continuing, for a further period, its consultations on the proposals made in volume 3 of the report.

WALES

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the gross capital investment in (i) schools and (ii) higher and further education in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices;

(2) what was the gross capital investment in (i) trunk roads and (ii) local roads in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices;

(3) what was the gross capital investment in (i) housing and (ii) the local environmental services in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices;

(4) what was the gross capital investment in hospital services in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Gross public sector capital expenditure in Wales for the services requested is estimated to be as follows:

£ million

	1970-71	*1975-76*	*1980-81*	**1984-85*	†*1985-86*	‡*1986-87*
Trunk roads and motorways						
cash terms	15	45	89	93	89	105
1984-85 prices	71	114	114	93	85	95
Local roads						
cash terms	10	24	51	55	67	65
1984-85 prices	48	62	66	55	63	59
Housing						
cash terms	39	144	145	217	186	201
1984-85 prices	191	366	187	217	178	183
Local Environment Services						
cash terms	8	30	59	62	80	98
1984-85 prices	36	77	81	77	93	89
Schools						
cash terms	—	26	26	26	22	27
1984-85 prices	—	65	33	26	21	25
Further Education						
cash terms	—	4	8	8	7	9
1984-85 prices	—	9	10	8	7	9

	1970-71	1975-76	1980-81	*1984-85	†1985-86	‡1986-87
Hospital Services						
cash terms	9	23	33	52	54	50
1984-85 prices	44	59	42	52	51	46

* Provisional.
† Estimated.
‡ Planned.
‖ Including the urban programme.

The sums shown for 1980-81 and onwards are consistent with those which will underlie the forthcoming White Paper on public expenditure.

The figures shown at 1984-85 prices have been derived by the application of the GDP market price deflators.

On account of changes in definition, the figures for the years before 1980-81 may not be strictly comparable in every case.

The 1970-71 figures for schools and further education are not readily available. The education service in Wales did not then come within my responsibility.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Consolidation Measures

Mr. White asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the consolidation measures Her Majesty's Government propose to introduce during the coming Session.

The Solicitor-General: I have been asked to reply.

A Bill dealing with agricultural holdings in England and Wales was introduced in another place on 3 December. Bills relating to sea fisheries, insolvency and winding up, opticians and parliamentary constituencies are being prepared with a view to introduction this Session, and it is hoped it may prove possible to prepare one or two others.

TRANSPORT

Advertising

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Ridley: The advertising agencies appointed to handle campaigns involving communication of information on subjects for which my Department is responsible to Parliament over the past five years, plus the subject of each capaign and how much was spent on each, was as follows:

Agency	Campaign	Expenditure £
	1980-81	
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Pelican Crossings	215,351
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Car Sharing Schemes	102,450
Doyle Dané Bernbach	Fuel Consumption Test Results	193
Ogilvy Benson & Mather	Pedestrian Road Safety	1,754,539
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Public Participation Exhibitions	15,264
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Motor Cycle Safety	855,026
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Pedal Cycle Safety	54,148
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Drink and Drive	1,589,289
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Seat Belt Wearing	198,101
	1981-82	
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Motor Cycle Learner Riders	46,259
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Vehicle Licence Renewal	218,221
Ogilvy Benson & Mather	Pedestrian Road Safety	1,626,607
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Fuel Consumption Test Results	1,102
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Seat Belt Wearing	1,338,070
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Drink and Drive	1,133,785
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Pedal Cycle Safety	276,222
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Public Participation Exhibitions	11,025
	1982-83	
Kingsway Media	Rail Strike: Parking arrangements	16,925
Ogilvy and Mather	Pedestrian Road Safety	144,910
Ogilvy and Mather	Child Pedestrian Road Safety	1,040,347
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Road Safety (General)	1,903
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Motorcycle Safety	97,278
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Seat Belt Wearing	478,425
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Pedal Cycle Safety	148,329
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Drink and Drive	1,183,048
Leo Burnett	Rail Strike: Parking arrangements	2,654
	1983-84	
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Motor Cycle Safety (Training)	98,526

Agency	*Campaign*	*Expenditure* £
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Motor Cycle Safety (Training)	1,434,696
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Regulations—Tyre Treads	256
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Regulations—Bottle Gas in Caravans	271
Ogilvy and Mather	Pedestrian Road Safety	1,816,939
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Fuel Consumption Test Results	290
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Drink and Drive	895,610
JPF Sporting Advertising Limited	Drink and Drive	15,601
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Public Participation Exhibitions	9,038
Leo Burnett	DVLC—Vehicle Excise Duty	22,117
Wasey Campbell Ewald	Pedal Cycle Safety	832,207
Dorlands	DVLC—Vehicle Excise Duty	4,755
Dorlands	Vehicle Licence Log Books	104,108
	1984-85	
Davidson Pearce	Drink and Drive	818,058
Davidson Pearce	Motor Cycle Safety	112,434
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Public Participation Exhibitions	44,370
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Fuel Consumption Test Results	979
Ogilvy and Mather	Child Pedestrian Road Safety	1,075,918
Lowe Howard Spink Campbell Ewald	Pedal Cycle Safety	75,990
Portland Outdoor	Pedal Cycle Safety	810,840
Dorlands	DVLC Vehicle Excise Duty	*58,355
Leo Burnett	DVLC Vehicle Excise Duty	*41,986

* Funded by the Post Office.

The figures are available for the past five years only. To go back further would involve disproportionate costs.

National Bus Company

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any discussions with the National Bus Company about reallocation of capital resources consequent upon implementation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I have had a number of discussions with the National Bus Company on the restructuring of its operations to prepare for deregulation and privatisation.

M1

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport why there are at present no plans for additional lanes or carriageways on the M1.

Mrs. Chalker: I am awaiting the outcome of the wider review of motorway capacity announced in "National Roads England 1985" to establish whether there is a need for any additional capacity on the M1.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the addition of separate outer lanes for short-distance traffic on the M1 northwards from the M25 to junction 10; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: A scheme to widen the M1 between junctions 5 and 8, at some points to four lanes, was completed in November 1983. The three-lane southbound carriageway between junctions 6A (with M25) and 7 (with M10) was built with overbridges wide enough to accommodate a fourth lane if one proves necessary in the future. The Department has made no assessment of the effect of further widening, but the carrying capacity of the M1 is currently under review.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made of ways of increasing the capacity of the M1 between the M25 and Milton Keynes.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department has begun a national review of motorway capacity which includes the M1. The study will identify stretches of motorway that may need relief or widening by the end of the century.

Trunk Road Schemes

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what trunk road schemes are under study or in preparation along the M1/A5 corridor between the M25 and M45.

Mrs. Chalker: Bypasses for traffic on the A5 through Dunstable in Bedfordshire and Little Brickhill in Buckinghamshire were added to the trunk road programme in June 1985. I expect to appoint design agents within the next few weeks.

A5 (Milton Keynes)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the average daily traffic flow and the maximum design flow on the A5 diversion, Milton Keynes.

Mrs. Chalker: The most recent survey, taken in 1984, showed that on average about 16,000 vehicles a day were then using the A5 diversion through Milton Keynes. A road of this standard would normally be expected to cope satisfactorily with 30,000 vehicles per day.

Noise Insulation

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to update the noise insulation regulations to deal with the position of dwellings adjacent to highways which have not been improved since 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are considering with other Departments the possibility of selective changes in the

present arrangements for providing insulation against increased traffic noise associated with the road schemes of highway authorities. I cannot, however, encourage the hope of any general retrospective provision for unimproved roads in existence before the cut off date of the current noise insulation regulations.

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the gross capital investment in (i) trunk roads and (ii) local roads in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87, expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mrs. Chalker: The 1984-85 price base is not yet available for trunk roads. All figures have been provided therefore at 1983-84 prices. Future years plans are shown only in cash.

Trunk Roads Capital (Gross)

	Cash *£ million*	*1983-84 Prices* *£ million*
1970-71	234	N/A
1975-76	408	904
1980-81	479	503
1984-85	729	*712
1985-86	†764	*712
1986-87	‡832	—

* Estimated
† Provision
‡ Planned

Local Roads Capital (Gross)

	Cash *£ million*	*1983-84 Prices* *£ million*
1970-71	206	N/A
1975-76	274	650
1980-81	427	427
1984-85	*526	*511
1985-86	*511	*472
1986-87	†556	—

* Estimated
† Planned

Bus and Coach Safety

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been conducted by or for his Department into the potential benefit to the safety of bus and coach passengers involved in accidents of requiring buses and coaches to be constructed with roll over bars in the roof structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Research undertaken for my Department by the Cranfield Institute of Technology and the Motor Industry Research Association has been a major input into a new European standard on coach roof strength. We will shortly be publishing formal proposals to require new coaches to meet this and other safety requirements.

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents to buses and coaches in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, involved the rolling-over of the vehicles.

Mrs. Chalker: The number of buses and coaches which overturned after accidents in Great Britain in 1982, 1983 and 1984 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982	19
1983	20
1984	12

Calder Valley Motorway

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive and publish the consultant's report on the linking of the existing Calder Valley motorway to the M61 and M6 in Lancashire.

Mrs. Chalker: I expect to receive the consultant's report later this month and to make an announcement in the spring.

Helicopters (Offshore Diversions)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the CAA has reached any conclusions about the use of offshore diversions for helicopters?

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to the reply*, 10 December 1985]: The Civil Aviation Authority has informed me that it has not yet reached a conclusion about the use of offshore diversions for helicopters. An analysis of the total risk involved in the use of offshore diversions is being undertaken and should be complete early in 1986.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Tricinosis

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has given any advice or undertakings to horse slaughterers who are engaged in the export trade to France about the tests for tricinosis required since 12 November.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department has issued advice to exporters about the certification and testing arrangements required to meet the additional import requirements introduced by the French authorities. I have undertaken to relieve the industry of the cost of carrying out the examinations for trichinae. The EC Commission, at our request and that of other member states, are considering the validity of the French measures.

Agriculture (Long-term Planning)

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has within his Department a section which specialises in long-term strategic planning for the agriculture industry.

Mr. Jopling: My Department does not currently have a specific section which specialises in long-term planning for the agricultural industry. Many staff in many parts of the Department are regularly involved in studying the trends and prospects in agriculture and in the other industries with which we are concerned, taking into account wider aspects including the rural economy, consumers and the environment.

Aspartame

Mr. Dykes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress the Food Advisory Committee is making with its review of the use of Aspartame in aqueous solutions.

Mrs. Fenner: In its report (FAC/REP/34) the Food Additives and Contaminants Committee recommended a review of intake levels of permitted sweeteners within five years of the implementation of regulations following the report. The market is continuing to develop and it is not yet appropriate for a start to be made on the review.

Market Regulation

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of expenditure in 1984-85 and 1985-86 by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and the agricultural departments on market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jopling: Details are given below of the outturn for 1984-85 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1985-86.

£ million

	Outturn 1984-85	*Latest Forecast of Outturn 1985-86*
(i) *Expenditure by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce*		
Cereals	370·5	636·0
Beef and Veal	343·2	322·2
Pigmeat	−10·6	−10·4
Sugar	83·4	83·9
Processed Products	32·8	37·0
Milk Products	251·4	363·8
Oil Seeds	49·2	120·3
Sheepmeat	113·3	95·9
Others	26·9	40·2
	1,260·1	1,688·9
(ii) *Expenditure by the Agricultural Departments*		
Milk Non-Marketing Premiums	12·6	2·4
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	27·3	28·1
Annual Premium on Ewes	76·7	173·6
	116·6	204·1
GRAND TOTAL	1,376·7	1,893·0

Expenditure includes the beef and sheepmeat variable premium schemes (net of clawback for sheepmeat and charges on beef exported and sold into intervention), the premium schemes for the non-marketing of milk and the conversion of dairy herds, suckler cow premium scheme, annual premium on ewes, refunds on imports and exports (net of levies), the butter and school milk subsidies, and the net cost of buying commodities into intervention less proceeds from sales. It also takes account of certain receipts treated as negative expenditure, namely monetary compensatory amounts levied on intra-Community trade and the co-responsibility and supplementary levies on milk producers. Of the estimated outturn for 1985-86, £1,253·4 million is expected to be financed from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund compared with £1,120·1 million in 1984-85. In addition the EAGFF contribution towards the cost of financing intervention stocks is estimated at £77·8 million for 1985-86 compared with £39·5 million in 1984-85. Some of the expenditure shown above benefits consumers and trade interests rather than United Kingdom producers.

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1984-85 and 1985-86 by the agricultural departments on agricultural grants and subsidies excluding market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jopling: Details are given below of the outturn for 1984-85 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1985-86.

	Outturn 1984-85 *£ million*	*Latest forecast of outturn 1985-86* *£ million*
Price guarantees		
Wool	−7·8	0·3
Potatoes	7·6	7·5
	−0·2	7·8
Support for capital and other improvements		
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme	93·2	71·5
Guidance Premiums	3·6	3·1
Farm Accounts	1·0	0·9
Farm Structure	0·5	0·5
Northern Ireland Agricultural Development Programme	13·4	4·9
Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme	85·1	57·9
Agriculture Improvement Regulations	—	—
Agriculture Improvement Scheme	—	—
Co-operation Grants	4·5	4·6
Others	1·6	1·6
	202·9	144·9
Support for Agriculture in special areas		
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	93·8	110·4
Additional benefit to farmers in special areas under AHDS, NIADP, AHGS, AIR and AIS	28·4	25·8

	Outturn 1984-85 £ million	*Latest forecast of outturn 1985-86* £ million
Others	7·5	6·9
	129·7	143·1
Other payments		
Milk Outgoers Scheme	5·2	9·6
Emergency relief 1985	—	16·9
	5·2	26·5
Grand total	337·6	322·3

Some of this expenditure attracts contributions from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. These are mainly received in the following year. In 1985-86 £55·3 million is expected to be received from the fund compared with £52·5 million in 1984-85.

The individual figures may not add up to the totals shown due to roundings.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Brussels on 9 and 10 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House earlier today.

Regional Land Drainage Committees

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the members, and their occupations, of each of the Regional Land Drainage Committees.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 10 December 1985]: The information requested is given below. Details of the ministerial appointees are current; those relating to local and water authority appointments are as at August 1985.

Water Authority and Regional Land Drainage Committee Members

	Occupation
ANGLIAN WATER	
1) *Appointed by Minister*	
J. L. Roughton CBE JP (Chairman)	Farmer
B. J. M. Clark	Farmer
H. A. Duffield	Farmer
W. E. Grant	Farmer
J. S. Martin CBE MA	Farmer
J. H. M. Norris	Farmer
2) *Appointed by Local Authority*	
D. R. Upchurch	Farmer
K. P. Leonard	Farmer
D. J. Fisher	Farmer
A. W. Eley	Electronics Technician
A. Bryan	Retired
F. H. Rockliffe	Farmer
J. N. R. Harker	Architect
M. M. P. Macrae (Miss)	Farmer
3) *Appointed by Water Authority*	
C. J. Groom	Secretary to Building and Civil Engineering Economic Development Committee
P. H. Tombleson	Executive Director of National Anglers council for England and Wales
NORTHUMBRIAN	
1) *Appointed by Minister*	
E. A. Wrangham MA (Chairman)	Farmer
W. J. Rogers-Coltman	Farmer
J. W. Gibson	Farmer
D. A. Howie	Farmer
Major W. K. Trotter	Farmer
J. Hall	Farmer
2) *Appointed by Local Authority*	
Councillor J. Avery	Retired
Councillor J. M. Copland (Mrs.)	Housewife
Councillor P. D. Snell	Retired
Councillor A. V. Turnbull	Retired
Councillor D. Bates	Unemployed
Councillor R. Dunn	NUM Trade Union Official
Councillor L. Hewitson	Retired
Councillor K. Nilan	Retired
Councillor A. R. Pragnell	Chartered Engineer
3) *Appointed by Water Authority*	
T. J. Brannon	Retired
Lt. Col. H. Crossman	Regional Secretary of Country Landowners Association
NORTH WEST	
1) *Appointed by Minister*	
J. B. Robinson (Chairman)	Farmer
J. S. Brentnall	Farmer
J. Gardner	Farmer
R. J. W. Slack	Farmer
Hon. W. R. F. Vane	Farmer
2) *Appointed by Local Authority*	
County Councillor E. Cowser JP	Retired Sales Supervisor
County Councillor D. M. Allen	Geography Lecturer
County Councillor P. M. Entwhistle	Farmer
County Councillor R. G. Paterson	Retired
County Councillor H. S. Petrie	Retired
County Councillor Dr. J. Taylor	Retired Medical Practitioner
County Councillor J. V. Walsh	Retired Seaman
County Councillor F. Walton	Farmer
3) *Appointed by Water Authority*	
T. A. F. Barnes	Chartered Surveyor
G. Mann	Chairman North West Water
SEVERN TRENT	
1) *Appointed by Minister*	

	Occupation
G. W. Hart OBE NDA NDD JP (Chairman)	Farmer
R. H. Cambidge	Farmer
J. R. Chamberlayne	Farmer
C. H. Crowther	Landowner/Horticulturalist
C. G. Hawthorne	Farmer
Sir J. P. Starkey, Bt.	Farmer
2) Appointed by Local Authority	
G. W. Thomas	Not known
G. T. N. Ratcliffe	Not known
E. L. Hoskin	Not known
T. F. Smith	Not known
H. Edwards	Retired Dentist
B. V. Smith	Not known
J. Besserman	Retired Local Government Officer
Vacancies (2)	
3) Appointed by Water Authority	
J. E. Anthony	Miners' Union Official
T. C. Heywood-Lonsdale	Farmer and Property Manager
SOUTHERN	
1) Appointed by Minister	
H. J. L. Harris (Chairman)	Farmer
D. G. L. Monnington	Farmer
C. D. Neame	Farmer
H. J. Richards	Farmer
T. J. Sobey	Registered grower of certified fruit stocks, Agricultural/Horticultural consultant, Riding Establishment proprietor
Vacancy	
SOUTHERN	
2) Appointed by Local Authority	
E. M. Clarke (Mrs.)	Retired
Lt. Col. G. H. Hart	—
Major T. T. Holden	Retired Head Postmaster
R. T. Millard	Retired Headmaster
M. F. Odling	Company Director and Consultant
L. G. S. Shirley	Sub-Postmaster
C. L. Tandy	Financial Business
W. H. Wheeler	Gas Board Salesman
G. Wilson	Retired Heating Engineer
3) Appointed by Water Authority	
A. Humbert	Fish Farmer and wine importer
B. R. Thorpe	Chief Executive of Southern Water and Deputy Chairman of the Board
SOUTH WEST	
1) Appointed by Minister	
G. C. Manning (Chairman)	Farmer
Lt. Col. J. A. Molesworth-St. Aubyn	Landowner
R. H. Sampson	Farmer
R. Stratton	Chartered Surveyor, Land Agent
2) Appointed by Local Authority	
J. Isaac	Farmer
M. J. Merry	Ministry of Defence Employee
E. S. Morshead	Farmer
R. K. Taylor	Retired Farmer
J. D. Walker	Farmer
H. T. Lutey	Retired Farmer
H. Northcott	Retired Farmer

	Occupation
3) Appointed by Water Authority	
S. J. Day	Company Director
D. Mitchell	Company Director
THAMES	
1) Appointed by Minister	
M. Davies JP (Chairman)	Farmer
J. J. Eyston	Farmer
J. Kinross	Farmer
R. E. L. Pile	Farmer
H. Scantlebury	Farmer
J. Venables (Mrs.)	Lecturer
G. Vigus	Farmer
J. Willmer	Farmer
2) Appointed by Local Authority	
M. Metcalf MC DL (Vice-Chairman)	Company Director
S. Turney	—
A. J. Wilcox	—
E. Wright	Company Director
One vacancy	
S. G. Cole	—
R. Fricker	—
G. Kenton	Boat Proprietor, yard and moorings
J. F. Lunnon	Farmer
F. L. Rees	Consultant
Dr. D. A. Hoyle	Horticulturalist (Retired member of academic staff, Reading University)
THAMES	
3) Appointed by Water Authority	
Mrs. J. K. Wykes BSc	Company Director
H. P. Parry FCA	Company Director
WELSH	
1) Appointed by Secretary of State for Wales	
Major Jackson	Unknown
Lt. Chase	—
J. W. Hughes	—
R. S. Jones MBE	—
M. A. Maclaggan	—
P. J. Perkins	—
W. N. Waters	—
2) Appointed by Local Authority	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Councillor D. J. Thomas	
Councillor R. T. Bartlett	—
Councillor E. E. Davies JP	—
Councillor W. W. Makin	—
Councillor G. McBride	—
Councillor J. T. H. Davies	—
Councillor D. Longden	—
Councillor F. C. Evans	—
3) Appointed by Water Authority	
J. E. Jones	—
G. O. Edwards	—
Councillor J. D. A. Thompson	—
WESSEX	
1) Appointed by Minister	
R. H. Baker (Chairman)	Farmer
S. H. Chedzoy	Farmer
J. B. Bush JP	Farmer
R. Willis	Lloyds underwriting name Farmer
2) Appointed by Local Authority	
J. R. Blizzard	Political Officer
R. G. L. Bell	Retired Factory and Export Manager
D. H. White	Engineer (Senior Planner)

	Occupation
P. W. Staples	Retired engineer overseer/ chartered engineer
L. H. Ames	Mechanical/Electrical Engineer. Professional and Technical Engineer with MOD (Navy)—Retired
C. R. Taylor	Farmer
A. G. Phillips	Owner and proprietor of Woodland Park, Brokerswood and other woodland. Company Director/Chairman of numerous concerns
3) *Appointed by Water Authority*	
R. B. Clark	Managing Director Avalon Industries, Director C. & J. Clark (Shoemakers)
R. W. Clark	Quantity Surveyor—Robin Clark Associates Chairman and Managing Director of R. W. Clark (Building Contractors) Ltd.
YORKSHIRE	
1) *Appointed by Minister*	
J. P. Coverdale (Chairman)	Farmer
J. C. Cooke	Farmer
B. R. Croft	Farmer
N. Thompson	Farmer
2) *Appointed by Local Authority*	
County Councillor V. Cliffe	Retired
County Councillor W. Cutts	Retired
County Councillor D. Helliwell	Sound Engineer
County Councillor J. Marsden	Personnel Manager NCB
County Councillor T. N. M. Stow	Farmer
County Councillor E. Tarlton (Mrs.)	Self Employed Driving Instructor
County Councillor J. Walkden	Traction and Rolling Stock Engineer
3) *Appointed by Water Authority*	
J. A. Fawcett	Managing Director of Thomas Fawcett & Sons (Malsters)
F. A. Paling	Area Surveyor and Minerals Manager NCB

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the total amount of money paid to Britain under the European Economic Community common agricultural policy in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 December 1985]: The information requested, rounded to nearest £10 million, is set out in the table:

	*United Kingdom receipts under the CAP**	*United Kingdom receipts under the CAP in real terms (1985 prices)*	*United Kingdom receipts under the CAP as a per cent. of total EC expenditure per cent.*
	£ million	*£ million*	
1979	380	640	4·1
1980	570	790	5·8
1981	670	830	6·7
1982	760	870	6·6
1983	1,090	1,190	7·6
1984	1,310	1,380	†8·2

Source:
EC Court of Auditors Reports.
EC Commission FEOGA Financial Reports.
* Source figures, expressed in mecu, converted to £ using average rate for each year.
† Percentage of final EC budget; outturn figures n/a.

Field Drainage

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food whether the field drainage design service, including conservation advice, will be available to the non-agricultural sector, such as sporting interests.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *484*]: As part of the agricultural services scheme the field drainage design scheme is not available to the non-agricultural sector.

ENVIRONMENT

Water

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to publish the Watts report on water metering;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to permit water authorities to enter into trials of universal metering provided that the trials are financed by the contracting company, repayable by the authority over not less than 10 years.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to establish compulsory water metering.

Mr. John Patten: The report of the joint study group under the chairmanship of Mr. R Watts, chairman of the Thames Water Authority, is being published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. I have placed copies in the Library.

The Government welcome the report. It presents a new view of the economic aspects of domestic water metering. Unlike earlier studies, it concludes that in some circumstances charging households by means of water metering may be cost effective.

This radically alters the options: and justifies undertaking the extensive trials which the report calls for.

We shall legislate at the earliest suitable opportunity to make progress possible. But before responding to all the recommendations in detail I intend to seek the views of water consumers and others who may be affected. I shall work out with the industry a programme of follow up action.

Public Money Allocations (Wolverhampton)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the overall identifiable allocation of public money made by the Government since 1979 to Wolverhampton (i) in total, (ii) per person, (iii) per unemployed person, (iv) per unemployed person aged 21 years and (v) per retirement pensioner.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information is given in the table.

Identifiable grants and subsidies paid to Wolverhampton district council

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(i) In total (£1 million)	60·0	73·8	65·9	68·3	87·7	90·1	95·5
(capital grants in brackets)	(0·8)	(1·1)	(1·0)	(2·3)	(0·7)	(n/a)	(n/a)
(ii) Per person	223	288	257	267	343	353	374
(iii) Per unemployed person	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,960	3,954	4,191
(iv) Per unemployed person under 20	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20,018	22,422
(v) Per person of pensionable age	1,463	1,766	1,555	1,595	2,030	2,066	2,189

Notes:

1. The figures include rate support grant, housing subsidies, housing benefit, specific revenue grants and capital grants. Capital grants are not available however for 1984-85 and 1985-86. The amounts included for capital grants in the totals for the earlier years are shown in brackets under line (i) of the table.
2. The figures included for rate support grant are affected by the change which occurred in 1981-82 when block grant and domestic rate relief grant superseded the needs, resources and domestic elements. Figures prior to 1981-82 are not on a comparable basis.
3. Up to 1982-83 the figures include rent and rate rebates paid by the DOE. The 1982-83 figures also include some housing benefits paid by the DHSS. Thereafter, all housing benefits were paid by the DHSS.
4. The figures only include grants and subsidies to the Wolverhampton district council and do not include any payments to persons, companies or other organisations within the area administered by that authority. Information on the latter is not readily available. If such payments could be included, the figures would be very much larger.
5. The figures also exclude any proportion of the grants paid to West Midlands county council which is the upper tier authority for Wolverhampton.
6. Estimates of population figures for use in calculating lines (ii) and (v) of the table were obtained from OPCS. 1984-85 figures have been used as estimates for 1985-86.
7. The figures in lines (iii) and (iv) are based on unemployment data from the Department of Employment. These are not available before 1983-84. Figures for unemployed persons under 20 have been used in place of those for persons under 21, which are not available. These can only be supplied for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the gross capital investment in (i) housing and (ii) local environmental services in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 terms.

Sir George Young: Gross capital investment in housing in the United Kingdom was as follows:

	Cash £ million	*1980 prices £ million*
1970-71	1,930	8,754
1975-76	5,011	9,369
1980-81	8,358	7,955
1984-85	12,117	8,848

Figures for 1985-86 are not yet available. There are no planning figures for 1986-87. Cost figures are calculated at 1980 prices.

Gross capital investment in local environmental services (excluding coast protection) in England is as follows:

	Cash £ million	*1984-85 prices £ million*
1970-71	194	938
1975-76	408	1,038
1980-81	664	854
1984-85	879	879
*1985-86	780	743
†1986-87	576	525

*Forecast.
†Plan.

Derelict Land

Mr. Parris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the expenditure on derelict land reclamation undertaken with the aid of grant, by West Derbyshire district council from 1980-81 to 1984-85 and on its allocation for 1985-86.

Sir George Young: Grant aided derelict land reclamation activity by West Derbyshire district council increased during the period 1980-81 to 1984-85. Reclamation expenditure by the council was £293,000 over this period. In 1985-86, about £123,000 will be spent. the major current reclamation scheme is at Butts road, Darley Dale, where land is being reclaimed for private housing. It is expected that the value of private investment on this site will be six times the expenditure on reclamation.

Chatham (Enterprise Zone)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to make an announcement about an enterprise zone in the non-historic part of the dockyard at Chatham.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am keen that the former dockyards should be regenerated by modern development bringing new jobs.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) announced in the House on 10 May 1983 that statutory invitations had been sent to certain local authorities in north-west Kent to prepare jointly a scheme for an enterprise zone in their areas. He added at that time that consideration would be given to the designation of

part of the non-historic dockyard at Chatham as an enterprise zone when it became surplus to defence requirements.

I have received a joint application from Rochester-upon-Medway city council and Gillingham borough council for such a zone. I am pleased to announce my agreement to this subject to satisfactory arrangements being agreed on the boundaries of the zone, the planning regime in the zone and the administrative arrangements to be adopted.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the shares of (i) block grant and (ii) rate support grant paid to *(a)* London, *(b)* metropolitan areas and *(c)* non-metropolitan areas at (i) budget and (ii) estimated outturn in each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 December 1985, c. *473*]: The available information is as follows:

Grant shares

	1981-82		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*	*1985-86*
	Budget	*Outturn*	*Budget*	*Outturn*	*Budget*	*Outturn*	*Budget*	*Outturn*
(i) *Block grant*								
Shire areas	55·0	55·1	55·0	54·5	54·8	54·8	54·9	53·3
Metropolitan areas	30·3	30·3	30·3	29·8	30·8	30·9	31·4	31·5
London	14·7	14·6	14·7	15·7	14·4	14·6	13·7	15·2
(ii) *Rate support grant*								
Shire areas	55·3	55·4	55·3	54·8	55·0	54·8	55·2	53·7
Metropolitan areas	29·5	29·5	29·5	29·0	30·0	30·1	30·5	30·6
London	15·2	15·1	15·2	16·2	15·0	15·1	14·3	15·7

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *297-98*, if he will explain why 101 applications for consent under the Local Government Act 1985 from the Greater London council are still outstanding after three months.

Mr. Tracey: Each application needs to be considered carefully on its merits. In at least 50 cases my right hon. Friend is awaiting further information requested from the council.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *297-98*, about outstanding requests for consent under the Local Government Act 1985, if he will explain why the figures supplied do not add up.

Mr. Tracey: Neither the hon. Member nor his hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) requested details of the number of applications outstanding for between two and three months. Accordingly, those figures were excluded from my answer.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *297-98*, if he will list each of the applications for consent under sections 91 and 92 of the Local Government Act 1985 and section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 as amended by section 93 of the 1985 Act from *(a)* Greater Manchester, *(b)* Merseyside, *(c)* South Yorkshire, *(d)* Tyne and Wear, *(e)* the West Midlands and *(f)* West Yorkshire that have been outstanding for over three months.

Mr. Tracey: The information, relating to the date of my reply to the hon. Member's question, is as follows:

Greater Manchester County Council
Consumer Advice Centre, Trafford.
Bolton Bus Station and Rochdale Transport Depot.
East Lancashire Railway.
Pennington Flash Golf Course.
Whelley Loop North.
Boothstown Basin.
Colley Hurst Road.
Burrs Mill Building.
Staly Railway.
Lime Bank Street Stage 2.
Crompton Sidings Phase 2.
Holme Lock Bridgewater Canal.
All Saints Church, Wigan.
Christ Church, Healey.
Higginbotham Farm, Chorlton.
Ellenroad Mill Engine, Milnrow.
Manchester Club, 81 King Street, Manchester.
Hindley Hall, Aspull.
Tongue Hall, Middleton.
208-210 Great Clowes Street, Salford.
81 Upper Hibbert Lane, Marple.
13-15 Great Underbank, Stockport.
447 Lower Broughton Road, Salford.
Gatley Hill House, Gatley.
Trinity Street Railway Station.
Wigan Bus Station.
Christmas Lighting Scheme.
Castle Street/Duke Street Improvement.

Merseyside County Council
None.

South Yorkshire County Council
Ground Floor Office Block, Bridge Street, Rotherham.
Highways Capital Programme.
Land adjoining Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield.
Penistone Road Statutory Undertakers works.
Rishymoor Street, Askern.
Penistone Road (Stage 1) improvement.
A628 Barnsley Road, Brierly.
Visitors Design Centre, Howell Wood Country Park.
62 Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse.

Tyne and Wear County Council
Hadrian Park Landscaping Phase 2.
C.W.S. Shirt Factory, pelaw I.I.A.
Ryton/Greenside Landscaping phases 3 and 4.
Hebburn Riverside Landscaping.

West Midlands County Council

448 Stratford Road, Sparkhill.
72 Holbrooks Road, Coventry.
Malthouse Stables, Hurst Lane, Tipton.
Sandwell Aftercare Association.

West Yorkshire County Council
Bradford Toller Land/Duckworth Lane.
Foster Square.
Leeds Hinslet Moor.
Bradford Croft Street.
Rothwell Longthorpe Lane.
Ripponden Commons Bus Turning Circle.
Morley Wellington Street.
Leeds Sheepscar Phase 2.
Elland Cromwell Bottom.
Traffic Signal Maintenance Contract No. 5.
Rail Halt—Elland Road Stadium.

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the current members of each regional and district health authority and family practitioner committee.

Mr. Hayhoe: District health authority members are appointed by regional health authorities. The information the hon. Member requires is not therefore held centrally but may be obtained from the chairman of the regional health authority concerned. A list of current members of family practitioner committees has been placed in the Library. Current members of regional health authorities are as follows:

Northern Region

Tony Brown Esq.
Michael Charlton Esq. TD JP AI Mech E
Professor Alex Crombie MB CLB FRCS
Harry Cruddace Esq. SRN RMN RNT CNS (Admin) B Ed
Dr. Alexander Dellipiani MD FRCP
Dr. Peter Dodgson OBE MSc PhD FRSC
Cllr. Mrs. Shirley Ewart MBE
Bill Fursyth Esq B Com AIB
Cllr. Timothy Kirkhope
Mrs. Barbara Payne
Cllr. Mrs. Hazel Pearson
Cllr. Mrs. Annie Pratt
Dr. Colin Waine MB BS FRCGP

Yorkshire Region

Ian Cordial Esq MA
Dr. George Crouch MB ChB FRCGP DObst RCOG
Mrs. Irene Endean SRN HV NDN
Cllr. John Greetham
Brian Hayward Esq JP
Mrs. Yvonne Jackson
Stephen Kaye Esq FCA
Cllr. William Kilgallon MA DSA
Maurice Kirk JP MA
Baroness Masham of Ilton
Arnold Moore Esq
Cllr. Eric Pickles
Dr. Julian Roberts MD FRC Psych DPM
Dipanker Sen Esq
James Walsh Esq MA
Cllr. James West

Trent Region

Dr. John Birch PhD Med SRN RNT
Cllr. Mrs. Brenda Borrett
Douglas Brown Esq
Cllr. Alfred Burton
Professor Rex Coupland MD PhD DSc FRSE
Mrs. Joan Dady
Jim Eardley JP
Cllr. David Jackson
Mrs. Rachel Kelly OBE MA
Professor Robert Kilpatrick CBE MD FRCP (Edin) FRCP
Dr. Ralph Lawrence OBE MB ChB MRCGP DMJ
Cllr. John Layden JP
Professor Donald Munro MD FRCP
John Pattison Esq BPharm MPS MIPM Dip Ed
Cllr. Harry Seddons
Dr. Peter Sewell BSc PhD MB FRCPath
Cllr. Mrs Maureen Spencer-Gregson
Michael Spungin Esq OBE MA BLitt
Cyril Urwin Esq MBE JP

East Anglian Region

Dr. Anthony Allibone MB BS DCH FRCGP
Marcus Austin Esq JP
Cllr. Brigadier Alan Breitmeyer
Edward Broadway Esq BDS FDS D'orth FRC
Professor Sir John Butterfield OBE DM FRCP
Raymond Harris Esq FSCA FMS
John Mowson Esq
Dr. Alexander Nicol MA PhD
Mrs. Jill Swindin SRN
Miss Gina Topps SRN
Roderick Travers Esq
Michael Upcroft Esq JP
Colin Walker Esq OBE
Dr. Ian Wallace MB MRCGP

North West Thames Region

Ron Brown Esq JP
Miss Patricia Fletcher SRN RCN NA(H)C
Professor Tony Glenister CBE TD PhD DSc BS
Dr Malcolm Godfrey MB BS FRCP
Harold Greenfield Esq
Cllr Mrs Joan Hanham
Frank Hobson Esq
Cllr Mrs Barbara Langstone
John McClenahan Esq PhD MA
Ahmad Mallick Esq
William Milner Esq MB BS FRCS
Mrs Joan Partridge OBE
David Rennie Esq CEng FIEE
Dr Donald Richardson MB BS MRCGP DObst RCOG
Cllr Miss Marion Shepherd MBE
Roy Snewing Esq
Michael Storey Esq
Mrs Jane Wyndham-Kaye OBE LLB
Eric Lyall Esq CBE MBIM

North East Thames Region

Cllr Mrs Sonia Anderson BA(Hons) Oxon
Richard Brew Esq CBE BA (Cantab)
Cllr Mrs Nora Dain
Cllr Mrs Jean Frost
Donald Hoodless Esq BA DPA
Dr Ian Kelsey Fry DM FRCP FRCR
Dr John Hamblin MB FRCP
Dr Silvain Josse OBE MB BS MRCS LRCP FRCGP DMJ
David Hague Esq
Mrs Frances Heidonsohn BA (Hons)
John Marks Esq MA (Cantab)
Frank Hencher Esq
Martin Easteal Esq MA (Oxon)
Rodney Bass Esq
John Quinton Esq MA FIB

South East Thames Region

Cllr Professor David Smith BDS MSc MPhil
Cllr Joe Lynch
Cllr Mrs Joan Waters
Professor Peter Higgins MB BS FRCP FRCGP
Timothy Bolland Esq CBE
Mrs Rosanne Corben

Miss Eileen White RRC TD SRN SCM NACert
Victor Brett Esq
Alex De Gelsey Esq
Cllr John Barnes MA
Dr Ronald King MD FRCP
Richard Holland Esq MA CEng MIEE
Lady Audrey Willis
Richard Hayllar Esq FCA
Alexander Robinson Esq
Professor Timothy Clark

South West Thames Region

Nigel Beard Esq BSc FRSA
Cllr Mrs Margaret Campbell SRN CMB
Major Quentin St John Carpendale MC
Cllr Mrs Diana James
Miss Ileana Macmillan
Dennis Mallam Esq ARICS MRSH
Cllr Kim Morrell
James Park Esq LLB ACMA ACIS
John Plastow Esq FIB
David Rye Esq BA SRN RMN RNT
Dr Trevor Silver MB BS FRCGP DA
Dr Gerassimos Spathis MA BM Bch MRCP DM
Cllr Edward Trevor Esq
Michael Ward Esq BA
Dr Richard West MD FRCP
Mrs Lyn Wyatt JP BSc

Wessex Region

Cllr. Dudley Keep
Cllr. Elizabeth Le Brecht
Cllr. John Wall
Professor Gordon Higginson
Pharic Gillibrand
Dr. Malcolm Tuddenham MB BS MRCS LRCP
Miss Dora Frost SRN SCM BTA
Ronald Lee Esq.
Mrs. Caroline Bond SRN
Robert Donnelly Esq.
James Foster Esq. FCMA FBM
Mrs. Joyce Perry
Major General Trevor Hart CB MB FFCM DPH DTM+H
Anthony Rees Esq.
Paul Rhodes Esq.

Oxford Region

Mrs. Elizabeth Arkell
Anthony Bilson Esq.
Cllr. John Ewart
Timothy Griffen Esq. FCA ACMA
Dr. John Holt MA MSc MD FRCP
Keith Jerrome Esq. BSc (Sociology)
Cllr. Owen Kernahan
John Morley Esq.
Dr. Rodney O'Donnell MB BCH BAO
David Poole Esq. SRN BTA Cert NEBSS
Cllr. Dr. Peter Phillips BEng PhD MICE fimm FIMine
Dr. Angus Robson MD MB BS MRCP
Cllr. Joseph Slater
Mrs. Janet Thomas
Geoffrey Weston Esq. CBE FHA

South Western Region

Capt. Michael Moreland OBE
Cllr. Mrs. Shiela Bevan
Cllr. William Graves JP
Dr. John Bowes MB BS FFA RCS
Jack Harris Esq. BEM
Thomas Ward Esq.
Mrs. Paula Bower BA
Mrs. Elizabeth Bruegger
Dr. John Gilmore MB BCh BAO FRCGP
Mrs. Margaret Maisey SRN RMN DipN RNT Btd (Hons)
Mrs. Caroline Meek JP
Professor Gordon Stirrat MA MD FROG
Raymond Heal Esq.
Dr. Richard Maxwell MA BM BCh MRCGP
Lt. Col. William McClelland TD
Phillip Deeble Esq.

West Midlands Region

Mrs. Margaret Backhouse SRN
Cllr. Francis Betteridge JP
Derek Dean Esq. SRN RMN MBIM
Cllr David Lloyd MBE
Professor Edward Marsland BDS PhD FD SRCS
Alfred Owen Esq. MA FBIM
Arnold Parkinson Esq. MA
Ragghavan Pillai Esq. JP MA
Dr. Richard Pomeroy MB BCh MRCGP BAO DObst RCOG
Dr. Neville Shinton MD FRCP FRCPath
Barry Shuttleworth Esq. JP
Cllr. Arnold Ward CBE JP
Cllr. Bob Ward
Michael Worley Esq. JP MA
Lady Jean Young JP SRN SCM
Mrs. Joan Hadley SRN SCM OBE

Mersey Region

Kenneth Atherton Esq. MEng
Cllr. Harry Bailey MIEE
Eric Bromley Esq. BA Dipp APP Psych FBPSS
Henry Clarke Esq.
Mrs. Enid Halling
Derrick Hanson Esq.
Professor Frank Harris MD M Med (Paed) FRCP (Ed)
Michael Jack Esq. BA MPhil
Robert Martin Esq. QC
Dr. Mollie McBride MB ChB MRCGP
Miss Jean Rolands RCN SCM MV QH DHSA
Cllr. Gerard Sampey
Cllr. Mrs. Kate Wood
Mrs. Rosemary Hawley BA (Hons)
Edward Sims Esq.

North Western Region

Cllr. Mrs. Patricia Case BA
Cllr. Bryan Leck JP AMA FBIM
Michael Brennan Esq. MB ChB FRCS
Dr. Simon Jenkins MB ChB FRCGP
Cllr. Mrs. Sheila Oldham JP
Ron Parkinson Esq BSc AMCT
Robert Hodd Esq. CBE BSc Dip Ed
Rodney Ward Esq. MA FCA
Dr. Satya Chatterjee OBE JP MBBS FRCP
Professor Iain Gillespie MB MSc FRCS
Mrs. Christine Harrison JP
Cllr. George MacDonald JP DL
Keith Walker Esq.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list former members of regional and district health authorities and family practitioner committees whose membership has not been renewed in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: Regional health authorities appoint members of district health authorities and, before 1 April 1985, district health authorities appointed members of family practitioner committees. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairmen of the health authorities concerned for the information he requires which is not held centrally.

The last review of regional health authority membership was in 1984. Details of members not reappointed — but excluding those who retired or resigned—in that year are as follows:

REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY FORMER MEMBERS

Northern

Mr. W. Kutub
Mr. A. McManus

Yorkshire
Councillor Mrs. R. Armitage
Dr. C. G. W. Sykes
Dr. D. P. Hullin

Trent
Mr. T. Dale
Mr. J. Radford
Miss P. Vick
Mr. J. Driver
Mr. F. Stockdale

East Anglian
Councillor F. Gales
Mrs. H. W. Sneden
Miss S. M. Wright
Councillor T. Topley

North West Thames
Mr. J. Athisayam
Mrs. S. Edwards
Mr. R. C. Morgan
Sir Malby Crofton
Mr. H. A. Greenfield
Mr. J. Lemkin
Dr. M. H. Rosen
Mr. J. Morrisey

North East Thames
Councillor J. W. Pike

South East Thames
Dr. G. Templeman CBE DL MA DCL

South West Thames
Dr. B. Meade MD FRC Path
Mr. P. Lambert ACII

Wessex
Councillor P. C. Whitelegg
A. H. G. Butler

Oxford
Councillor A. G. Wilkinson
Professor Duthie
Mr. Kempster
Mr. J. Power
Councillor C. Rayner

South Western
Mr. J. H. T. Howes
Professor J. H. Peacock
Mr. M. J. Malcolm

West Midlands
Mrs. D. McAuslan
Professor M. Brown

Mersey
Mr. D. P. Daw
Councillor Mrs. R. Dean
Mr. R. H. Hobhouse
Dr. T. L. Hobday
Mr. W. E. Leigh

North Western
Councillor N. Briggs
Mrs. C. Merry
Mrs. C. M. Pickard JP
Councillor Mrs. D. I. Carter

Binder Hamlyn Report

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to publish the Binder Hamlyn report on primary care.

Mr. Hayhoe: This is being considered in the context of the preparation and publication of the Green Paper on primary health care.

Cardiac Bypass

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to meet in full the demand for cardiac bypass operations.

Mr. Whitney: The provision of services for patients requiring cardiac bypass operations is a health authority responsibility. In January 1984 and again in January 1985 health authorities were asked to develop facilities for coronary artery surgery as a priority within the acute sector. This is one of the recognised priorities within the resources generated by authorities' cost improvement programmes.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average percentage level of mortality in the course of, or immediately following, heart bypass operations; and which district had the highest level and which district had the lowest in the last full year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: According to information provided in the United Kingdom cardiac surgery register of the Society of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons, the mortality rate in all coronary artery bypass grafts performed in the United Kingdom in 1983 was 4·8 per cent. For all open heart operations, which include valve and cogenital heart disease operations as well as coronary artery bypass grafts, the mortality rate was 7·0 per cent. Information on mortality rates in individual districts is not available centrally.

Renal Failure

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients suffering from chronic renal failure were treated in 1984; and how many were not.

Mr. Whitney: According to information supplied by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, 11,235 patients with chronic or end stage renal failure were receiving treatment in the United Kingdom at 31 December 1984. No information is available on the total number of patients with chronic renal failure who might have benefited from treatment.

Health Services Board (Membership)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make it a condition of membership of the Health Services Board that each member shall be treated only in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. Such a restriction upon an individual's freedom of choice within the United Kingdom would be quite intolerable and when abroad would be patently absurd.

Post Operative Infection

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the level of post operative infection for each health district in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to him on 20 June at column *202*. An analysis of these figures by district health authority is not available from the sample information held centrally.

NHS (Staff Pay)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the total National Health Service wage bill was paid to ancillary workers, technicians or professional workers and administrative staff, respectively, in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Whitney: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of health authorities in England:

	Ancillary Staff Per cent.	*Professional and Technical Staff* Per cent.	*Administrative and Clerical Staff* Per cent.
1978-79	21·8	9·7	12·5
1979-80	21·1	9·8	11·9
1980-81	19·1	9·5	11·6
1981-82	18·8	9·8	11·7
1982-83	18·4	10·1	11·2
1983-84	18·0	10·2	11·2
1984-85	16·5	10·6	11·4

Notes:
1. Payments to doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians and others contracted with the National Health Service to provide family practitioner services are excluded.
2. The expenses of the Dental Estimates Board and special health authorities providing National Health Service central services, for which detailed analyses of staff pay are not readily available, are also excluded.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will produce figures showing changes in real terms in expenditure, after allowing for inflation measured by the National Health Service cost deflator equivalent, to the figures given in his National Health Service annual report 1985 covered by note 3 of appendix B.

Mr. Hayhoe: The expression "real terms" refers to changes in expenditure by reference to movements in general inflation, the accepted measure for which is the GDP deflator; "real terms" cannot be applied to specific National Health Service pay and price movements.

There are in fact only a limited number of places in the report where figures for expenditure are given in real terms and these mainly relate to social services expenditure to which National Health Service pay and price movements have no relevance. The two references to National Health Service expenditure in real terms both occur on page 2 of the annual report. In the case of total National Health Service spending the equivalent figure for which the hon. Member asks is given. In the case of capital expenditure the equivalent figure to the 5·8 per cent. real terms growth in 1984-85 is 6·4 per cent.

Social Workers (Education Standards)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department issues any guidance to *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* voluntary organisations concerning minimum education standards for social workers.

Mr. Whitney: No. Qualifying courses in social work are approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, which is appointed by the Government for the purpose. It is the responsibility of employing authorities and organisations to determine whether to employ qualified social workers and in what posts, to decide what educational standards to require of unqualified staff and to provide appropriate initial and in-service training for them.

Local Authority Social Services (Registration)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to establish a statutory system of registration for social workers.

Mr. Whitney: There are no such plans. The views in the report of the working party on the role and tasks of social workers under the chairmanship of Mr. Peter Barclay, in the responses to that report and in further consultations carried out by the Department do not persuade me that at present the potential benefits of the statutory registration of social workers outweigh the possible disadvantages.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any health authority has indicated to him an intention to have cervical smears examined abroad in order to reduce backlogs in pathology laboratories.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken by a health authority to process a cervical smear through a pathology laboratory; and how this figure compares with previous years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information on which to calculate such an average is not available centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all family practitioner committees which possess a computer capable of operating a cervical screening call and re-call scheme, distinguishing between those which will carry out all other computerised functions of a family practitioner committee and those which will not.

Mr. Hayhoe: The 45 family practitioner committees listed have computers capable of operating a cervical screening call and recall scheme, of which 35 (above the line) are equipped with computers capable of other functions, primarily patient registration and certain finance tasks.

Family Practitioner Committee
Barnsley
Derbyshire
Salford
Avon
Sefton
Buckinghamshire
Northampton
Gloucestershire
Dorset
Calderdale
Liverpool
Devon
Northumberland

Croydon
Sandwell
Cleveland
Enfield and Haringey
Nottingham
Warwickshire
Hillingdon
Coventry
Hereford and Worcester
Barnet
Hampshire
Brent and Harrow
Wirral
Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow
Rotherham
St. Helens and Knowsley
Manchester
Birmingham
Solihull
Staffordshire
Walsall

Bedfordshire
Rochdale
Stockport
Wigan
Durham
North Tyneside
Kent
Isle of Wight
Wiltshire
Kirklees

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's estimate of the total cost of running a fully computerised system of call and re-call for cervical cancer screening covering all women in the age groups at risk in every part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: District health authorities are responsible for cervical cancer screening. Many have arranged for a family practitioner committee to operate computerised call and recall systems on their behalf. The re-chargeable costs are a matter for local negotiation between the district health authority(s) and the family practitioner committee, and because this is the first year of separate funding for family practitioner committees no figures are held centrally on which to base an estimate of the total running costs.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all health authorities, family practitioner committees and community health councils, respectively, which have expressed concern to his Department about delays in processing cervical smears in pathology laboratories.

Mr. Hayhoe: Organisation of cervical cancer screening including provision of laboratory facilities is a health authority responsibility. I would not therefore expect health authorities to express concern to my Department on this subject and have not identified any such cases. Concerns from family practitioner committees or community health councils will have been referred to the responsible health authority. Such cases cannot readily be identified.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate when all health authorities will have a fully computerised system for identifying women in the high risk category for cervical cancer.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985, c. *401-2*]: All district health authorities have been asked to arrange with their corresponding family practitioner committees to implement computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening and it is estimated that this objective should be fully achieved by March 1988.

Health Service Commission (Reports)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to change the law so that Health Service Commission reports have to be published locally.

Mr. Whitney: The existing arrangements for publication of the commissioner's reports, and their confidential nature, make local publication unnecessary and inappropriate.

Dysentery

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has carried out any investigation into the causes of the quadrupling of dysentery rates since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Notifications of dysentery in England and Wales from 1979-84 were as follows:

	Number
1979	2,787
1980	2,709
1981	3,401
1982	2,850
1983	5,004
1984	6,844

Notifications of dysentery have fluctuated considerably since 1919 when the disease became notifiable. The reason for this is unknown.

Part of the increase in recent years is thought to be due to more effective reporting arrangements to local medical officers for environmental health and the Government financed communicable disease surveillance centre.

MOEHs investigate outbreaks of dysentery and recommend preventive measures in the light of local circumstances. The CDSC monitors the incidence of the disease and provides expert advice on local control measures as appropriate.

Dental Services

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the average length of time for a section 21 appeal in the general dental service to be heard; and what plans he has for speeding up appeal hearings;

(2) what criteria are used when selecting referees for section 21 appeals;

(3) if he will make it his policy to restrict the appointment of referees in section 21 appeals to those currently on the dental list of a family practitioner committee;

(4) if he will enlarge the list of referees for section 21 appeals (i) by accepting nominations from the General Dental Practitioners Association and (ii) by including all those on the dental list of family practitioner committees who are prepared to carry out this duty.

Mr. Hayhoe: The average time from the date of an appeal under regulation 21 of the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations to the

hearing is six months. Additional staff have been recruited and the number of referees available has also been increased to cope with a very large increase in the number of appeals since 1983.

In accordance with the regulations referees are selected from two lists of dentists. The first list comprises dentists selected by the British Dental Association, which is recognised as representative of the dental profession. The second is drawn up by my Department and comprises dentists of good standing who have indicated their willingness to serve. For each hearing one referee is selected from each of the two lists. My Department is always willing to consider any dentist who is willing to serve as a referee for inclusion in the list.

The selection of referees for individual hearings is primarily a question of their location, availability and, for cases where specialist knowledge is desirable such as orthodontics, relevant expertise.

The vast majority of dentists appointed as referees are currently in contract with family practitioner committees. I have no plans however to confine the appointment of referees to such dentists.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to end the advertising and promotion in any form of tobacco products.

Mr. Whitney: The Government's policy is to continue to restrict tobacco advertising and promotion by means of voluntary agreements.

Parallel Imports

Mr. Laurie Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if parallel imports of the kind listed in the document sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South are available to pharmacists.

Mr. Hayhoe: At the date specified (31 October 1985), the licensing authority had not granted any parallel import product licences for the medicinal products named in the list provided by the hon. Member in respect of the countries of origin quoted.

Anyone with knowledge that these or other unlicensed medicinal products were on offer to pharmacists at that date should bring this to the attention of the enforcement branch in the medicines division of my Department.

Pensions

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to make regulations on disclosure of information by occupational pension schemes; and whether he intends to set up a register of pension schemes as provided for in the Social Security Act 1985.

Mr. Newton: We intend to bring regulations on disclosure of information into effect during 1986. This will be a little later than originally planned, in response to requests in a number of replies to the consultative document to allow pension schemes more time to examine the detail of the regulations and make any administrative changes which are necessary before they come into effect.

Meanwhile, I have today laid regulations concerning other important aspects of the occupational pension provisions of the Social Security Act 1985, for example in giving better protection for the rights of early leavers. These are:

The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) Regulations 1985,
The Contracting-Out (Transfer Premiums) Regulations 1985,
The Occupational Pension Schemes (Revaluation) Regulations 1985,
The Occupational Pension Schemes (Discharge of Liability) Regulations 1985,
The Contracting-Out (Protection of Pensions) Regulations 1985,
The Occupational Pension Schemes (Preservation of Benefit) Amendment Regulations 1985.

In considering the need for a register of pension schemes, account has been taken of the estimated costs and staff numbers involved in setting up and running it, the burden which would be placed on schemes and the benefits which could be expected to flow from it. In addition to considering the variety of views expressed in response to the consultation the Government have sought the advice of the Occupational Pensions Board.

Recognising that circumstances have changed significantly since it recommended a register, the board has suggested that the question whether there should be such a register should be reviewed in three years time when the pattern of pension provision will be clearer and there will be some evidence of how effective the regulations on disclosure of information have been. The Government accept this view and have decided not to set up a register of occupational pension schemes at the present time.

The Occupational Pensions Board was concerned, however, that scheme members should be able to obtain the information they are entitled to have about their scheme without difficulty and have suggested that an existing body should have the power to enforce, if necessary, compliance with the disclosure regulations. The Government agree and have decided to ask the OPB to act in this capacity.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated 1985 spending, on the basis of December figures, on supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance for independent homes; and what is the estimated number of residents for 1985 and the estimated average payment in 1985.

Mr. Newton: I regret that it is not possible to make any reliable estimates at this time, largely because the impact of the 1985 changes in supplementary benefit payments to people in residential care and nursing homes have not yet been fully assessed.

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the gross capital investment in hospital services in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table shows capital expenditure on hospital services since 1970-71 and total capital expenditure by health authorities from 1975-76. The figures are derived from the summarised accounts of

health authorities or, for 1970-71, regional hospital boards. It is not yet possible to give comparable planned figures for 1986-87.

Year	Health authorities' total capital expenditure £ million		Capital expenditure on hospital services £ million	
	Cash	At 1984-85 prices (using gross domestic product deflator)	Cash	At 1984-85 prices (using gross domestic product deflator)
1970-71	*	—	119·2	575·4
1975-76	331·7	844·6	276·8	704·8
1980-81	563·2	724·6	439·8	565·8
1984-85	795·4	795·4	618·4	618·4

* Aggregated expenditure figures not available for years prior to 1974 reorganisation.

Aspartame

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has regarding a possible correlation between the use of the artificial sweetener Aspartame and the incidence of epileptic seizures in previously healthy adults; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: A letter published in the *Lancet* on 9 November reported three cases of epileptic seizure in previously healthy adults in the United States of America who consumed large quantities of aspartame-sweetened drinks. The author claimed only that this suggested an association between epilepsy and the consumption of aspartame.

Epilepsy is a relatively common condition which may affect previously healthy adults at any age. Some cases of first seizures in people who are also consumers of large amounts of aspartame would be expected simply by chance during the two years that aspartame has been extensively used in the United States of America. The letter provides no evidence that consumption of aspartame increases susceptibility to epileptic seizures.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the homes and hospital units making special provision for mentally handicapped children who are either blind or suffer from impaired vision and state the number of places available at each.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Joint Planning (Report)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what measures he is considering to strengthen the joint consultative committees and the joint planning process in the light of the recommendations made by the internal departmental working group on joint planning;

(2) when he intends to publish the report of the departmental working group on joint planning in England.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 3 December at columns *210-11*.

Medicines

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of medicines which have had their licences of right withdrawn during the past six years; and which specific medicines this applied to.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 November 1985, c. *715*]: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. Medicines placed on the United Kingdom market require a licence granted under the Medicines Act 1968 and such licences may be revoked or not renewed in various circumstances including cases where the licence holder asks for cancellation or does not seek renewal of a licence. In the last six years, 5,185 product licences of right have been cancelled and 47 revoked.

Details of the medicinal products whose products licences of right have been revoked in that period have been placed in the Library.

National Health Service (Red Alerts)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospitals and their district health authorities which have already been on red alert for no further admissions other than emergencies at least once in the current winter; and how many red alerts in how many hospitals there were last winter.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *494*]: The information requested is not collected centrally. It is the responsibility of health authorities to manage and supervise hospital and specialist services to meet local need. Arrangements for admissions to National Health Service hospitals are planned to take into account circumstances which would significantly affect demand. We would expect extremes of weather conditions, epidemics, major accidents and natural disasters to be amongst the factors taken into account. It may occasionally be necessary to restrict routine admissions for a short period due to such things as unseasonably severe weather.

SCOTLAND

Rate Relief

9. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet in a position to announce the level of rate relief available in 1986-87 to domestic and commercial ratepayers in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend in his statement on 3 December said that revaluation rate relief would continue in 1986-87 but that the level of relief would be reduced from 100 per cent. to 75 per cent.

He has circulated to authorities proposals for the distribution of grant in 1986-87 in preparation for his meeting with the convention of 16 December. These include a proposal to set domestic rate relief for the coming year at 7p per pound of rateable value.

Rural Forum

10. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had any discussions with Rural Forum about Her Majesty's Government's rural policy for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The chairman of Rural Forum has written to me in support of the recommendation by the Scottish Affairs Committee for a rural development fund for Scotland. I have assured him that the forum's views will be taken into account in the Government's continuing consideration of this matter.

Veterinary Laboratories, Lasswade

11. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received in relation to the proposed closure of the Lasswade (Midlothian) veterinary laboratories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the proposed closure from parliamentary colleagues, representatives of the farming and poultry industries and members of the veterinary profession.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whose Department is responsible for the services currently provided by the laboratory, made it clear that essential services needed in Scotland will continue to be provided for the benefit of Scottish agriculture. The most appropriate means of doing so are under active consideration.

Housing Associations

12. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public money has been paid to housing associations in Scotland since May 1979; and how this compares with the preceding five years.

Mr. Ancram: Total payments from public funds amounted to £524·3 million in the six years from 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1985; this compares with £41·91 million for the five years from 1 April 1974 to 31 March 1979.

Teachers' Pay Dispute

13. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the dispute in Scottish education with particular regard to the ability of the Scottish Examinations Board to organise the appropriate examinations in 1986.

Mr. Younger: I have nothing to add to the statement I made to the House on 22 October, at column 161, and to the reply my hon. Friend gave the hon. Member on 13 November at column 189.

14. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made in the House on 22 October, at column 161.

31. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a further statement about the teachers' pay dispute.

35. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the current negotiations in the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. Friend made in the House on 22 October, at column 161.

38. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans any further initiative to resolve the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has already offered to make substantial additional resources available. That offer remains open, at least for the moment.

Agricultural Advisory Services

15. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received supporting his proposal to cut spending on agricultural advisory services fom April 1987.

Mr. John MacKay: Prior to the recent issue of our formal consultation paper, a number of representations have been received on the proposed future funding of the agricultural advisory services in Scotland, including some which recognise that there is merit in the Government's view that industry should make a greater financial contribution towards the cost of services from which it benefits.

30. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the agricultural advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: My Department's consultation paper on the agricultural advisory services in Scotland, which was published on 14 November 1985, has been given a wide circulation to interested organisations within the industry. Careful consideration will be given to all the comments received.

Rating Reform

16. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to announce the Government's proposals for rates reform in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: We are looking carefully at the whole system of local government finance, including rating. A consultative document setting out the Government's proposals will be published early in the new year.

17. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the National Federation of Small Businesses and the Self-Employed to discuss reform of the rating system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I met representatives of the federation on 11 March and since then its Scottish secretary has

written to me and to my right hon. Friend on some two dozen occasions so I am not unaware of the federation's views on a range of issues concerned with local government finance. Following publication of the Government's proposals on this early in the new year, there will be an opportunity for detailed comment and consultation.

24. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many recent representations he has received concerning the proposed replacement of the domestic rating system in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Throughout most of the past year there has been a steady flow of representations urging changes in the local domestic taxation system in Scotland. These will be taken into account in our proposals for reform of local government finance, due to be published early in the new year.

33. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies are being undertaken in his Department into the practicalities of replacing the rating system with a poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: We shall be publishing a consultative document early in the new year setting out proposals for the reform of local government finance. This will include the information necessary to reach a view about the consequences of the proposals.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under the age of 25 years are currently unemployed in the Lothian region and Leith, respectively.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information as at 10 October, the latest date for which figures are available, may be obtained from the House of Commons Library for both Lothian region and the Edinburgh, Leith constituency.

32. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Scotland.

Mr. Younger: On 14 November 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland was 351,463, a fall of 1,848 from the October figure. The seasonally adjusted figure shows a similar fall.

42. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the most up-to-date youth unemployment figures in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: At 10 October 1985, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland under the age of 18 was 27,908. This figure shows an overall improvement on the position 12 months previously when the figure stood at 30,228, a reduction of 2,320. The Government are, of course, committing considerable resources through the youth training scheme to improving young people's skills and thus their employment prospects. With the expansion of the scheme from next April, all young people under 18 will have the opportunity to obtain a recognised vocational qualification.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

19. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the financing of the Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. John MacKay: Representations have been received from one member of the public and one employee of the board, and I have been in correspondence with the chairman of the board. Other representations about specific issues have referred in general terms to the funding of this board.

Gartcosh Steelworks

20. **Dr. Bray** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the future of Gartcosh works.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

36. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from local authorities about the financial consequences to them of the closure of Gartcosh steelworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

NHS (Funding)

21. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the increase in real terms in the funding of the National Health Service in Scotland from 1979 to the latest convenient date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland has risen from £883 million in 1978-79 to an estimated £2,000 million in 1985-86. In real terms, this represents an increase of over 20 per cent. over the period. Further real terms increases in health spending in each of the next three years are planned.

House Sales

22. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most up-to-date figures for council and Scottish Special Housing Association house sales in Glasgow.

Mr. Ancram: The number of houses sold by the City of Glasgow district council between 1 April 1979 and 30 September 1985 was 3,881. The Scottish Special Housing Association reported 503 sales in Glasgow between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1985.

Job Creation

23. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans any new initiatives to reduce the level of unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government's economic strategy of keeping inflation down, offering real incentive for enterprise and restoring competitiveness to industry, provides the only sensible means of improving the prospects for the unemployed people in Scotland and in Great Britain.

The Government's full range of special employment and training measures to help unemployed people will continue to be available throughout Scotland.

Grampian Region (Health Care)

25. **Mr. Malone** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current annual expenditure per head of population in the Grampian region on health care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Total expenditure by Grampian health board in 1984-85 amounted to £303 per head of population or £349 when account is taken of the estimated cost to other health boards of providing treatment to patients from the Grampian area, along with the board's estimated share of the cost of other health services funded centrally.

Bridge of Allan (Flooding)

26. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations or requests for assistance he has received from Central region following the serious flooding in Bridge of Allan; and if he will introduce legislation to impose on local authorities a duty to provide assistance and take remedial measures when such flooding occurs.

Mr. Ancram: No representations or requests for assistance have been received from Central regional council.

Regional and islands councils may already exercise powers in the Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961 to take measures for the prevention or mitigation of flooding of non-agricultural land in their areas. We have no plans for further legislation.

Steel Industry

27. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the British Steel Corporation on 28 November. We have no plans for another meeting in the near future.

Abattoirs (Competitiveness)

28. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the implications of the regulations governing the skinning of sheep's heads in EEC abattoirs in Scotland for the relative competitiveness of such abattoirs in England and Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Abattoirs in both Scotland and England which are approved to participate in intra-community trade are required to skin sheep heads.

Prisons (Overcrowding)

29. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the problems the prison authorities in Scotland are having with regard to the increased numbers of persons staying longer in prison or remand before trial, and the larger number of persons in prison as a result of drug offences; and whether he will make a detailed investigation into the overcrowding problems in Saughton prison and elsewhere in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Following a sustained rise in the level of admissions, the Scottish prison service number of inmates for 26 November 1985 reached a record level of 5,697. This is approximately 10 per cent. above the total number of places available. The main elements in this increase are larger numbers of prisoners on remand, mainly because of an increase in the length of time prisoners are being held on remand, and an increase in the number of persons convicted of drug-related offences and other serious crimes which are attracting longer sentences.

My right hon. Friend is well aware of the overcrowding and the problems associated with it. Serious overcrowding exists in four establishments, Barlinnie, Edinburgh and Inverness prisons and Longriggend remand institution. Unless numbers decline from their present levels, no significant relief is likely to be achieved until the refurbished Greenock prison and phase II of Shotts prison become available next March and in March 1987.

Assisted Places Scheme

34. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount of money received by each school participating in the assisted places scheme in Glasgow in each year since its inception.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As the answer is lengthy and contains a number of figures, I will, with permission, circulate the information in the *Official Report*.

Housing Associations Sales

37. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the new housing legislation in Scotland in favour of retaining the voluntary code of practice in sales by housing associations.

Mr. Younger: I have received representations from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and from Williamsburgh Housing Association in favour of retaining the present voluntary code governing sales. One of my hon. Friends has also passed on to me similar representations made to him by Shelter. In addition, six individual housing associations have written expressing a desire to modify certain aspects of the provisions contained in the Housing (Scotland) Bill which are of particular concern to them. I have also received representation from a number of tenants of housing associations and residents' associations welcoming the new legislation.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

39. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the representatives of the teaching profession about pay and conditions of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 22 October, at column 161.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

40. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the arrangements for paying hill livestock compensatory allowances to farmers in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Payment on the 20,000 or so claims for hill livestock compensatory allowances made each year in Scotland normally starts about the end of January and is virtually completed by the end of May. Exceptionally, for 1986, we have decided that, provided farmers submit their claims very quickly after they are issued to them at the end of December, a 75 per cent. payment on their claim will be issued straight away. The balance due to them will be paid after the claim has been checked in the normal way.

Coxsachie Virus Illness

41. **Mr. Campbell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the most recent information on the incidence of coxsachie virus illnesses in the west of Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Illness caused by coxsachie virus is not a notifiable disease, and data are not therefore available centrally which would enable the incidence of the disease to be determined.

Motorways

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland have safety barriers on the central reservation; on which motorways; and what plans currently exist to increase the provision of such safety barriers.

Mr. Ancram: At present there are approximately 28·8 miles of trunk motorway with safety barriers on the central reservation in Scotland. The details are as follows:

Motorway	*Length of barrier miles*
M8*	9·0
M9	2·0
M74	12·0
M80	0·3
M85	0·6
M876	1·4
M90	3·5

* The figure for the M8 does not include the Glasgow urban section for which Strathclyde regional council are responsible.

I am currently reviewing policy on the provision of central safety barriers for new motorways.

European Poverty Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has for the statement of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in his letter to David Martin MEP of 1 May, that participation in the second European poverty programme would have imposed a significant extra administrative burden on central Government, and on the local authorities and community and voluntary bodies involved.

Mr. Ancram: In reaching our decision not to participate in the second European Commission anti-poverty programme, we took into account the likely level of demand as compared with the likely level of resources; and concluded that participation was bound to require significant and disproportionate work for all concerned on preparation and evaluation of projects which would not ultimately be supported. The soundness of this judgment can be measured in terms of the decision of the European Commission announced on 11 October, under which only 14 of over 250 projects forwarded to the Commission in respect of England and Wales were approved.

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in (i) prisons, (ii) police stations and (iii) courts in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. John MacKay: Capital expenditure in these services for the years to 1984-85 with estimated outturn expenditure for 1985-86 and planned expenditure for 1986-87 in terms of cash and expressed at 1984-85 prices by use of the GDP deflator, are as follows:

Gross capital expenditure in Scotland

£ million gross

	1970-71	*1975-76*	*1980-81*	*1984-85*	*1985-86**	*1986-87 (estimate)*
Prisons:						
Cash	0·9	3·9	4·4	8·7	12·3	9·4
1984-85 prices	4·3	9·9	5·6	8·7	11·7	8·6
Police:						
Cash	1·3	7·8	9·2	11·7	12·7	16·3
1984-85 prices	6·3	19·9	11·8	11·7	12·1	14·9
Courts (High Courts and Districts)						
Cash	†	0·9	2·7	13·5	8·5	5·4
1984-85 prices	†	2·3	3·5	13·5	8·1	4·9

*Provisional.

†In 1970-71 the courts were administered by Court House Commissioners and information about capital expenditure in that year is not available.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in (i) trunk roads and (ii) local roads in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	1970-71 (outturn)	*1975-76 (outturn)*	*1980-81 (outturn)*	*1984-85 (outturn)*	*1985-86 (estimate)*	*1986-87 (planned)*
Trunk Roads						
(a) Cash	*23	*43	81	98	‡105	‡96
(b) 1984-85 prices†	109	110	104	98	100	87
Local Roads						
(a) Cash	13	51	77	104	‡121	‡125
(b) 1984-85 prices†	63	130	99	104	115	114

Notes

*Figures do not include expenditure on structural repairs and other minor items which were then included in current expenditure and which are not separable.

†Cash figures adjusted by the GDP deflator.

‡Provision for local roads for 1985-86 and 1986-87 enhanced by transfers made from the trunk roads provision to assist the construction of the Edinburgh outer city bypass.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in (i) housing and (ii) the local environmental services in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in hospital services in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested for the years to 1985-86 is given in the table, in terms of cash, and expressed at 1984-85 prices by application of the gross domestic product deflator. Decisions have yet to be taken about the allocation of capital expenditure provision to hospital services in 1986-87.

Hospitals and Community Health Services: Gross Capital Expenditure

	Cash *£ million*	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator £ million*
1970-71	16·1	77·8
1975-76	39·2	99·9
1980-81	59·5	76·5
1984-85	104·7	104·7
*1985-86	119·9	114·2

* Estimate.

These figures are for capital expenditure on the hospitals and community health programme together: they do not represent total capital expenditure on the NHS in the years concerned.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in (i) schools and (ii) higher and further education in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85, 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Support Finance

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the amount of new money that was added by the Scottish Office to the 1985-86 budget of each health board in respect of support finance.

Mr. John MacKay: Health boards have been set indicative levels of expenditure on support finance projects totalling £6 million in the current year. From within that total, expenditure on projects approved before 1 April 1985, amounting to some £2·9 million, will continue to be met from funds held centrally. Expenditure on new projects is to be met from health boards' financial allocations, which include the following sums distributed from the uncommitted balance of the funds formerly held centrally:

Health Board	*£'000*
Argyll and Clyde	110
Ayrshire and Arran	90
Borders	30
Dumfries and Galloway	40
Fife	80
Forth Valley	70
Grampian	110
Greater Glasgow	250
Highland	50
Lanarkshire	130
Lothian	170
Orkney	10
Shetland	10
Tayside	100
Western Isles	10
Total	1,260

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the amounts of money and the project titles, health board area by health board area, that have now been allocated support finance in 1985-86.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Joint Liaison Committees

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list joint liaison committees which now have voluntary sector representatives in full and regular membership and the joint liaison committees which have them on a partial basis;

(2) if he will list the joint liaison committees that now have meetings which are open to the press and public;

(3) if he will list the joint liaison committees between health boards and local authorities known to his Department to have amended their constitutions in response to the proposals for changes contained in the 29 April Scottish Office circular "Community Care: Joint Planning and Support Finance."

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Monofilament Nets

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations on behalf of the English fishermen about the effects on them of the proposed ban on the carriage of monofilament nets in Scottish waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Representations have been made by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee and have been taken into consideration along with other comments made about the Government's intentions.

Scottish Transport Group

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial targets he has agreed with the Scottish Transport Group for 1986 and beyond.

Mr. Younger: I have agreed with STG that the Scottish Bus Group will seek an average annual return of 4 per cent. on average net fixed assets at current cost over the period 1 January 1986 to 31 December 1990. The return will reflect current cost operating profit adjusted to take account of capital grant on an historical cost basis. The existing targets for the other areas of STG's business will be continued. Caledonian MacBrayne is required to break even in historic cost terms after receipt of grant. On its other activities the group is required to make a surplus of 8 per cent. on turnover, after replacement depreciation.

Scottish Examination Board

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* a statistical breakdown of the total number of official markers for the 1984 Scottish Examination Board certificate examinations which details *(a)* the number of markers who were otherwise employed as college lecturers, *(b)* the number of markers who were otherwise employed as full-time teachers; *(c)* the number of markers who were retired school teachers.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply,* 25 November 1985 c. *434*]: The information requested for 1984 and in addition for 1985, with the numbers in each category expressed as a percentage of the total, is as follows:

	1984		*1985*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
(a) Lecturers in tertiary education	347	8·6	383	10·0
(b) Full time teachers*	3,473	85·6	3,126	82·1
(c) Retired lecturers in tertiary education	9	0·2	18	0·5
(d) Retired school teachers	80	2·0	122	3·2
(e) Others†	148	3·6	157	4·1
Total	4,057		3,806	

* Category *(b)* includes also part time teachers and teachers who were temporarily out of teaching.

† Category *(e)* covers mainly former teachers now otherwise employed that is Her Majesty's inspectors, board staff and education authority advisers. It also covers a small number of markers with a proven track record whose recruitment antedated the setting up of the Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board in 1965.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 December 1985

WALES

Prescriptions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales, for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, what were *(a)* the costs of producing and distributing literature about exemption from from prescription charges, *(b)* the costs of inspection for fraud in claiming exemption from prescription charges and *(c)* the cost of administering the sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information to patients about exemption from prescription charges is contained in leaflet P11, which is produced by the DHSS for England and Wales. There is no separate charge against the Welsh Vote. Distribution costs, costs of fraud inspection and costs of administering the sale of pre-payment certificates are not separately indentifiable within the overall administrative budgets of family practitioner committees.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales, for each quarter of the calendar year 1984, the first three quarters of 1985 and for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, what was *(a)* the number of prescriptions dispensed, *(b)* the percentage of prescriptions exempt from charges, *(c)* the costs of prescriptions, (i) the payents by patients (excluding pre-payment certificates), (ii) the payments from public funds, (iii) the total costs and (iv) the average gross costs per prescripton, *(d)* the number and type of pre-payment certificate and *(e)* revenue from sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information required is set out in the following table:

	1984				*1985*			*1983/84*	*1984/85*
	1st Quarter	*2nd Quarter*	*3rd Quarter*	*4th Quarter*	*1st Quarter*	*2nd Quarter*	*3rd Quarter*		
Prescriptions dispensed	6,755,095	6,518,126	6,328,460	6,791,390	6,923,853	6,160,580	6,293,921	26,108,478	26,561,829
Prescription exempt from charges—percentage	83·0	83·8	84·1	84·7	84·6	85·9	85·6	82·3	83·9
Costs									
i Payments by Patients (excluding pre-payment certificates) (£ million)	1·5	1·3	1·5	1·6	1·6	1·7	1·7	6·0	6·2
ii Payments from Public Funds (£ million)	25·5	25·9	25·9	28·0	28·4	26·4	27·6	99·3	107·9
iii Total Costs (£ million)	27·0	27·2	27·4	29·6	30·0	28·1	29·3	105·3	114·1
iv Average gross cost per (£)	4·00	4·16	4·33	4·36	4·33	4·56	4·65	4·03	4·30
No. and type of pre-payment certificates									
—4 Monthly	5,678	4,116	4,990	5,035	5,789	4,272	4,825	20,454	19,932
—12 Monthly	12,525	5,822	6,985	7,464	14,023	5,918	5,909	35,541	34,294
Revenue from sale of pre-payment certificates (£)									
—4 Monthly	42,586	34,990	42,414	42,809	49,209	43,689	53,083	153,413	169,423
—12 Monthly	269,227	139,777	167,629	179,142	336,553	166,370	180,201	764,144	823,061
Total	311,813	174,767	210,043	221,951	385,762	210,059	233,284	917,557	992,484

Farmers (Exceptional Weather Aid)

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much he is contributing towards the £5·3 million savings announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his statement of 28 November, *Official Report*, column 1033.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A contribution of £1·85 million is being made by way of a reduction of the cash limit on class XVI, vote 5, from £46,610,000 to £44,760,000. This saving in reduced grant in aid to the Welsh Development Agency arises from a further increase in the level of anticipated receipts in the current financial year. A spring Supplementary Estimate will be sought for class XVI, vote 2, to cover expenditure in Wales on both the exceptional weather relief for farmers (£1,700,000) and the additional expenditure arising from the hill livestock compensatory allowance uprating.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Expenditure)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, with appropriate statistics, the principal elements of expenditure which have caused anticipated expenditure on the police in 1985-86 to exceed by £92 million the figure stated in Cmnd. 9428.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I assume that the right hon. Member is comparing the figure given for police expenditure in 1985-86 in the White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans (Cmnd. 9428), with that given in reply to a question by him on 18 November, at columns 15-16. The first is the central and local government expenditure on the police planned at the time the White Paper was published last year. The second, as explained in the reply to his earlier question, represents the sum of current expenditure provided for in local authority budgets for 1985-86 set at the beginning of the financial year. The figures are not comparable.

Coal Industry Dispute (Police Overtime)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much expenditure on overtime pay for police officers in connection with the miners' dispute is accounted for in the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Giles Shaw: For the purposes of the Budget estimates for 1985-86 it was assumed that £9 million would be necessary for claims for the special payment which we are making available for the additional costs of

policing the miners' dispute. This figure relates to all forms of expenditure eligible for the special payment, including overtime payments. No separate assumption has been made for expenditure on overtime payments arising from the dispute.

Public Order Bill

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether, in view of the errors contained in the version of the Public Order Bill published on 6 December, he will withdraw the Bill;

(2) if he will undertake not to proceed with a Second Reading of the Public Order Bill until a corrected and accurate version of the Bill is published.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A corrigendum slip was published on 10 December.

Mr. Colin Hewitt

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Mr. Colin Hewitt on his appointment as national co-ordinator of police activities in relation to drug crimes is to continue to be a member of the Metropolitan police department; and if the Metropolitan police establishment is to be revised to enable him to serve as an assistant commissioner.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet received the report of the interdepartmental working party reviewing the criminal injuries compensation scheme; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the working party has not yet completed its deliberations, but we hope to receive its report early in the new year.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the level of grant to the National Association of Victim Support Schemes in 1984-85 and 1985-86; and what level of grant is proposed for 1986-87.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's grant to NAVSS in 1984-85 was £58,500. In 1985-86 it was £120,000, with an additional payment of £6,000 towards the cost of the association's move to new premises. The grant for 1986-87 has not yet been settled, but it will be based on that for 1985-86 with a modest increase to reflect inflation and the higher level of activity resulting from the recent recruitment of new members of staff.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of additional part-time and full-time staff recruited by the National Association of Victim Support Schemes in 1985-86 as a result of his Department's increased grants.

Mr. Mellor: The National Association of Victims Support Schemes has been able to recruit four additional full-time staff in the current financial year.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board has yet made available to criminal courts guidelines for the level of compensation orders in courts.

Mr. Mellor: The board has prepared a set of draft guidelines for the criminal courts and we have received comments on them from the Magistrates' Association. We will be consulting further on these with the board and the association.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet completed his consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers about the provision of a leaflet, together with a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board claim form, to all victims of crime when the crime is first reported.

Mr. Mellor: The police already provide victims of violent crime with a leaflet about the criminal injuries compensation scheme and how to apply for compensation under the scheme. We intend to produce another leaflet, for distribution to all victims of crime, explaining the powers of the criminal courts in England and Wales to order the payment of compensation by a convicted offender. We are consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers, among others, about the nature and content of the leaflet, including the possibility of a standard application form for compensation by the offender.

Block Insurance

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made on his invitation to local authority associations, the British Gas Corporation and the Electricity Council to consider block insurance arrangements to cover household contents and thefts from meters.

Mr. Mellor: The Associations of Metropolitan Authorities, District Councils and County Councils, and the Electricity Council and British Gas Corporation were invited early this year to consider the possibility of block insurance arrangements. The Associations of Metropolitan Authorities and District Councils have agreed to circulate their members with a view to encouraging the development, where appropriate, of block insurance schemes such as already exist in some areas. The Electricity Council and British Gas Corporation see a number of difficulties with such schemes, especially as regards the widespread insurance of household contents by individual customers, the difficulty in finding insurers willing to quote for such cover and the problem of meter thefts by or in collusion with a member of the household concerned; in the case of thefts from meters, crime prevention may have a more significant part to play than block insurance arrangements.

Ilkeston Police Station

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he is satisfied that the present conditions and facilities at Ilkeston police station are suitable for policing requirements and meet current statutory obligations;

(2) what proposals he has received, and when, from Derbyshire county council, for the modernisation or rebuilding of the Ilkeston police station.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is the responsibility of the police authority to provide and maintain the buildings required for police purposes in its area. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary for the region considers that the authority

should improve conditions at Ilkeston police station and I understand that the authority is undertaking interim improvements there so that it can be used as a designated custody station under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I also understand that the authority is considering proposals for the modernisation of the police station, but these have not yet been sent for my right hon. Friend's approval. In December 1981 and in December 1982, in response to a request from the police authority for approval to build a new Ilkeston police station, the authority was offered the opportunity to plan with a view to starting building in, respectively, 1983-84 and 1985-86, but in the event these offers have not been taken up. I shall be glad for officials to discuss the position further with the police authority should they wish to do so.

Robert Maxwell and Michael King

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to exchange Robert Maxwell and Michael King, two British citizens held in Libya, for Libyans imprisoned in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: No.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Meals

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give figures for each year since 1975 for primary and secondary maintained schools in England for the total number of pupils in attendance, the number of pupils taking school meals on payment and free and the number of pupils bringing their own food.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is shown in the Department's annual published school meals census, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate for primary and secondary maintained schools in England the number of pupils receiving free school meals where the entitlement derives from families' *(a)* receipt of supplementary benefit, *(b)* receipt of family income supplement and *(c)* local authority discretionary powers.

Mr. Dunn: It is possible to estimate only the broad order of magnitude, as there are fluctuations from year to year and within the year in the number of pupils entitled to a free school meal and the proportion who take up the entitlement. At the time of the October 1984 school meals census in England an estimated breakdown of the main categories of entitlement would have been as follows (to the nearest 10,000):

	Number
(a) Pupils whose parents were in receipt of supplementary benefit	680,000
(b) Pupils whose parents were in receipt of family income supplement	170,000
(c) Other pupils	300,000
	1,150,000

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving pupil-teacher ratios in Tameside for *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985, the latest date for which information is available, the pupil-teacher ratio within maintained primary schools in Tameside was 23·3; the corresponding ratio within maintained secondary schools was 15·7.

Universities (Clinical Academics)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what reply he intends to give to the request from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for additional funds to enable the universities to apply to clinical academics the 1985 pay award for National Health Service doctors and dentists.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend will publish his reply when it is sent.

16 to 18-year-olds

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of 16 to 18-year-olds in each English region stay on at school.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985 the average staying-on rates for 16 to 18-year-olds in maintained secondary schools for each region were:

Region	*Percentages**
North	13·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	14·1
North West	13·5
East Midlands	13·7
West Midlands	13·3
East Anglia	13·7
Greater London	18·1
Other South East	17·6
South West	13·5
England	15·0

* The percentages are calculated by comparing the total number of pupils aged 16, 17 or 18 years in maintained schools in January 1985 with the total number of 15-year-olds one, two and three years earlier in these schools.

School Leavers (Qualifications)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of children in each English region leave school without qualifications.

Mr. Dunn: The percentage of leavers from maintained secondary schools with no graded result in GCE or CSE examinations in 1983-84 were:

Region	*Percentage*
North	9·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	10·8
North West	12·3
East Midlands	7·8
West Midlands	12·0
East Anglia	8·2
Greater London	14·2
Other South East	6·6
South West	7·0
England	9·9

Source: School leavers survey. The figures shown are subject to sampling error.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many staff in his Department have been required to leave their employment since 1979 *(a)* to enable the Department to meet financial targets and *(b)* because their jobs were redundant.

Sir Keith Joseph: Nobody has been required to leave to enable the Department to meet its financial targets. Two part-time cleaners and a personal secretary have been made redundant.

Schoolchildren (Work Experience)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information is available to his Department in respect of the numbers of schoolchildren injured whilst taking part in work experience placements in any year;

(2) what representations he has received about the exclusion of schoolchildren on work experience placements from the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: None. We are, however, currently reviewing the legal, health and safety aspects of work experience for young people, taking account of requests from a number of LEAs for further guidance in this area.

Schoolchildren (Special Needs)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number of places in special schools for children of compulsory school age with special needs *(a)* in each local education authority in England, *(b)* for all local education authorities in England, *(c)* for privately run special schools in England and *(d)* the total of such places (i) for all such children and (ii) expressed in those categories used as classification by his Department in each of the last 10 years, and the percentage change involved in each case.

Mr. Dunn: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the capital borrowing of the Inner London education authority in each of the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Borrowing by the Inner London education authority for the capital account (including advances from the Consolidated Loans Fund) for the last three years for which figures are available was:

	£ million
1981-82	6·179
1982-83	13·734
1983-84	14·191

Source: Returns from the Greater London council.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for each of the London boroughs in the Inner London education authority area the proportion of Inner London education authority rates income which came from each borough in each of the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Inner London education authority levies a rate precept on the inner London boroughs; thus the proportion of its rate income coming from each inner London borough is the ratio of the rateable value of each borough to the total inner London rateable value. The figures are for the last three outturn years.

Inner London Borough	*Percentage of Inner London Education Authority rate income*		
	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
City of London	21·9	22·1	22·1
Camden	9·7	9·6	9·8
Greenwich	2·9	2·9	2·8
Hackney	3·3	3·3	3·2
Hammersmith	3·0	3·0	3·0
Islington	4·7	4·6	4·6
Kensington and Chelsea	6·2	6·2	6·1
Lambeth	5·1	5·1	5·1
Lewisham	3·0	3·0	3·0
Southwark	5·0	5·0	5·1
Tower Hamlets	4·0	4·0	4·0
Wandsworth	3·8	3·7	3·7
Westminster	27·5	27·6	27·5

Figures may not add to 100 per cent. due to rounding.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of inner London education authority income was derived from *(a)* direct Government grants and *(b)* rate precepts from the London boroughs in each of the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures are for the last three years for which outturn information is available. They are taken from returns made by the authority. The total income is taken to be: rate income; income from Government grants (including pooling adjustments); and income from fees and other charges including charges for the education of pupils belonging to other authorities.

Percentage income from:

	Government grants	*Rate precept*	*Other income*
1981-82	7·8	82·8	9·4
1982-83	7·5	83·7	8·8
1983-84	6·9	84·7	8·4

Local Authorities (Further Education)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total capital expenditure authorisation for 1986-87 bid for by local education authorities for the advanced further education sector.

Mr. Chris Patten: £110·4 million in England.

Student-Academic Staff Ratios

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he expects to be the average student-academic staff ratio for the university sector.

Mr. Chris Patten: In December 1983, the latest year for which information is available, the student-staff ratio in universities in Great Britain was 10·2. This ratio is

defined as the full-time equivalent of undergraduate and postgraduate students divided by full-time academic staff funded wholly from university funds.

Academic staff student ratios for future years will depend on individual universities decisions on staffing levels within the resources available to them.

Universities and Polytechnics (Mergers)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate the involvement of his Department in promoting or assisting with discussions concerning mergers of polytechnics and universities with special reference to City of London polytechnic and City university and North Staffordshire polytechnic and the University of Keele.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend is interested in any proposals for mergers between publicly funded institutions of higher education which promise educational and financial benefits. He stands ready to assist in the discussion of such proposals.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make additional funds available to new institutions arising from the merger of the City of London polytechnic and City university and North Staffordshire polytechnic and the University of Keele.

Mr. Chris Patten: Any proposed merger of higher education institutions would have to be considered in terms of the educational and financial benefits which it offered. The need for additional funding of a transitional nature to facilitate mergers agreed to be desirable would be a matter for the funding bodies concerned.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on the extension of tenure to academic staff employed in a new university arising from a merger of the City of London polytechnic and City university and North Staffordshire polytechnic and the University of Keele.

Mr. Chris Patten: In any proposed merger of higher education institutions the terms of employment of the academic staff would be considered in the light of the circumstances of the institutions concerned.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received subsequent to his announcement of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; of what nature they have been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: No representations have been received from overseas Governments since the confirmation of withdrawal of British membership of UNESCO, although several have issued statements. Members of the public have written both in favour and against the decision to withdraw.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the transfer or redirection of resources to all organisations, other than United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, as outlined in his statement of 5 December, together with the respective sums and total.

Mr. Raison: The redirection of resources is under consideration. As I said in my statement of 5 December 1985, at columns 448-49, details will be given to the House in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

European Community (Reform)

Q18. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her participation in the recent Luxembourg summit meeting of Heads of Government to discuss the reform of European Economic Community procedures.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 5 December at columns 429-39.

Neasden Hospital

Q78. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Neasden hospital.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Football League Match (Visit)

Q85. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to a Football League match before the end of the current season.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Scotland

Q88. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Prime Minister when she last paid an official visit to Scotland during the winter months.

The Prime Minister: In January 1983.

Disarmament

Q90. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the progress of disarmament or arms control negotiations since the conclusion of the Geneva summit meeting.

The Prime Minister: As I told the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 25 November, at columns *391-92*, we believe the Geneva summit has given an impetus to arms control negotiations in Geneva. We hope that when the United States/Soviet talks resume in January, the Soviet Union will get down to serious negotiations in order to reach the balanced and equitable agreements we believe are desirable. We believe the United States proposals tabled before the summit offer the basis for progress towards this objective. The United Kingdom will continue to give full support to the United States in the negotiations.

At the mutual and balanced force reductions talks in Vienna, a new Western proposal was tabled by the United Kingdom on 5 December. The conference on disarmament

in Europe at Stockholm is expected to conclude its eigth session on 20 December, and the conference on disarmament in Geneva is currently in recess.

Fisheries

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what progress is being made in developing a multilaterally based fisheries and management regime in the south-west Atlantic.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on 6 December at column *385*.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Investment Projects

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to ensure that major investment projects undertaken under the auspices of Government will be subject to an analysis showing the full effects of development on all English regions before any definitive decisions on them are taken.

The Prime Minister: The siting of investment projects funded by central Government is given careful consideration where there is a choice of location.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will take all necessary steps to ensure that future Government annual public expenditure plans are broken down by reference to each English region.

The Prime Minister: No. The Government's expenditure plans are published by Department, function, economic category and spending authority. It would be prohibitively expensive to plan public spending by English region.

Decentralisation

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister whether she has any proposals for decentralising further parts of Government into the regions.

The Prime Minister: There are at present no plans for further decentralisation beyond those contained in the Government's dispersal programme announced on 26 July 1979.

Regional Policy

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the implications of different rates of development as between the south-east and other regions for Government policies towards alleviating congestion and environmental damage; what plans the Government have to promote the prosperity of the north of England; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government continually assess all aspects of their policies. Many parts of the north are assisted areas and therefore benefit from regional assistance aimed at reducing disparities in employment opportunities.

British Atlantic Committee

Mr. Michie asked the Prime Minister how much Government money was allocated in each year from 1983 to the British Atlantic Committee.

The Prime Minister: The British Atlantic Committee received grants-in-aid of £45,000 in 1983-84 and £47,000 in 1984-85. There is a provision for a grant-in-aid of £49,000 in 1985-86.

Peace Through NATO

Mr. Michie asked the Prime Minister how much Government money was allocated in each year from 1983 to Peace Through NATO.

The Prime Minister: Peace Through NATO received grants-in-aid of £68,000 in 1983-84 and £71,500 in 1984-85. There is a provision for a grant-in-aid of £74,000 in 1985-86.

Mr. Michie asked the Prime Minister what was the cost to the Government, by year, of design, research and printing of the material supplied to Peace Through NATO for the following publications, listed separately, Arms Control and Disarmament Bulletin, the Ministry of Defence material pack, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office material pack and Ministry of Defence—North Atlantic Treaty Organisation films.

The Prime Minister: The publications and material referred to are supplied free of charge or on free loan to a wide range of organisations and individuals including Peace Through NATO. It is not possible to identify the cost of items supplied to individual organisations.

Mr. Michie asked the Prime Minister how much material was supplied by the Government to Peace Through NATO in each year from 1983; how much Peace Through NATO paid for the material; and which organisations were given these publications for distribution.

The Prime Minister: Peace Through NATO receives a wide range of material issued by the Government on arms control, disarmament and defence issues. The Government do not charge for this material which is freely available on request. Others receiving such items include Members of the House, interested individuals, and a wide range of non-governmental organisations.

Armed Forces (Publicity)

Mr. Michie asked the Prime Minister how much material was produced in the years 1983 to 1985 for publicity purposes for the armed forces; and how much was the cost in each year.

The Prime Minister: Total expenditure from the defence public relations budget on written publicity

material for the armed forces amounted to £87,400 in 1983-84 and £121,200 in 1984-85. Among the major items produced in these years were the following:

Item	*Amount (£)*
Leaflets for Her Majesty's Ships	*46,700
	†38,200
Posters for Beating the Retreat	†5,500
Exercise Lionheart booklet	†14,600
British Army Brochure	†8,900

* 1983-84.
† 1984-85.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Michie asked the Prime Minister how much material was produced on defence, arms control and foreign affairs by the Central Office of Information in the years 1983 to 1985; to which organisations it was sent; and how much it cost each year.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

	£
Production of Publicity Material	
1983-84	
Defence and Disarmament Issue	35,365
Peace and Disarmament	1,156
Britain and Arms Control	644
Cruise—Your Questions	7,011
Cruise Missiles, Some More Important Questions and Answers	4,891
	49,067
1984-85	
Nuclear Weapons and Preventing War	1,894
Key Points	5,942
Defence and Disarmament Issues	22,634
A Nuclear Free Europe	2,200
	32,670
1985-86	
Trident, Britain's Strategic Deterrent	1,664
Trident—Extract from Statement on Defence Estimates	2,274
Defence and Disarmament Issues	14,732
	18,670

Distribution
COI is involved in the distribution only of the starred titles. The Arms Control and Disarmament Research Unit's Newsletter is distributed on a regular basis by COI and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office control a joint mailing list for this and the starred items. Distribution costs are not separable.

1983-84
No costings available—COI staff time only involved—on an Allied basis.

	£
1984-85	5,865
1985-86	
Sponsored amount for full financial year	7,160

Ocean Drilling Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Departments of Energy, Environment and Trade and Industry over seeking resources to permit full United Kingdom membership in the ocean drilling programme; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 11 December at column 627 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Bus Services

Mr. Parris asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about ministerial responsibility for local bus services under the Transport Act 1985.

The Prime Minister: Ministerial responsibility in Great Britain for overall Government policy towards the bus industry, for the appointment of traffic commissioners, for driver and bus licensing, and for administering the fuel duty rebate system will remain with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. He will also continue to have ministerial responsibility for taxis and hire cars in England and Wales and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will continue to be responsible for this in Scotland.

For the new functions created by the Transport Act 1985, I have decided that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be responsible in relation to the operation of the new registration system for local services, the privatisation of the National Bus Company, the establishment of a disabled persons transport advisory committee and the administration of transitional rural bus grants. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Transport will be responsible in Scotland, Wales and England respectively for the determination of traffic regulation conditions appeals; the establishment and oversight of new local authority and PTE bus companies; the issuing of regulations governing the procedure for tendering for subsidised services; and the determination of applications related to concessionary fares and related matters including the issue of regulations. The administration of the new system of rural innovation grants in Scotland and Wales under section 108 of the new Act will also fall to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales respectively.

Public Money (Allocation)

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister what is the total overall identifiable allocation of public money made by the Government since 1979 to *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Lambeth, *(d)* Newcastle, *(e)* Hammersmith, *(f)* Cardiff, *(g)* Haringey, *(h)* Southampton, *(i)* Leicester, *(j)* Leeds, *(k)* Wandsworth, *(l)* Belfast and *(m)* Northampton (i) in total, (ii) per person, (iii) per unemployed person, (iv) per unemployed person aged under 21 years and (v) per retirement pensioner, in each named district.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 28 November 1985, c. *624*]: The total amount of money allocated by the Government to these areas is very large. It includes social security payments; funding for hospitals, GPs and other health services; aid for employment and training measures; grants to companies, voluntary bodies and other institutions and individuals; and support for the arts.

The extent of these funds is so great, and the number of people and institutions to whom they are allocated is so

large, that they cannot be identified without disproportionate cost. There would also be considerable technical problems in attempting to identify them.

However, there is readily available information about the relatively small proportion of total Government spending that takes the form of grants and subsidies paid to local authorities. These include rate support grant, housing subsidies, housing benefit, specific revenue grants and capital grants.

The information is given in the tables which are explained in the notes. Belfast has been excluded because, owing to the different structure of local government in Northern Ireland, comparable data in respect of that city are not available.

Unemployment statistics by local authority areas are not available prior to 1983-84.

Attention is drawn to the discontinuities which result from the change in the rate support grant arrangements for England and Wales in 1981-82 and the introduction of housing benefit payments by DHSS in 1982-83.

Table 1
Identifiable grants and subsidies
(1) In total—£ million (capital grants to English authorities in parentheses)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
(a) Edinburgh	39·7	47·2	49·5	44·7	83·1	68·6	71·6
(b) Bristol	38·2	46·0	26·1	29·3	56·2	54·9	57·5
	(0·1)	(0·2)	(0·3)	(0·4)	(0·5)		
(c) Lambeth	93·5	109·9	104·1	112·1	137·1	136·4	131·9
	(3·6)	(3·7)	(1·4)	(0·3)	(2·4)		
(d) Newcastle upon Tyne	78·9	93·8	75·8	63·1	90·4	91·5	66·2
	(1·0)	(0·7)	(0·8)	(0·5)	(1·2)		
(e) Hammersmith and Fulham	50·8	56·1	56·2	55·4	76·0	74·4	84·3
	(2·6)	(0·1)	(4·3)	(2·2)	(0·3)		
(f) Cardiff	36·8	41·4	25·7	25·2	45·3	51·2	58·4
(g) Haringey	79·9	101·5	102·1	99·3	119·5	112·2	113·7
	(3·3)	(11·1)	(8·9)	(4·1)	(2·9)		
(h) Southampton	21·4	24·3	13·4	14·9	29·3	27·1	29·9
	(0·5)	(1·0)	(0·2)	(0·3)	(0·4)		
(i) Leicester	34·6	39·8	30·5	31·5	48·9	46·9	51·1
	(1·8)	(2·4)	(2·4)	(2·0)	(3·0)		
(j) Leeds	155·7	188·5	156·7	163·9	203·5	202·2	197·2
	(0·9)	(1·3)	(1·0)	(4·6)	(3·6)		
(k) Wandsworth	79·9	90·5	76·5	76·5	103·8	106·2	116·5
	(5·1)	(2·8)	(10·2)	(13·2)	(13·0)		
(m) Northampton	12·6	14·5	11·5	12·0	17·8	17·7	30·9
	(3·4)	(3·1)	(3·9)	(1·7)	(1·8)		

Identifiable grants and subsidies
2) Per person } £
5) Per person of pensionable age }

		1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(a) Edinburgh	2)	87	104	111	100	189	156	163
	5)	454	535	581	522	967	801	836
(b) Bristol	2)	91	113	65	73	141	139	145
	5)	495	592	335	374	733	713	746
(c) Lambeth	2)	315	419	408	452	560	558	540
	5)	2,087	2,491	2,399	2,613	3,241	3,278	3,170
(d) Newcastle upon Tyne	2)	267	324	267	225	322	326	236
	5)	1,438	1,696	1,363	1,142	1,638	1,677	1,212
(e) Hammersmith and Fulham	2)	295	355	367	371	506	494	559
	5)	1,704	1,909	1,937	1,949	2,658	2,666	3,020
(f) Cardiff	2)	130	147	92	90	162	163	208
	5)	751	831	511	499	896	1,008	1,149
(g) Haringey	2)	343	458	491	485	584	561	568
	5)	2,189	2,819	2,975	2,955	3,632	3,527	3,576
(h) Southampton	2)	99	118	64	72	142	133	147
	5)	582	655	361	395	776	723	797
(i) Leicester	2)	119	144	108	112	173	167	182
	5)	704	803	612	636	992	947	1,031
(j) Leeds	2)	208	260	219	229	285	284	277
	5)	1,212	1,447	1,200	1,253	1,557	1,546	1,508
(k) Wandsworth	2)	277	333	289	296	402	411	452
	5)	1,595	1,810	1,548	1,572	2,148	2,246	2,463
(m) Northampton	2)	81	92	73	74	109	106	184
	5)	474	543	418	430	649	640	1,116

Table 3
Identifiable Grants and Subsidies
3) Per unemployed person
4) Per unemployed person under 20
£

		1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(a) Edinburgh	3)	3,319	2,588	2,664
	4)		12,855	15,628
(b) Bristol	3)	2,257	2,118	2,199
	4)		12,950	15,457
(c) Lambeth	3)	5,910	5,488	4,840
	4)		35,888	37,022
(d) Newcastle upon Tyne	3)	3,890	3,667	2,567
	4)		19,027	14,255
(e) Hammersmith and Fulham	3)	7,094	6,384	6,684
	4)		48,677	56,247
(f) Cardiff	3)	2,403	2,609	2,872
	4)		13,918	17,268
(g) Haringey	3)	7,764	6,759	6,419
	4)		43,376	46,421
(h) Southampton	3)	2,502	2,174	2,246
	4)		11,987	13,838
(i) Leicester	3)	2,409	2,267	2,508
	4)		14,423	18,068
(j) Leeds	3)	5,075	4,701	4,523
	4)		24,731	25,954
(k) Wandsworth	3)	6,821	6,491	6,964
	4)		40,417	49,425
(m) Northampton	3)	2,251	2,018	3,564
	4)		11,351	23,504

Notes to the tables
Table 1

(a) The figures included for rate support grant for the English authorities and Cardiff are affected by the change which occurred in 1981-82 when block grant and domestic rate relief grant superseded the needs, resources and domestic elements. The figures prior to 1981-82 are not on a comparable basis.

(b) Up to 1982-83 the figures include rent and rate rebates grants paid by the DOE. The 1982-83 figures also include some housing benefits paid by the DHSS. Thereafter, all housing benefits were paid by DHSS.

(c) The figures also include housing subsidies, specific revenue grants and capital grants. Capital grants are not available for English authorities for 1984-85 and 1985-86 and they are excluded from the totals for these years. The figures in brackets show the amounts of capital grants included in the English authority figures up to 1983-84.

(d) The figures include grants and subsidies made to local government only and do not include those made to persons, companies or other organisations. Information on the latter is not readily available. The figures would be very much greater if such payments could be included. Grants made to upper tier authorities within whose areas the towns and boroughs listed are situated are also excluded.

(e) The figures for Edinburgh and Cardiff have been provided by the Scottish and Welsh Offices respectively.

Table 2

The figures are based on population estimates obtained from OPCS for the English authorities and Cardiff and from the General Register Office (Scotland) for Edinburgh. 1984-85 figures have been used as estimates for 1985-86.

Table 3

The figures are based on unemployment data from the Department of Employment. No figures are available before 1983-84. Figures for unemployed persons under 20 have been used in place of those for persons under 21, which are not available. These figures can only be supplied for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Steel Industry

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what information he has on the current maximum steel making capacity of both the public and private sectors in the United Kingdom;

(2) what information he has on the current percentage of capacity in use in the United Kingdom steel industry;

(3) what information he has on the current production for export of the United Kingdom steel industry;

(4) what information he has on the current production for home consumption of the United Kingdom steel industry; and what information he has on the estimate of steel tonnages to be used in each of the proposed channel tunnel or bridge schemes in each of the years of construction.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the available information:

United Kingdom crude steel production
Million tonnes

	1985
Maximum possible production as at 1 January 1985*	23·7
Estimated annual production†	15·8
Capacity utilisation	67 per cent.

* *Source:* "ECSC Investment in the Community coalmining and iron and steel industries".

† Based on the figures for January to October 1985.

Finished steel products
Million tonnes

	January to September 1985
United Kingdom producers deliveries to the United Kingdom home market	6·8
United Kingdom producers exports	3·0
Other exports from United Kingdom	0·6
Total United Kingdom exports	3·6

Estimates of steel tonnages for the Channel crossings were included in the confidential proposals submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 31 October 1985 by the four promoters of a fixed Channel link and these proposals are now being assessed.

Regional Aid

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans for reviewing regional aid budgets; and whether he will take steps to introduce a development agency for the north of England.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, at 1985 prices, the amount of regional grants paid to Yorkshire and Humberside under *(a)* section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and *(b)* under part II of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for the financial years 1979-80 to 1983-84 inclusive.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 December 1985, c. *558*]: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure at 1985 prices

£'000

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Regional Development Grants	34,129	51,750	57,129	41,253	25,537
Regional Selective Assistance	10,800	8,823	8,618	11,796	9,559

Note: Current price expenditure has been converted to 1985 prices by use of an estimated GDP deflator.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the amount of regional assistance to be allocated to Yorkshire and Humberside during the 1985-86 financial year.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 December 1985, c. 558]: Estimates of regional assistance are only allocated on a national basis. However, expenditure during the first six months of this financial year in the Yorkshire and Humberside region was £9 million. On this basis, expenditure for 1985-86 is estimated to be £18 million.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the average of gross domestic product per head for the United Kingdom and for each English region.

Mr. Butcher: Data on gross domestic product per head for the United Kingdom and the English regions for the years 1975 to 1984 are published in the article "Regional Accounts 1984" (*Economic Trends*, November 1985) a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Institutional Investment

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will consider commissioning a study into the investment practices of the financial institutions, so as to ascertain their effects on the various English regions.

Mr. Howard: The recent review of regional policy revealed no evidence to suggest that the investment practices of the financial institutions were contributing to the problems of the various English regions. In the circumstances I do not consider it necessary to commission such a study.

Regional Policy

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each constituency in the north-west region which lie within the assisted areas the total offered under the new regional industrial policy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Misleading Pricing

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals Her Majesty's Government have for further controls regarding misleading price comparisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: As indicated in the statement to this House by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) on 4 March, the Government intend, as soon as parliamentary time is available, to introduce legislation replacing section 11 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and the Price Marking (Bargain Offers) Order 1979, as amended, by a new general prohibition on misleading price indications. Much of the necessary supporting detail, including paragraphs on misleading price comparisons, will be contained in a statutory code of practice. Consultation on the drafting of such a code is currently being undertaken by my Department with the trade, consumer organisations, enforcement authorities and the Office of Fair Trading.

BT (Shareholders' Vouchers)

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the application of the BT shareholder telephone voucher arrangements to businesses.

Mr. Pattie: Vouchers have been issued to over half a million British Telecom shareholders. The scheme is working well. Under the BT prospectus, companies, partnerships, firms, trusts and associations were not eligible to apply for telephone vouchers and individual investors could use vouchers only against their own BT telephone bills or the bills of their spouses. Accordingly, BT and the Post Office were instructed to reject all vouchers submitted against bills in business names. I have received a small number of complaints about this from individual investors who are sole traders on the grounds that they are personally and solely liable to British Telecom for their bills, in a manner distinct, for example, from partnerships. Having reviewed the position, I accept that, under the terms of the prospectus, vouchers should not have been rejected in these particular circumstances. I am therefore giving revised instructions to BT and the Post Office in this respect.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bolshevik Revolution (Compensation Claims)

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans for a new initiative on behalf of claimants for compensation for assets seized in Russia at the time of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have no new initiative in mind at present. We believe we should persist with the discussions with the Soviet Union about these claims.

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of claims received from British citizens for compensation for property in Russia seized at the time of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917; and what is the total value of the claims.

Mr. Eggar: Some 50,000 private claims were registered between 1918 and the early 1950s. The total value of those claims was earlier set at £400 million.

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in discussions with

the Soviet Union, Her Majesty's Government have attempted, since 1979, to reach a negotiated settlement of claims by British citizens for compensation for assets seized in Russia in 1917.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. We have continued to hold meetings with the Soviet Union at irregular intervals which have been directed towards a settlement both of United Kingdom claims against the Soviet Union and of Soviet claims against us.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment (Definition)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will define unemployment as used to produce *(a)* the conventional unemployment figures and *(b)* the labour force survey figures; and if he will list those categories of persons who are included in *(a)* but not in *(b)* and those who are included in *(b)* but not in *(a)*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information was published in the October 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette*, at page 393.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been lost since 1977 in the three northern regions (the north, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside); what proportion of the job losses in England over the same period the job losses in the northern regions represent; and what are the corresponding figures for the south-east region.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

The net changes in the size of the civilian employed labour force for the areas specified between June 1977 and September 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, are as follows:

	Number
North	− 211,000
North-West	− 183,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	− 186,000
South-East	+ 386,000
England	− 300,000

The net decrease in the civilian employed labour force was the result of increases in some regions, including the south-east, and decreases in others including the northern region.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate for each English region the change in total employment as a proportion of all jobs between June 1977 and September 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The changes in the size of the civilian employed labour force for the areas and dates specified are contained in the following table:

Percentage changes in the size of the civilian employed labour force between June 1977 and September 1984

	Per cent
South-East	3
East Anglia	9
South-West	4
West Midlands	− 9
East Midlands	− 5
Yorkshire and Humberside	− 9
North-West	− 7
North	− 16

The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in each of the regions of England since June 1977 to the latest available date, showing the proportion of people employed in the manufacturing sector for each region.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

The following tables show the net changes in the numbers of employees in employment in the manufacturing industries between June 1977 and September 1985, and the proportion of employees employed in September 1985 who were employed in manufacturing industries.

Net changes between June 1977 and September 1985 in numbers of employees in employment in manufacturing industries

Region	*Net change*
South-East	−317,000
East Anglia	−26,000
South-West	−76,000
West Midlands	−298,000
East Midlands	−103,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	−208,000
North-West	−320,000
North	−144,000

Employees employed in manufacturing industries in September 1985 as a proportion of all employees in employment

Region	*Per cent.*
South-East	21
East Anglia	25
South-West	24
West Midlands	36
East Midlands	35
Yorkshire and Humberside	29
North-West	28
North	28

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what was the unemployment rate in 1981 and 1984 in each English region and in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The rates are adjusted for discontinuities and relate to unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted school leavers for the English regions and the United Kingdom for October 1981 and October 1984.

	October 1981 Per cent.	*October 1984 Per cent.*
South-East	7·1	9·4
East Anglia	8·2	9·9
South-West	8·9	11·3
West Midlands	12·3	14·9
East Midlands	9·1	12·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	11·0	14·0
North-West	12·6	15·4
North	14·0	17·8
United Kingdom	10·2	12·8

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what is the proportion of unemployed in each English region who have been continuously unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. 10 October 1985 is the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available. The proportions of claimants who have been unemployed for over 12 months in the English regions were as follows:

	per cent.
South-East	36·3
East Anglia	34·8
South-West	34·2
West Midlands	47·0
East Midlands	40·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	41·8
North-West	45·2
North	45·7

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what is the ratio of registered unemployed people to notified vacancies in each English region; and what are the ratios for the three northern regions (north, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside) and the south-east.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following is the available information. Figures are given showing the numbers of unemployed claimants in the regions of England as at 14 November 1985. Also shown are the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the regions (including community programme) as at 8 November, and the ratios of the unemployed to these vacancies. Vacancies notified to jobcentres are estimated to be about one third of all vacancies in the economy as a whole.

Region	*Unemployed claimants*	*Unfilled Vacancies*	*Ratio*
South-East	779,842	68,428	11·4
East Anglis	81,676	6,303	13·0
South-West	208,419	19,573	10·6
West Midlands	345,681	16,927	20·4
East Midlands	198,884	10,698	18·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	307,148	11,461	26·8
North-West	448,151	19,319	23·2
North	236,188	11,051	21·4
Northern Regions (Yorkshire and Humberside North-West and North)	991,487	41,831	23·7

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General (1) what was the seasonally adjusted fall in unemployment in November;

(2) what was the seasonally adjusted fall in unemployment in September.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in the United Kingdom (excluding school leavers) fell by 3,800 in September, and by 8,100 in November.

Earnings

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what are the average gross weekly earnings of men in full-time employment for the United Kingdom and for each English region.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information relates to full-time male employees on adult rates in April 1985 in each English region and in Great Britain and is published in table 12 of "New Earnings Survey 1985", part A, a copy of which is in the Library.

Regions (Overseas Promotion)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General whether, in the light of the Government's commitment to spread the benefit of tourism throughout the United Kingdom, he will make proposals for promoting overseas the regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The British Tourist Authority, through its many marketing and advertising schemes, already encourages our overseas tourists to visit places outside London. The board has been asked to give even greater emphasis to this aspect of its marketing effort in the future. We have, of course, already announced the provision of an additional £150,000 to the BTA towards the new British travel centre which will have a key role to play in this aspect.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many chairmen and how many members of industrial tribunals there are in each region within the United Kingdom; and how many of such persons in each region are women, of Afro-Caribbean origin and of Asian origin, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

	Total number of members	*Women members*	*Total number of Chairmen*	*Women Chairmen*
England and Wales Regional Office of Industrial Tribunals				
Birmingham	172	44	14	—
Bristol	164	28	14	—
Bury St. Edmonds	151	40	12	—
Cardiff	130	26	7	—
Leeds	143	22	12	1
Liverpool	111	13	16	1
London/Central	171	43	23	2
London/North	141	33	19	4
London/South	163	45	23	5
Manchester	139	28	14	1
Newcastle	133	24	12	—
Nottingham	87	23	10	—
Sheffield	85	14	12	—
Southampton	140	28	11	—
Scotland	212	31	25	2

In Great Britain there are about 25 members of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin. I do not consider it appropriate to publish a regional breakdown of these figures. We have no information about the ethnic origins of chairmen of industrial tribunals.

Questions relating to industrial tribunals in Northern Ireland are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what is the annual salary of each member of the Manpower Services Commission; and what expenses were paid to each member in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Members of the commission are currently paid an annual salary of £673 plus £67·30 for each day worked. Expenses paid to commissioners from 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985 were as follows:

	£
Miss S. Elkin (resigned January 1985)	50·65
Dr. M. R. Green	307·38
Mr. W. H. Keys	190·30
Mr. J. A. Lawton	808·70
Mr. W. Longden	2,439·56
Sir Norman Payne	196·35

The remaining commissioners received no expenses payments during this period. The salary of the chairman is £52,750 per annum. Expenses of £793 were paid to the chairman during the period 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985.

Race Relations

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 9 December, he will provide information on the level of under-representation in particular work, the particular racial groups involved and geographical locations in such form as the information is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Ionising Radiation Regulations

Mr. Roger King asked the Paymaster General why copies of the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 and the associated code of practice are not available at the offices of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Broad street, Birmingham; if he will take steps to ensure that an adequate supply of copies are available before the regulations come into effect on 1 January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Due to exceptional demand, the regulations and associated code of practice have had to be reprinted. They will both be available from the Birmingham office of HMSO before 1 January 1986.

National Freight Company (Fire)

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General when the report of the Health and Safety Executive into the fire at the warehouse of the National Freight Company in Sheffield on 14 December will be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that the Health and Safety Executive will be publishing the report on Monday 16 December. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

EC Social Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the total amount of money paid to Britain under the European Economic Community Social Fund in each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will list the figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms at 1985 prices and *(c)* as a proportion of the total European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply,* 10 December 1985, c. *580*]: The information requested is given in the table:

Year	*Social fund payments—Great Britain* *Actual* *£ million*	*Real terms at 1985 prices* *£ million*	*Actual payments as proportion of EEC budget* *Per cent.*
1979	66·2	39·2	0·79
1980	76·9	55·7	0·87
1981	111·9	90·2	1·30
1982	112·9	97·9	1·11
1983	69·6	63·1	0·5
1984	243·7	231·6	*

* Budget details not yet available.

The EEC budget operates within a calendar year and the figures given refer to payments received from January to December each year.

The dip in receipts experienced in 1983 is due to EEC budgetary difficulties which slowed down the level of payments, some of which were carried over into the following year. In 1984, new social fund rules were introduced which for the first time allow advance payments to be made automatically to all approved schemes for that year. This, coupled to the payments carried over from 1983, explains the wide variance between the two years.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink Farm (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when a decision is likely to be made on an application to operate a mink farm at Porchfield on the Isle of Wight;

(2) whether a valid licence presently exists for the operation of a mink farm on any part of the Isle of Wight.

Mrs. Fenner: A licence to keep mink at Porchfield, Isle of Wight, was issued on 3 December 1985.

Slaughterhouses (Stunning Equipment)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce legislation to require a monthly check of stunning equipment by slaughterhouse authorities.

Mrs. Fenner: The law already requires stunning instruments to be in proper repair. In our response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the welfare of red meat animals at the time of slaughter the Government have proposed to give guidance to local authorities that this provision should be enforced by means of monthly checks.

Hinckley Point

Mr. Ashdown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a report of the radioactive contamination detected following the site incident at Hinckley point nuclear power station on 29 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: No increase in radioactivity has been detected off-site following the incident. I do not, therefore, intend to publish a report.

Battery Hen Cages

Mr. Frank Field asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the

Government's attitude to the proposed changes in European Economic Community regulations on the size of battery hen cages.

Mrs. Fenner: We attach importance to reaching Communitywide agreement on a new directive laying down minimum welfare standards for laying hens in battery cages.

As the House was informed yesterday, this issue was further examined by the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 9/10 December, but no conclusions were reached. Discussions are expected to resume on 19 December.

Sheepmeat (Exports to France)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in replying to the hon. Member for Tiverton on 9 December that the best means to return France to her treaty obligations concerning her illegal ban on British sheepmeat exports is to draw the French action to the attention of the European Community Commission and to write to the French Minister of Agriculture, he means that this is more rapidly efficacious than imposing an immediate ban on the import of French turkeys into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: As I made clear in my earlier reply to my hon. Friend, it may be doubted whether the best means to return France to adherance to her treaty obligations is for Britain herself to act illegally.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total staff of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service as at 1 April in each of the operating departments.

Mrs. Fenner: The total staff of ADAS as at 1 April 1985 was as follows:

	Number
Central Unit	11
Agriculture Service	1,619
Agricultural Science Service	1,141
Land and Water Service	593
State Veterinary Service	1,422
	4,786

Research and Development

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he proposes to announce the savings in programmes within his responsibility referred to in his statement on 28 November.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1985, c. *269*.]: A contribution of £1 million is to be made from the programmes for which I am responsible. The cash limit for Class III, Vote 4 (Other Agricultural and Food Services and Support from the Fishing Industry) is being reduced by £650,000 from £145,333,000 to £144,683,000 and extra receipts of £350,000 arising from increased sales of land on that Vote will be surrendered to the Consolidated Fund. Separate announcements are being made about the remaining contribution of £4·3 million which is being found by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Government Subvention (Cost)

21. **Mr. Cyril Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost in the present fiscal year and for five fiscal years hence of Her Majesty's Government's subvention to Ulster.

Dr. Boyson: The subvention for 1985-86 is estimated to be £1,468 million. Estimates are not available for future years because a number of the figures which form part of the calculation can only be forecast accurately on an in-year basis.

Security

22. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present state of cross-border co-operation on security.

Mr. Scott: Co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana at a working level is good. I am confident, however, that co-operation in security matters at all levels between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom will be enhanced by the recent agreement. As the joint communiqué issued after the meeting on 15 November between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach made clear, this will be one of the subjects on which the Intergovernmental Conference will concentrate at its initial meetings. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the statement issued after yesterday's meeting, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

United States Aid

23. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what level of United States aid has been promised to Northern Ireland in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: The Government of the United Kingdom have not received any formal offers of financial support from the Government of the United States of America for Northern Ireland in response to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. But the President has said that he will be working closely with Congress in a bipartisan effort to find tangible ways for the United States to lend practical support to this important agreement. I welcome this response, but I cannot anticipate what the outcome will be.

Assembly

24. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Tom King: The Assembly's responsibilities are to consider how a widely acceptable Northern Ireland Administration could be formed and, meanwhile, to scrutinise the work of the Northern Ireland Departments. It has suspended its consultative activities and set up a committee to examine the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If this suspension continues for long, questions about the Assembly's continuance will inevitably arise, and it will, in any event, be necessary to review the allocation of staff to it.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

25. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many representations he has received on the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and how many of those received have alleged that the Irish Government have been given a major and substantial role in the day-to-day running of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) earlier today.

27. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make a statement about the workings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question by the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) earlier today.

28. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will reconsider his decision not to publish the agendas of intergovernmental councils.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) earlier today.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the text of the assurances circulated to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and other members of the public service concerning the effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, of 9 December 1985, c. *444*]: On 15 November 1985, I issued a message about the Anglo-Irish Agreement to all civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments. The Chief Constable also issued a statement on the agreement on 29 November, which has been published. I am arranging for a copy of my statement to be placed in the Library.

Flags and Emblems Act 1954

26. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to repeal the Flags and Emblems Act 1954.

Mr. Scott: We shall want to give careful consideration to this question. No decisions have yet been taken.

Navan Fort

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received relating to the implications for the archaeological heritage of the possible development of the Navan fort site in County Armagh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: A planning application for an extension to an existing quarry, which lies adjacent to Navan Fort, generated widespread interest and a substantial number of representations were received relating to the implications for the archaeological heritage of the site. The Planning Appeals Commission has held a public inquiry to consider the application and is expected to report early in the new year.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regularly. Our meetings are confidential.

Prescriptions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, what were *(a)* the costs of producing and distributing literature about exemption from prescription charges, *(b)* the costs of inspection for fraud in claiming exemption from prescription charges and *(c)* the cost of administering the sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for each quarter of the calendar year 1984, the first three quarters of 1985 and for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, what was *(a)* the number of prescriptions dispensed, *(b)* the percentage of prescriptions exempt from charges, *(c)* the costs of prescriptions (i) the payments by patients (including pre-payment certification), (ii) the payments from public funds, (iii) the total costs, (iv) the average gross costs per prescription and *(d)* the number and type of pre-payment certificate and *(e)* revenue from the sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. Needham: The information requested on prescriptions dispensed by chemist contractors and appliance suppliers is as follows:

Prescriptions dispensed by chemists and appliance suppliers

Period	*Prescriptions dispensed*	*Percentage exempt from charge**	*Patients contributions†*	*Payment from public funds*	*Total cost*	*Average gross cost per prescription*	*Number and type of pre-payment certificates*		*Revenue from sale of pre-payment certificates*
	Thousands		*£ thousands*	*£ thousands*	*£ thousands*	*£*	*4 month*	*12 month*	*£*
Quarter ended									
31 March 1984	3,501	84·89	744	14,974	15,795	4·51	1,536	3,003	76,655
30 June 1984	3,455	85·48	806	15,246	16,100	4·66	1,020	1,531	47,588
30 September 1984	3,192	85·73	733	14,938	15,714	4·92	1,165	1,487	43,176
31 December 1984	3,519	85·89	798	15,889	16,740	4·76	2,327	3,151	52,753
31 March 1985	3,734	86·63	802	16,590	17,492	4·68	1,461	3,499	99,503
30 June 1985	3,029	87·60	754	14,549	15,358	5·07	1,094	1,576	55,488
30 September 1985	3,036	87·35	772	14,861	15,685	5·17	1,127	1,283	52,280

Period	Prescriptions dispensed	Percentage exempt from charge*	Patients contributions†	Payment from public funds	Total cost	Average gross cost per prescription	Number and type of pre-payment certificates		Revenue from sale of pre-payment certificates
	Thousands		£ thousands	£ thousands	£ thousands	£	4 month	12 month	£
Financial year									
1983-84	13,503	84·44	2,923	59,011	62,139	4·60	4,880	7,810	204,889
1984-85	13,900	85·64	3,140	62,865	66,046	4·75	5,973	9,868	241,093

* This figure includes an estimated 4 per cent. of prescriptions which are exempt because of the purchase of prepayment certificates.
† Excluding pre-payment certificates.

New University of Ulster

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his current estimate of the increased capital costs and increased revenue costs, respectively, of the merger between the university of Ulster and Ulster polytechnic to form the new university of Ulster.

Mr. Scott: The merger between the new university of Ulster and the Ulster polytechnic to form the university of Ulster involved no additional capital costs. The current increased revenue cost is estimated to be approximately £900,000.

Anglo-Irish Summit (Security)

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much it cost to secure Hillsborough castle on the occasion of the Anglo-Irish summit on 15 November.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *45*]: Precise details are not readily available. However, the cost of policing this event has been estimated at £154,000.

SCOTLAND

Nursery Places

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of day care places and nursery places provided by Scottish local authorities in each year since 1978-79; and what proportion of the under-five years population in Scotland these numbers represented in each year.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Year at 31 March	Places available	Number of places available per 1,000 population under five
Day Nurseries		
1979	3,738	11·5
1980	3,645	11·4
1981	3,853	12·0
1982	3,792	11·9
1983	3,679	11·4
1984	3,685	11·2
1985	*3,829	11·7
Playgroups		
1979	†891	‡2·7
1980	967	3·0
1981	919	2·9
1982	717	2·3
1983	1,107	3·4
1984	1,207	3·7
1985	*2,077	6·3

* Provisional.
† Number of children attending.
‡ Number of children attending per 1,000 population.

Nursery Schools and Classes

	Number of places	Number of pupils	Number of Pupils as a percentage of 3 & 4-year-old Population
1978-79	22,469	31,326	23·1
1979-80	24,724	31,770	24·0
1980-81	25,508	32,472	25·8
1981-82	25,367	33,178	28·0
1982-83	25,512	34,682	28·1
1983-84	26,758	36,650	28·3
1984-85	27,660	37,867	28·4

Notes:
(1) The numbers of places and pupils relate to September in each year. The number of pupils is known to rise during the session due to staggered intakes.
(2) The numbers of pupils include full-time and part-time places.

Milk

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for the average household consumption of liquid milk in Scotland in each of the last six years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Mackay: Estimates of average household consumption of liquid milk are obtained from the national food survey conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The information set out in the table takes account of whole white milk, semi-skimmed and skimmed milk, including supplies provided in schools and by the welfare milk scheme. Liquid milk consumed by catering, manufacturing or institutional outlets is excluded.

	Pints per person per week
1979	4·26
1980	4·37
1981	4·20
1982	4·11
1983	4·00
1984	4·01

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the average household consumption of liquid milk in Scotland over the last six years for which figures are available, differentiating between higher and lower income families.

Mr. John Mackay: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained, partly on an estimated basis, only at a disproportionate cost.

Population Statistics

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the figures for the number of children aged under five years in Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and what is his Department's estimate of the proportion of these children in each year who are *(a)* first-born children and *(b)* members of large families.

Mr. John MacKay: The Registrar General's estimates of the population aged under five at 30 June in the years 1980-84 are as follows. From a variety of sources, the Registrar General has estimated that, in those years, 40 to 42 per cent. of children under five were first born, 7 to 9 per cent. were in families with four or more children and about 2 per cent. were in families with five or more children.

	Number
1980	320,738
1981	317,908
1982	324,012
1983	328,023
1984	327,340

Note:
There is a discontinuity in the series between 1980 and 1981. The 1981-84 figures have been rebased on the final results from the 1981 census of population.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many local authority dwellings in each district in Scotland at 31 March were *(a)* built pre-1940 of non-traditional construction and require comprehensive modernisation, *(b)* built pre-1940 of traditional construction and require comprehensive modernisation, *(c)* built post-1939 of non-traditional construction and require comprehensive modernisation and *(d)* built post-1939 of traditional construction and require comprehensive modernisation.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested at *(a)*, *(b)* and *(d)* is provided in the tabel below for 31 March 1984. The details requested at *(c)* are not held centrally. However, the local housing authorities' estimates of the numbers of dwellings of non-traditional construction built in the immediate post-war period (up to 1955) have been provided.

	Dwellings requiring comprehensive modernisation			
	Built pre-1940 of non-traditional construction	*Built pre-1940 of traditional construction*	*Built immediately post war (up to 1955) of non-traditional construction*	*Built post-1939 of traditional construction*
Scotland	744	68,331	31,629	252,866
Borders				
Berwickshire	0	0	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0	0	933
Roxburgh	0	342	20	0
Tweeddale	0	68	0	50
Central				
Clackmannan	2	0	282	1,372
Falkirk	116	1,500	1,884	5,500
Stirling	0	584	115	248
Dumfries and Galloway				
Annendale and Eskdale	0	25	0	1,725
Nithsdale	12	1,570	525	4,000
Stewartry	0	100	40	0
Wigtown	0	0	305	830
Fife				
Dunfermline	0	831	931	1,000
Kirkcaldy	0	964	1,598	7,698
North East Fife	0	481	0	1,129
Grampian				
Aberdeen	134	444	1,911	1,200
Banff and Buchan	0	1,500	60	500
Gordon	3	31	0	0
Kincardine and Deeside	0	0	0	331
Moray	1	220	105	61
Highland				
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	4	0	0
Caithness	0	78	205	138
Inverness	—	—	—	—
Lochaber	0	320	75	1,200
Nairn	0	0	14	44
Ross and Cromarty	0	0	14	402
Skye and Lochalsh	0	81	0	251

	Dwellings requiring comprehensive modernisation			
	Built pre-1940 of non-traditional construction	*Built pre-1940 of traditional construction*	*Built immediately post war (up to 1955) of non-traditional construction*	*Built post-1939 of traditional construction*
Sutherland	0	—	65	250
Lothian				
East Lothian	0	96	605	3,733
Edinburgh	0	5,384	3,600	2,007
Midlothian	100	0	402	0
West Lothian	0	0	83	0
Strathclyde				
Argyll and Bute	0	353	174	2,500
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	29	0	220
Clydebank	0	0	1,300	0
Clydesdale	0	2,330	961	1,860
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0	29	1,149
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	2,957	1,720	4,114
Cunninghame	0	24	1,398	2,950
Dumbarton	0	2,023	2,267	—
East Kilbride	0	0	0	383
Eastwood	0	0	0	0
Glasgow	0	22,129	1,645	35,794
Hamilton	204	2,821	—	—
Inverclyde	0	0	72	6,600
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	502	1,054	3,000
Kyle and Carrick	0	0	10	5,751
Monklands	72	2,764	730	1,525
Motherwell	0	3,365	2,012	158
Renfrew	0	10,013	771	12,000
Strathkelvin	0	0	146	0
Tayside				
Angus	0	45	0	1,500
Dundee	100	3,100	3,800	2,800
Perth and Kinross	0	616	276	144
Orkney Islands	0	170	20	0
Shetland Islands	0	311	147	110
Western Isles Islands	0	156	258	0

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many local authority dwellings in each district in Scotland at 31 March were *(a)* built pre-1940 of traditional construction and require partial modernisation, *(b)* built post-1939 of traditional construction and require partial modernisation and *(c)* built post-1955 of non-traditional construction and require partial modernisation.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested as at 31 March 1984 is set out in the table.

	Local Authority dwellings requiring partial modernisation of traditional construction		*of non-traditional construction*
	Built pre-1940	*Built post-1939*	*Built post-1955*
Scotland	27,350	65,928	17,375
Borders			
Berwickshire	0	537	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0	4
Roxburgh	250	1,000	0
Tweeddale	0	0	0
Central			
Clackmannan	0	0	0
Falkirk	2,500	5,500	3,000
Stirling	400	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway			
Annandale and Eskdale	0	0	0
Nithsdale	..	..	0
Stewartry	38	177	0
Wigtown	900	0	0
Fife			
Dunfermline	0	8,500	..
Kirkcaldy	0	..	0
North East Fife	1,400	55	0
Grampian			
Aberdeen	7,135	0	700
Banff and Buchan	0	0	0
Gordon	144	1,020	0
Kincardine and Deeside	135	9	0
Moray	248	1,700	106
Highland			
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	60	10
Caithness	0	705	170
Inverness	..	..	..
Lochaber	500	500	141

	Local Authority dwellings requiring partial modernisation of traditional construction		of non-traditional construction
	Built pre-1940	Built post-1939	Built post-1955
Nairn	0	123	0
Ross and Cromarty	310	1,577	0
Skye and Lochalsh	0	0	0
Sutherland	80	250	..
Lothian			
East Lothian	0	..	0
Edinburgh	0	3,410	7,000
Midlothian	4,000	6,200	58
West Lothian	2,000	10,000	3,000
Strathclyde			
Argyll and Bute	0	0	0
Bearsden and Milngavie	65	979	0
Clydebank	0	5,676	294
Clydesdale	0	430	194
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,170	470	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0	1,050
Cunninghame	698	0	0
Dumbarton	0	..	..
East Kilbride	0	0	0
Eastwood	0	0	0
Glasgow	2,786	..	..
Hamilton	..	..	..
Inverclyde	0	6,000	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	982	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0	0
Monklands	0	0	0
Motherwell	0	0	0
Renfrew	0	..	226
Strathkelvin	1,609	3,291	0
Tayside			
Angus	0	3,200	0
Dundee	0	3,610	1,422
Perth and Kinross	0	114	0
Orkney Islands	0	200	0
Shetland Islands	0	299	0
Western Isles Islands	0	336	0

.. Not available.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many local authority dwellings in each district in Scotland at 31 March were *(a)* built pre-1940 of traditional construction and require rewiring only, *(b)* built post-1939 of traditional construction and require rewiring only and *(c)* built post-1955 of non-traditional construction and require rewiring only.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested as at 31 March 1984 is set out in the table.

	Number of dwellings requiring rewiring only of traditional construction		of non-traditional construction
	Built pre-1940	Built post-1939	Built post-1955
Scotland	2,026	101,380	14,834
Borders			
Berwickshire	0	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0	0
Roxburgh	0	0	0
Tweeddale	0	0	0
Central			
Clackmannan	0	0	0
Falkirk	900	3,000	500
Stirling	0	650	..
Dumfries and Galloway			
Annandale and Eskdale	0	552	0
Nithsdale	..	..	0
Stewartry	0	0	0
Wigtown	0	0	0
Fife			
Dunfermline	0	2,566	..
Kirkcaldy	0	3,194	0
North East Fife	686	272	0
Grampian			
Aberdeen	0	7,700	500
Banff and Buchan	0	750	0
Gordon	0	0	0
Kincardine and Deeside	0	0	0
Moray	119	361	0
Highland			
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	85	10
Caithness	0	224	0
Inverness	..	..	..
Lochaber	0	74	20
Nairn	0	26	0
Ross and Cromarty	0	0	0
Skye and Lochalsh	121	20	4
Sutherland	..	30	..
Lothian			
East Lothian	0	150	0
Edinburgh	0	6,000	6,000
Midlothian	0	0	0
West Lothian	0	1,500	0
Strathclyde			
Argyll and Bute	0	650	0
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0	0
Clydebank	0	0	0
Clydesdale	0	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0	0
Dumbarton	0	..	..
East Kilbride	0	0	0
Eastwood	0	0	0
Glasgow	0	41,669	..
Hamilton	..	..	..
Inverclyde	0	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	200	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	3,100	0
Monklands	0	4,607	0
Motherwell	0	12,500	0
Renfrew	0	0	..

	Number of dwellings requiring rewiring only of traditional construction		of non-traditional construction
	Built pre-1940	Built post-1939	Built post-1955
Strathkelvin	0	0	0
Tayside			
Angus	0	2,000	0
Dundee	0	7,600	7,800
Perth and Kinross	0	2,000	0
Orkney Islands	0	100	0
Shetland Islands	0	0	0
Western Isles Islands	0	0	0

.. Not available.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many local authority dwellings in each district in Scotland at 31 March were suffering from condensation and dampness.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Graigen) on 19 April 1985, at columns *287-90*.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many local authority dwellings in each district in Scotland at 31 March were built post-1955 of non-traditional construction and require major repairs.

Mr. Ancram: The table shows the housing authorities' assessments at 31 March 1984 of the numbers of local authority dwellings of non-traditional construction built after 1955 which required major repairs.

Built post 1955 of non traditional construction requiring major repairs

	Number
Scotland	50,011
Borders	
Berwickshire	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0
Roxburgh	40
Tweeddale	28
Central	
Clackmannan	0
Falkirk	1,170
Stirling	0
Dumfires and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	0
Nithsdale	0
Stewartry	0
Wigtown	0
Fife	
Dunfermline	181
Kirkcaldy	0
North East Fife	0
Grampian	
Aberdeen	1,329
Banff and Buchan	200
Gordon	0
Kincardine and Deeside	0
Moray	233
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	0
Caithness	0
Inverness	n.a.
Lochaber	194
Nairn	58
Ross and Cromarty	539
Skye and Lochalsh	0
Sutherland	40
Lothian	
East Lothian	0
Edinburgh	6,000
Midlothian	0
West Lothian	2,000
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	309
Bearsden and Milngavie	0
Clydebank	0
Clydesdale	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,070
Cunninghame	148
Dumbarton	n.a.
East Kilbride	0
Eastwood	0
Glasgow	24,592
Hamilton	n.a.
Inverclyde	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0
Kyle and Carrick	234
Monklands	800
Motherwell	5,123
Renfrew	250
Strathkelvin	0
Tayside	
Angus	0
Dundee	5,000
Perth and Kinross	433
Orkney Islands	0
Shetland Islands	40
Western Isles Islands	0

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many of the following types of housing are required in each district in Scotland at 31 March *(a)* sheltered, *(b)* amenity, *(c)* general needs, *(d)* housing suitable for wheelchairs and *(e)* housing suitable for ambulant disabled.

Mr. Ancram: The table shows the numbers of *(a)* sheltered, *(b)* amenity and *(c)* general needs housing which housing authorities considered were required at 31 March 1984. No information about housing authorities' assessed needs for housing suitable for disabled persons with wheelchairs or the ambulant disabled is held centrally.

	General needs dwellings	Special needs dwellings	
		Sheltered	Amenity
Scotland	89,629	29,536	27,754
Borders			
Berwickshire	60	30	18
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	156	48
Roxburgh	196	134	26
Tweeddale	50	102	0

	General needs dwellings	Special needs dwellings	
		Sheltered	Amenity
Central			
Clackmannan	350	200	200
Falkirk	2,200	700	600
Stirling	1,250	200	889
Dumfries and Galloway			
Annandale and Eskdale	650	37	245
Nithsdale	481	24	63
Stewartry	350	150	50
Wigtown	60	90	20
Fife			
Dunfermline	3,200	220	420
Kirkcaldy	2,340	510	n/a
North East Fife	n/a	1,264	100
Grampian			
Aberdeen	8,620	2,090	0
Banff and Buchan	1,983	276	438
Gordon	2,208	430	270
Kincardine and Deeside	1,817	148	264
Moray	1,333	305	110
Highland			
Badenoch and Strathspey	88	30	0
Caithness	250	20	30
Inverness	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lochaber	100	80	60
Nairn	100	60	20
Ross and Cromarty	255	0	0
Skye and Lochalsh	100	0	12
Sutherland	100	51	51
Lothian			
East Lothian	1,359	637	n/a
Edinburgh	12,000	3,735	n/a
Midlothian	982	321	n/a
West Lothian	5,000	1,000	n/a
Strathclyde			
Argyll and Bute	800	600	1,300
Bearsden and Milngavie	200	323	150
Clydebank	730	183	1,115
Clydesdale	283	297	1,082
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	500	150	60
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	108	526
Cunninghame	2,004	413	557
Dumbarton	1,238	615	148
East Kilbride	2,024	286	n/a
Eastwood	1,300	252	0
Glasgow	13,219	6,511	15,000
Hamilton	2,050	266	0
Inverclyde	1,200	400	2,000
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1,125	489	125
Kyle and Carrick	334	300	0
Monklands	1,537	317	12
Motherwell	2,300	84	98
Renfrew	0	1,350	800
Strathkelvin	180	384	n/a
Tayside			
Angus	1,357	158	747
Dundee	5,000	2,500	0
Perth and Kinross	3,000	500	n/a
Orkney Islands	150	30	30
Shetland Islands	516	20	20
Western Isles Islands	1,100	0	50

n/a=Not available.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses in each district in Scotland he estimates *(a)* lack some or all standard amenities and *(b)* are below the tolerable standard.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table for 31 March 1985.

Total number of dwellings

	Lacking some or all standard amenities*	Below tolerable standard
Scotland	37,765	63,195
Borders	265	2,014
Berwickshire	n/a	644
Ettrick and Lauderdale	265	720
Roxburgh	n/a	450
Tweeddale	n/a	200
Central	1,009	1,899
Clackmannan	15	470
Falkirk	735	872
Stirling	259	557
Dumfries and Galloway	335	982
Annandale and Eskdale	125	282
Nithsdale	34	423
Stewartry	76	177
Wigtown	100	100
Fife	2,415	3,461
Dunfermline	568	650
Kirkcaldy	622	862
North East Fife	1,225	1,949
Grampian	5,089	6,651
Aberdeen	2,633	2,656
Banff and Buchan	878	1,814
Gordon	543	543
Kincardine and Deeside	42	202
Moray	993	1,436
Highland	2,846	5,371
Badenoch and Strathspey	n/a	264
Caithness	420	448
Inverness	434	717
Lochaber	138	170
Nairn	17	52
Ross and Cromarty	905	2,690
Skye and Lochalsh	665	665
Sutherland†	267	365
Lothian	7,471	8,657
East Lothian	399	964
Edinburgh	6,446	6,766
Midlothian	21	322
West Lothian	605	605
Strathclyde	10,937	23,004
Argyll and Bute	1,840	4,200
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	75
Clydebank	93	102
Clydesdale	39	311
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth†	31	68
Cumnock and Doon Valley	34	223
Cunninghame	n/a	437
Dumbarton	140	140
East Kilbride	32	128
Eastwood	31	38
Glasgow	4,953	12,189
Hamilton	604	933
Inverclyde	151	418
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	156	195
Kyle and Carrick	219	336
Monklands	140	284
Motherwell	285	787
Renfrew†	2,177	2,177
Strathkelvin	12	13
Tayside	5,513	6,885
Angus	n/a	1,216

	*Lacking some or all standard amenities**	*Below tolerable standard*
Dundee†	4,803	4,803
Perth and Kinross	710	866
Orkney Islands	875	1170
Shetland Islands	1,010	1,013
Western Isles Islands	n/a	2,088

* Sink, hot water and inside w.c.
† Figures for earlier year.
n/a=Not available.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, for each quarter of the calendar year 1984, the first three quarters of 1985 and for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, what was *(a)* the number of prescriptions dispensed, *(b)* the percentage of prescriptions exempt from charges, *(c)* the costs of prescriptions (i) the payments by patients (excluding pre-payment certificates), (ii) the payments from public funds, (iii) the total costs, (iv) the average gross costs per prescription, *(d)* the number and type of pre-payment certificate and *(e)* the revenue from sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. John MacKay: The information available on NHS prescriptions dispensed by chemist contractors and appliance suppliers in Scotland is given in the table:

	1984				*1985*		*1983-84*	*1984-85*
	Jan-Mar	*Apr-Jun*	*July-Sept*	*Oct-Dec*	*Jan-Mar*	*Apr-Jun*	*Apr-Mar*	*Apr-Mar*
				Million				
Prescriptions dispensed	9·26	9·15	8·70	9·28	9·56	8·65	35·94	36·69
				Per cent.				
Percentage exempt from prescription charges	77	78	78	79	79	80	77	78
				£ million				
Total gross cost	41·74	43·06	42·35	45·09	45·82	42·91	163·77	176·32
Less prescription charges paid by patients	2·95	3·23	3·02	3·16	3·23	3·38	11·60	12·64
Total net cost	38·79	39·83	39·33	41·93	42·59	39·53	152·17	163·68
				£				
Average gross cost per prescription	4·51	4·71	4·87	4·86	4·79	4·96	4·56	4·81

Corresponding details for the period July-September 1985 are not yet available.

Information for sales of pre-payment certificates in Scotland is readily available only for financial years. Details are as follows:

	1983-84	*1984-85*
	Thousands	
Number of certificates issued:		
Four-monthly certificates	24	26
Annual certificates	43	44
	£ million	
Total income from sale of certificates	1·11	1·28

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, for Scotland, what were *(a)* the costs of producing and distributing literature about exemption from prescription charges, *(b)* the costs of inspection for fraud in claiming exemption from prescription charges and *(c)* the cost of administering the sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. John MacKay: The detailed procedures relating to these prescription charge arrangements in Scotland are undertaken mainly by health boards and the information requested on costs is not readily available.

Farmers (Exceptional Weather Aid)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he is contributing towards the £5·3 million savings announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his statement of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *1033*.

Mr. Younger: Expenditure on Votes within my responsibility will be reduced by a total of £2 million, reflecting expected savings, as follows:

Vote		*Reduction £ thousand*
XV,1	(Agricultural Support, Scotland)	250
XV,2	(Agricultural Services and Fisheries Scotland)	550
XV,6	(Roads, Transport and Environmental Services, Scotland)	1,114
XV,9	(New Towns, Scotland)	86
		2,000

Corresponding reductions are being made in the cash limits for: Vote XV, 2 from £67,003 million to £66,453 million and for Vote XV, 6 from £147·467 million to £146·353 million.

Agricultural Research and Development

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the follow-up to the consultation paper "A Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development."

Mr. Younger: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has today published a paper entitled "Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development." It reports the outcome of the consultation process, outlines

future strategy and the implications for the present organisation of research and development in the Scottish agricultural research institutes and the Scottish agricultural colleges, and sets out proposals for improved co-ordination and management of Research and Development in Scotland and its effective integration and co-ordination with similar work throughout the United Kingdom.

Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the outturn revenue spending of each area health board in Scotland for each year from 1979-80 to 1984-85 and the budgeted revenue spending for 1985-86, all expressed in constant 1985-86 prices on the basis of the cost and price factors relevant to the National Health Service, along with indices for each year for each Board's spending taking 1979-80 as 100.

Mr. Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1985, c. *53*]: The table gives current expenditure on hospital and community health services by each health board in each year since 1979-80 at 1985-86 prices as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, along with the indices requested. No separate record is maintained of pay and price movements within the NHS in Scotland. When measured by a National Health Service pay and price index maintained for England by the Department of Health and Social Security, expenditure on hospital and community health services in Scotland between 1979-80 and 1984-85 has increased by 6·5 per cent. It would not be appropriate to measure movement in the expenditure of individual health boards on hospital services by reference to the index for national pay and price movements in England, because the composition of individual health boards' expenditure may differ substantially from the national average.

Health Board	*1979-80 Deflated by GDP Deflator £'000*	*Index*	*1980-81 Deflated by GDP Deflator £'000*	*Index*	*1981-82 Deflated by GDP Deflator £'000*	*Index*	*1982-83 Deflated by GDP Deflator £'000*	*Index*	*1983-84 Deflated by GDP Deflator £'000*	*Index*	*1984-85 Deflated by GDP Deflator £'000*	*Index*	*1985-86 Estimated Expenditure £'000*	*Index*
Argyll and Clyde	88,835	100	92,495	104·12	95,867	107·92	95,413	107·40	95,398	107·39	96,100	108·18	99,428	111·92
Ayrshire and Arran	51,127	100	56,026	109·58	59,295	115·98	63,680	124·55	67,184	131·40	69,158	135·27	70,786	138·45
Borders	16,206	100	18,120	111·81	18,341	113·17	19,080	117·73	19,476	120·18	19,948	123·09	20,231	124·84
Dumfries and Galloway	29,882	100	32,739	109·56	32,763	109·64	33,400	111·77	34,357	114·98	35,430	118·57	35,569	119·03
Fife	53,803	100	58,116	108·01	60,167	111·83	61,258	113·85	63,698	118·39	66,108	122·87	66,415	123·44
Forth Valley	53,321	100	58,432	109·59	59,047	110·73	60,235	112·97	60,840	114·10	62,056	116·38	64,456	120·89
Grampian	102,872	100	114,746	111·54	113,431	110·26	113,995	110·81	117,494	114·21	120,443	117·08	121,540	118·15
Greater Glasgow	329,340	100	359,910	109·28	362,080	109·94	356,678	108·30	361,250	109·69	367,612	111·62	364,823	110·77
Highland	45,035	100	48,092	106·79	49,378	109·64	48,385	107·44	49,110	109·05	50,477	112·08	51,041	113·34
Lanarkshire	95,844	100	105,125	109·68	105,589	110·17	107,424	112·08	107,236	111·87	111,600	116·44	112,538	117·42
Lothian	195,524	100	209,351	107·07	220,242	112·64	216,235	110·59	216,930	110·95	219,802	112·42	220,797	112·93
Orkney	2,931	100	3,206	109·38	3,331	113·65	3,404	116·14	3,508	119·69	3,641	124·22	3,686	125·76
Shetland	3,777	100	4,145	109·72	4,189	110·91	4,244	112·36	4,418	116·97	4,610	122·05	4,619	122·29
Tayside	120,208	100	130,384	108·47	129,039	107·35	127,440	106·02	128,907	107·24	130,109	108·24	128,436	106·84
Western Isles	5,526	100	5,996	108·51	6,193	112·07	6,371	115·29	6,627	119·92	7,007	126·80	7,048	127·54
Total	1,194,231	100	1,296,882	108·60	1,318,953	110·44	1,317,240	110·30	1,336,431	111·91	1,364,100	114·22	*1,378,067	115·39

Figures include expenditure by Boards on associated services which does not form part of their current expenditure allocations.
* Includes £6,654 million not allocated to individual boards.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing Health Service expenditure in Scotland for each year since 1979 in real terms, adjusted for *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* the medical price index.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985, c. *383*]: The information requested is as follows:

The figures in column *(b)* have been constructed by reference to the National Health Service pay and price index maintained for England by the Department of Health and Social Security.

	(a) £ million at 1984-85 prices and measured by the GDP deflator	*(b) £ million at 1984-85 prices as measured by the NHS pay and price deflator*
1978-79	1,576	1,744
1979-80	1,608	1,744
1980-81	1,712	1,732
1981-82	1,775	1,812
1982-83	1,799	1,834
1983-84	1,837	1,865
1984-85	1,885	1,885
Percentage increase	19·6	8·1

Childhood Cancer

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Her Majesty's Government are carrying out or intend to carry out any investigations into the incidence of childhood cancers in the areas around *(a)* Holy loch and *(b)* Rosyth.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *459*]: I am advised that there is no established connection between nuclear plants and the incidence of cancers in the surrounding population. Regular monitoring is carried out on environmental levels of radiation in the

vicinity of nuclear establishments. There are a number of detailed studies currently in progress into the incidence of cancers in the United Kingdom. These include studies of areas both around and remote from nuclear establishments. The results of these studies will be considered by the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment as they become available. In the meantime COMARE will consider any other relevant information put to it relating to the incidence of childhood cancers in the area around Rosyth and Holy loch.

The establishment of COMARE was announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Health on 25 July with the objective of offering Government independent medical and scientific advice on the health effects of natural and man-made radiation in the environment.

Capital Investment

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in (i) schools and (ii) higher and further education in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1985-86 and planned for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 December]: Information is not available in the form requested. The following table gives the information which is available on *(a)* local authority capital expenditure on schools and further education and *(b)* central Government capital expenditure on central institutions, colleges of education and grant-aided special schools in Scotland in the years specified.

£ million

Year	Local government expenditure		Central government expenditure	
	In cash terms	*At 1984-85 prices*	*In cash terms*	*At 1984-85 prices*
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*
1970-71	36	175	*	
1975-76†	62	157	6	17
1980-81	55	72	8	10
1984-85	51	51	10	10
1985-86‡	60	57	11	11
1986-87	47	43	18	17

* Not available.

† The figures in columns 2 and 3 for 1975-76 represent expenditure for 10·5 months only.

‡ The figures in columns 2 and 3 are based on local authority forecasts of expenditure.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross capital investment in 1. housing and 2. local environmental service in 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81 and 1984-85 then 1985-86 and plan for 1986-87 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 December]: The information is as follows:

£ million

	1970-71	*1975-76*	*‡1980-81*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
1. Housing cash	148	345	455	602	581	638
1984-85 prices*	716	879	585	602	553	581
2. Local Environmental services cash†	19	36	44	71	52	49
1984-85 prices†	90	90	71	71	50	45

Notes:

* Cash adjusted by the GDP deflator, base year 1984-85.

† Local environmental services comprises planning and related services, cleansing and so on, coast protection, factory building, slaughterhouses, burial grounds, administrative buildings and other local services. Due to changes in the coverage of individual services totals are not strictly comparable over the period.

‡ Derelict land clearance now undertaken by the Scottish Development Agency and not included from 1980-81 onwards.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of reactors at nuclear power stations in Scotland showing the number of gas circulators or blowers at each reactor, and whether these have any relevant features of design and construction in common with the faulty gas circulator that led to a site incident being declared at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Site	*Operator*	*Reactor Type*	*Number of reactors*	*Number of gas circulators per reactor*
Hunterston A	SSEB	Magnox	2	8
Hunterston B	SSEB	AGR	2	8
Torness*	SSEB	AGR	2	8
Chapelcross	BNFL	Magnox	4	4
Dounreay	UKAEA	Prototype Fast Reactor	1	—

* Under construction.

The gas circulators at Hunterston B are of a similar design to those at Hinckley Point B. Those at Hunterston A and Chapelcross are of an entirely different design and those at Torness have substantially different design features.

The SSEB will be maintaining close contact with the CEGB and Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate about the incident at Hinckley Point B and will take account of any lessons to be learned.

The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is satisfied that, it is safe to continue to operate nuclear reactors with the type of gas circulator in use at Hinckley Point B and Hunterston B.

ENERGY

Advertising

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Energy what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Peter Walker: Advertising expenditure by my Department, by agency and campaign, in each of the last five years was:

Advertising Agency	*Campaign*	*Amount spent with agency*
1980-81		
Young and Rubicam	Energy Conservation	2,750,000
Charles Barker	Offshore Supplies Office	21,000
1981-82		
Young and Rubicam	Energy Conservation	3,240,000
Charles Barker	Offshore Supplies Office	16,500
1982-83		
Young and Rubicam	Energy Conservation	1,160,000
Charles Barker	Offshore Supplies Office	20,600
1983-84		
Young and Rubicam	Energy Conservation	1,630,000
Charles Barker	Offshore Supplies Office	31,400
1984-85		
Young and Rubicam	Energy Conservation	1,660,000
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Energy Efficiency	2,567,000
Charles Barker	Offshore Supplies Office	57,000

Figures for the period 1975 to 1980 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NCB (Subsidiaries)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him the extent to which the National Coal Board's published accounts accurately record the trading activities of subsidiaries owned wholly or in part by the board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The published accounts of the National Coal Board are prepared in accordance with section 31 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 and are audited by external auditors appointed by the Secretary of State, who have certified that the statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the board, and of the board and its subsidiaries taken as a single undertaking, and of the results and source and application of funds for the year.

Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he makes of the problems of enforcing compulsory redundancies in the coal mines if the redundant mineworkers benefit scheme is not amended to cover those mineworkers who failed to pay contributions for 12 months; and if he is now able to announce prospects of legislation to assist all those mineworkers concerned.

Mr. David Hunt: The National Coal Board fully maintains its policy of not making redundant any man who wishes to stay in the industry.

My right hon. Friend has already made it clear that no decisions have been made on the details of any scheme to succeed the current redundant mineworkers payments scheme. As my right hon. Friend advised the right hon. Member in the House on 25 November, he will make a statement when conclusions have been reached.

Landward Petroleum Licences

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has considered the applications he received in September 1985 for landward petroleum licences in the first onshore round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have today announced the conditional award of 20 new-style exploration licences for blocks in England and Scotland which until now have been covered by old style exploration licences. The new style licences will allow companies to proceed to the exploration drilling stage. However, the licences do not give an automatic right to drill exploration wells. Licensees' precise plans are subject to planning permission and to my consent, which will not be given unless the operator provides evidence that planning permission has been obtained.

I will make an announcement about the applications received in the round for currently unlicensed areas as soon as possible next year.

Details of the awards made today have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Hinckley Point

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will explain the circumstances in which potassium iodate tablets were taken by personnel at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November; what was the maximum level of individual exposures anticipated at that time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the maximum individual effective dose equivalent commitment in milli-sieverts of any person as a result of the site incident at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list and describe the calculated total radioactive inventory of the gas, including any fissile particles and debris, released from reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station during and subsequent to the site incident on 29 November; what was the calculated collective effective dose equivalent commitment in man-sieverts arising from this incident; and what proportions were attributable to *(a)* personnel on the site and *(b)* members of the public outside the site;

(4) what were the quantities of carbon dioxide gas coolant released from reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station during and subsequent to the site incident on

29 November *(a)* as an unfiltered escape and *(b)* as deliberate releases, stating the degree to which these were filtered to remove fissile particles and debris; and if he will list and describe the radioactive inventory of the gas in the reactor immediately prior to the incident;

(5) if he will estimate the approximate number of days in a year on which fissile products from damaged nulear fuel elements are present in the carbon dioxide gas coolant of *(a)* a typical Magnox power reactor and *(b)* a typical advanced gas-cooled reactor; and if he will describe the typical length of delay before a damaged fuel element is withdrawn from a reactor;

(6) if he will publish a list showing, for each type of nuclear power reactor in commercial use, and for each type of nuclear fuel element, the typical rate of failure of fuel element integrity under normal operating conditions in a reactor;

(7) if he will estimate the approximate daily cost of reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station being shut down following the site incident on 29 November; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what were the number of days in the last year on which fissile products from damaged nuclear fuel elements were present in the carbon dioxide gas coolant of each of the four reactors at Hinckley Point nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement;

(9) if he will describe the measures undertaken, in progress, or planned to inspect and test gas circulators on reactor 3 and reactor 4 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station following the site incident on 29 November, stating when such work is likely to be completed; if he will describe the precautionary measures taken before such inspection and testing is properly completed; and if he will make a statement;

(10) if he will publish a list of reactors at nuclear power stations showing the number of gas circulators or blowers at each reactor and whether these have any relevant features of design and construction in common with the faulty gas circulator that led to a site incident being declared at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November; and if he will make a statement;

(11) if he will describe the circumstances in which some minor fault or faults in a gas circulator on reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station led to a site incident being declared on 29 November; and whether he is satisfied at present that reactors with such gas circulators are safe for continued operation.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is not available at present. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he expects the Central Electricity Generating board of inquiry into the site incident at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November to make a report; whether this report will be published; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to make a report on the site incident at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November; whether this report will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB expects shortly to complete its inquiries into the incident at Hinckley Point, and will announce its conclusions. Details of the incident will also be given by the Health and Safety Executive in its report for the fourth quarter of 1985, which will be published in due course. The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has allowed the board to restart reactor No. 3 at the station. This was returned to service yesterday.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many times since June 1983 he has held meetings with *(a)* chairmen or chairwomen of local authority social services committees, *(b)* directors of social services departments, *(c)* chairmen or chairwomen of health authorities and *(d)* general managers of health authorities in their own areas.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and ministerial colleagues have had six meetings with large groups of social services chairmen and directors and there have been two specific meetings with social services chairmen and directors in their areas. Apart from regular meetings held centrally with health authority chairmen, there have been 50 ministerial meetings (including 12 by my right hon. Friend) with them in their areas. Ministers have also met chairmen, directors and general managers on numerous other occasions in the course of normal ministerial visits to health and personal social services facilities in their areas.

Child Abuse

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the outcome of the special effort to prevent child abuse referred to in his National Health Service annual report 1985.

Mr. Whitney: Efforts in recent years have focused on guidance to promote better co-operation between the agencies concerned with the prevention of child abuse, and there have been consequent improvements in the liaison and co-ordination of the agencies with responsibility locally. There is more to be done, and the Government have in hand a considerable further programme of work, to help prevent child abuse cases and improve their handling when they occur, including a review of existing guidance.

Local Authority Social Services

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to establish an inspectorate to monitor the provision of social services by local authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 29 October at column *422*.

Social Workers

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to extend the training of social workers responsible in child care cases, especially in legal knowledge and application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work recently decided to review the

coverage of child care and child abuse, including knowledge of the relevant legislation, in existing qualifying and post-qualifying training courses. The council's earlier resolution that social work qualifying training should be extended from two to three years is the subject of consultations with Government Departments, universities and colleges and other interests as to the action and resources that would be required to implement it.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current hospital waiting lists by region.

Mr. Whitney: The requested information is given in table 1 of the booklet "Hospital In-Patient Waiting List at 31 March 1985, England National and Regional Summaries", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present length of waiting lists in the Wolverhampton health authority for trauma and orthopaedic surgery, ear surgery, nose surgery and throat surgery, gynaecology and ophthalmology; and how these compare with those of Coventry, Mid-Staffordshire, Central Nottinghamshire, Rugby and Sutton and Merton.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of cases on inpatient waiting list for admission to NHS hospitals at 31 March 1985

District Health Authority	*Orthopaedics*	*Ear, nose and throat*	*Gynaecology*	*Ophthalmology*
Wolverhampton	417	392	365	624
Coventry	1,286	1,105	1,103	1,115
Mid-Staffordshire	267	177	545	—
Central Nottinghamshire	3,388	744	755	50
Rugby	114	—	21	—
Merton and Sutton	349	610	203	219

Dental Services

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting list time for *(a)* consultation and *(b)* treatment for orthodontic cases by a consultant in the hospital service; and what is the average cost of (i) consultation and (ii) treatment for orthodontic cases by a consultant in this service.

Mr. Whitney: Information on waiting times in the orthodontic specialty is not available from the sample information which is held centrally. Information on average costs is not available in precisely the form requested. However, for orthodontic cases for 1983 the estimated average cost for an inpatient case was of the order of £600 at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average fee given for *(a)* orthodontic diagnosis, advice and study models in the general dental services and *(b)* an average case of orthodontic treatment also in the general dental services.

Mr. Hayhoe: The fee paid for an orthodontic case assessment and treatment plan is currently £6. A separate fee is not normally paid for study models but where such a fee is paid it is £6·20 (£3·20 for duplicate models). The average fee paid for orthodontic treatment provided for adults and children involving appliances of all kinds and completed in 1984 was £119·64.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what were the numbers of estimates scheduled for payment by the Dental Estimates Board in the month of October; and what were the corresponding figures for the years 1981 to 1984, inclusive;

(2) what were the numbers of estimates scheduled for payment by the Dental Estimates Board per dentist in each of the months from January to October, inclusive; and what were the corresponding figures for the years 1981 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is given in the tables:

(a) Number of estimates scheduled (England)

October	*Number*
1981	2,468,034
1982	2,536,702
1983	2,616,349
1984	2,634,243
1985	2,641,981

*(b) Number of estimates scheduled per General Dental Service principal** (England)

Year/Month	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
January	191	178	170	174	181
February	186	187	185	187	184
March	192	191	199	188	186
April	195	201	186	171	168
May	193	193	190	185	188
June	194	195	192	199	180
July	195	186	190	193	191
August	167	184	182	175	200
September	180	182	183	179	180
October	193	192	192	188	185

* Figures for the number of dentists in the general dental service are available only on a six-monthly basis up to 1983 and thereafter, on a quarterly basis. The figures are therefore estimated.

NHS (Capital Programmes)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which major capital programmes have been completed within the National Health Service during the last six years; and which regions of the United Kingdom have benefited from them as a result.

Mr. Whitney: Following is a list of major hospital schemes in England which have been completed during the past six years. The information relates to the completion of the building and engineering contract in each case. Final commissioning of some of the later projects may not yet be complete and the hon. Member may wish to contact the appropriate regional health authority chairman for details in particular cases.

Region	Scheme
Northern	North Tyneside Phase 1
	Furness (Barrow) DGH Phase 1
	South Cleveland General Phase 1
	Royal Victoria Infirmary Scheme 1 Phase 4
Yorkshire	Grimsby DGH Phase 1
	Leeds General Infirmary Phase 1
Trent	Queens Medical Centre Phase 2
	Chesterfield DGH Phase 1
	Glenfield DGH Phase 2
	Rotherham DGH Phase 2
	Lincoln County Phase 1
E Anglian	Hinchingbrooke Hospital Phase 3
	Ipswich Phase 1 (Heath Rd) Nucleus
	Kings Lynn DGH Phase 2
	Gt Yarmouth DGH Phase 1
N W Thames	Watford (Shrodells Wing) Phase 3
N E Thames	Broomfield Phase 5
	Colchester DGH Phase 2
	London Hospital Clinical Building Phase 11, Newham Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)
S E Thames	Maidstone DGH Phase 1 Nucleus
	Orpington DGH Phase 1
	Kent & Sussex Hospital Phase 1
S W Thames	Croydon (Mayday) DGH
	Redhill DGH (Nucleus)
Wessex	Southampton General Phase 5 (Maternity)
	Southampton General Phase 5 W. Ward Block
Oxford	Milton Keynes DGH Phase 1
S Western	Derriford DGH Phase 1
W Midlands	Stafford DGH Phase 4
	Dudley DGH (Russells Hall) Phase 3a
Mersey	Macclesfield (Nucleus) Development
	Halton DGH (Nucleus) Phase 2
	Arrowe Park DGH
	Countess of Chester (Nucleus) W Cheshire Phase 1
	Royal Liverpool Hospital Phase 2 & 3
N Western	Preston New Hospital Phase 1
	Preston New Hospital Phase 2
	Hope Hospital (Salford) Phase 1
Non RHA	Central Public Health Laboratory

Pensions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total spending on the payment of pensions each year since 1979-80, the weekly payments to pensioners and the number of people over 60 years and 65 years who have claimed the retirement pension in each year during the same period.

Mr. Major: The information requested is shown in the table:

Year ended 5 April	Total spending on pensions* (£ million)	Number of new claims to retirement pension	Average † weekly payments to pensioners (£)
1979/80	8,816	804,014	21·70‡
1980/81	10,526	735,515	25·26‡
1981/82	12,126	719,619	27·48‡
1982/83	13,549	649,679	30·45‖
1983/84	14,613	656,208	31·55¶
1984/85	15,307	806,014	33·16¶

Notes

* Does not include attendance allowance.

† Average weekly payments to pensioners including payable additional component, graduated pension, increments, age addition, invalidity addition, attendance allowance but excluding increases for dependants, graduated pension only and non-contributory retirement pension.

‡ Average at 30 November of the previous year.

‖ Average at 30 September.

¶ Average at 31 March.

Each average rate takes into account the uprating prior to the end of the tax year.

Drugs (Parallel Imports)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the medicines inspectorate is taking any steps to prevent the practice of parallel importing of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: It would not be appropriate for the medicines inspectorate to act to prevent parallel importing of drugs. A United Kingdom scheme for the licensing of parallel imported medicinal products was introduced on 16 May 1984. To date over 2,100 applications for parallel import product licences have been received and about 75 per cent. of these have been processed resulting in the grant of 700 product licences for parallel imports.

It is not an offence to import and hold in store medicinal products from the European Community which have been licensed in a Community country. An offence is committed if such products are marketed in the United Kingdom without a product licence under the Medicines Act 1968.

A close watch is kept for alleged unlicensed medicines and the medicines inspectorate plays its part in this. All reports of alleged breaches are followed up. Enforcement proceedings are considered if there is prima facie evidence that the terms of the Medicines Act or of EC legislation have been breached.

Drugs and Appliances

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to introduce the stock order for drugs and appliances now available in Scotland in doctors' practices in England, information about which has been sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no plans at present to introduce such a scheme.

Hospitals

Mrs. Reneé Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown of the hospitals in which there have been installed new beds, new operating theatres, new X-ray rooms, accident and emergency departments and new outpatient departments from National Health Service capital spending in the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The following table lists all new hospital building schemes each costing £2 million or more completed in the last five years which have provided some or all of the following facilities: new beds, new X-ray rooms, operating theatres, accident and emergency departments and outpatients departments.

Northern

Furness (Barrow) DGH Scheme 1 Phase 1
Hartlepool DGH Scheme 2 Phase 1
North Tyneside Scheme Phase 1
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead Scheme 3 Phase 1
South Cleveland General Scheme 1 Phase 1

Yorkshire

Grimsby DGH Phase 1
Leeds General Infirmary Phase 1

Pontefract General Infirmary

Trent
Chesterfield DGH Phase 1
Glenfield DGH Phase 1
Kilton (Bassetlaw) DGH Phase 1
Leicester General MIU
Lincoln County Phase 1
Northern General Phase 1C
Queens Medical Centre Development Phase 2
Rotherham DGH Phase 2

East Anglian
Addenbrookes Geriatric Unit
Great Yarmouth DGH Phase 1
Great Yarmouth DGH Phase 2
Hinchingbrooke Hospital Huntingdon Phase 3
Ipswich Phase 1 Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)
Rosie Maternity—Cambridge
St. Johns Peterborough

North West Thames
Charing Cross Hospital North Block
Lister Maternity Unit (Nucleus)
Luton and Dunstable Ward Block and Boiler House
St. Charles Hospital
St. Mary's W2 Phase 1A
Watford (Shrodells Wing) Phase 3

North East Thames
Broomfield Phase 5
Clacton District Phase 1 Stages 1 and 2
Colchester DGH Phase 2
London Hospital Clinical Building Phase 1
Newham Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)
Newham Hospital Phase 2 (Nucleus)

South East Thames
Archery House
Kent and Sussex—Tunbridge Wells Phase 1
Maidstone DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)
Orpington Phase 1

South West Thames
Crawley Hospital Stages 3A and 3B
Croydon/May Day DGH (Nucleus)
Queen Mary's—Roehampton—Phase 1
Redhill DGH (Nucleus)

Wessex
Odstock Hospital Spinal Injuries Unit
Southampton General Phase 5 West Ward Block

Oxford
Milton Keynes DGH Phase 1
Wexham Park Maternity Unit
Wexham Park Paediatric Department and Stores

South Western
Bristol Eye Hospital
Torbay DGH Maternity Unit

West Midlands
Dudley DGH (Russells Hall) Phase 3A
Kidderminster DGH Phase 5
New Cross Wolverhampton Wards and Theatres (Nucleus)
New Cross Wolverhampton Wards 1 and 2 (Nucleus)
Stafford DGH Phase 4 Main Hospital

Mersey
Arrowe Park New DGH
Countess of Chester—Nucleus (West Cheshire)
Halton DGH Phase 2 (Nucleus)
Macclesfield Development (Nucleus)

North Western
Hope Hospital Salford Phase 1
Manchester Royal Infirmary Phase 1
Preston New Hospital Phase 1
Preston New Hospital Phase 2
Royal Lancaster Infirmary Phase 2

Non Regional Health Authority
Moorfields Eye Hospital, City Road Development Phase 1

Population Statistics

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage of the population in each English region living in households of social class I or II.

Mr. Whitney: The following information is available from the 1981 census of population.

Percentage of the population in households with head in Social Class I or II

Region	*Percentage*
North	18·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	20·2
East Midlands	21·9
East Anglia	24·1
South-East	28·0
South-West	24·6
West Midlands	21·2
North-West	20·9
England	23·8

Notes:
1. Social classes I and II comprise mainly professional and managerial occupations.
2. Only economically active heads of household have been assigned a social class. Comparable figures for households in other social classes, and for households where the head is not economically active, are shown in the 1981 census publication "Key Statistics for Local Authorities" (Table 5).

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the changes in population between 1961 and 1983 for the south-east outside Greater London, the English regions and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested has been taken from table 2.1 of *Regional Trends* 20 (1985) and is as follows:

Area	*Resident population at 30 June*		*Change*
	1961	*1983*	*1961-83*
North	3,113,000	3,100,100	−12,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,677,000	4,908,500	+231,500
East Midlands	3,330,000	3,859,800	+529,800
East Anglia	1,489,000	1,925,200	+436,200
South-East	16,071,000	17,041,800	+970,800
Greater London	7,977,000	6,754,500	−1,222,500
South-East outside Greater London	8,094,000	10,287,300	+2,193,300
South-West	3,712,000	4,424,100	+712,100
West Midlands	4,762,000	5,176,300	+414,300
North-West	6,407,000	6,410,100	+3,100
Wales	2,635,000	2,807,800	+172,800
Scotland	5,184,000	5,150,400	−33,600
United Kingdom	52,807,000	56,376,800	+3,569,800

Some additional information for intervening years will be found in *Population Trends* —tables 2 and 3.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been admitted for *(a)* long-term care and *(b)* short-term care of less than three months duration, to mental handicap hospitals in the last full year; and if he will name the hospitals and their locations.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected centrally in precisely the form requested. The data that are readily available are given in the table. Some children had more than one admission and subsequent discharge during the year and are represented more than once in the figures. Six of the children admitted during 1984, all with a length of stay of less than three months, died during the year.

Children under 16, admitted to, and discharged from, mental handicap hospitals and units in England during 1984

Number

Regional and District Health Authority	*Hospital*	*Admitted during 1984*	*Discharges during 1984 of children admitted during 1984*		*Children admitted during 1984 but not discharged by end of 1984*
			Length of stay		
			Less than 3 months	*3 months or more*	
Northern Regional Health Authority					
North Tees	Fairbrook	337	327	1	9
	Aysgarth	16	15	—	1
West Cumbria	Dovenby Hall	206	201	—	5
Darlington	Aycliffe	162	159	—	3
Durham	Earls House	159	149	3	7
Northumberland	Northgate and District	51	48	1	2
	Prudhoe	29	17	2	10
South Tyneside	Monkton Hall	1	1	—	—
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority					
Hull	Brandesburton	228	219	1	7
	Tilworth Grange	226	219	—	7
York	Claypenny	11	11	—	—
Harrogate	Whixley	6	6	—	—
Bradford	Westwood	41	39	—	2
Airedale	Castleberg	11	11	—	—
Calderdale	Stansfield View	17	17	—	—
Leeds Eastern	Meanwood Park	94	92	—	2
Wakefield	Fieldhead	139	137	—	2
Trent Regional Health Authority					
North Derbyshire	Ridgeway	5	5	—	—
	Whittington Hall	1	1	—	—
	Dronfield	17	15	—	2
South Derbyshire	Bingham House Hostel	10	9	1	—
	Aston Hall	167	158	—	8
Leicestershire	The Glenfrith Group	87	82	—	5
North Lincolnshire	Harmston Hall	28	25	—	3
	Caistor	15	15	—	—
South Lincolnshire	Norton Lea	22	21	—	1
Bassetlaw	Bassetlaw District	345	340	—	5
Central Nottinghamshire	Balderton	20	17	—	3
Nottingham	Nottingham City	263	253	1	9
Doncaster	St. Catherine's Doncaster	32	29	—	3
Rotherham	Rotherham District	266	258	—	8
Sheffield	Ryegate Centre	367	357	2	8
East Anglian Regional Health Authority					
Cambridge	Ida Darwin	79	77	—	2
Peterborough	Gloucester Centre	197	191	—	5
West Suffolk	Risbridge	7	7	—	—
East Suffolk	St. Clements	16	13	—	3
Norwich	Little Plumstead	45	44	—	1
Great Yarmouth	Lothingland	79	76	—	3
North-West Thames Regional Health Authority					
North Bedfordshire	Bromham	33	32	—	1
North-West Hertfordshire	Cell Barnes	180	175	1	4
	Harperbury	13	12	—	—
South-West Hertfordshire	Leavesden	25	24	—	1
Barnet	Winifred House	65	60	—	5
Brent	Kingsbury and St. Andrews	80	76	—	4
Paddington	MH Unit, 291 Harrow Road	3	3	—	—
North-East Thames Regional Health Authority					
Basildon/Thurrock	South Ockendon	28	27	—	1
Mid Essex	Bridge	114	108	1	5
North-East Essex	The Royal Eastern Counties	92	86	—	6
Barking/Havering/Brentwood	High Wood	58	53	—	5
Enfield	Enfield (Chase Farm)	55	51	—	4

Regional and District Health Authority	Hospital	Admitted during 1984	Discharges during 1984 of children admitted during 1984		Children admitted during 1984 but not discharged by end of 1984
			Length of stay		
			Less than 3 months	3 months or more	
Waltham Forest	Leytonstone House	6	5	—	1
South-East Thames Regional Health Authority					
Brighton	Foredown	63	60	—	3
Hastings	Hill House	6	6	—	—
	Mount Pleasant	8	3	—	5
South-East Kent	Eversley House	47	39	—	8
Canterbury and Thanet	Lansborne	25	24	—	1
	Highland Court	1	1	—	—
	Eastry	1	—	—	1
Dartford and Gravesham	Darenth Park	21	11	—	10
Maidstone	Lenham	1	1	—	—
Tunbridge Wells	Leybourne Grange	15	15	—	—
Greenwich	Goldie Leigh	263	252	2	9
Bromley	Cheyne	193	176	7	10
Lewisham and North Southwark	Grove Park	3	1	—	2
South-West Thames Regional Health Authority					
North-West Surrey	Botleys Park	60	57	—	3
	Brook House	18	18	—	—
West Surrey/North-East Hampshire	Northfield	26	24	—	2
Mid Surrey	The Manor, Epsom	1	—	—	1
East Surrey	Royal Earlswood	99	94	—	5
Mid Downs	Forest	138	134	2	2
Wandsworth	Gardiner Hill Unit	3	3	—	—
Sutton	Ellen Terry Home	3	2	—	1
	Queen Mary's for Children	20	20	—	—
	St. Ebba's	1	—	1	—
	Daffodil	2	2	—	—
Wessex Regional Health Authority					
East Dorset	The Oaks, Bournemouth	340	330	—	10
	Castle Hill House	206	198	—	8
West Dorset	Coldharbour	15	15	—	—
	Henchard House	117	110	3	4
Portsmouth	Coldeast	162	156	1	5
South-West Hampshire and Southampton	Tatchbury Mount	88	82	1	5
Winchester	Berweeke House Hotel	1	1	—	—
	Bishopstoke House	3	3	—	—
	The Old Rectory	259	246	2	11
Basingstoke	Darlington House	1	1	—	—
	Erdersley House	328	325	—	2
Salisbury	Hillcote Hostel	166	161	—	5
Swindon	The Lanterns	68	55	—	13
	Burderop	14	14	—	—
Bath	Amberley Unit	27	27	—	—
	Beaumonds	19	19	—	—
	Winsley Centre	3	3	—	—
Oxford Regional Health Authority					
East Berkshire	Church Hill House	17	15	—	2
West Berkshire	Bonncourt	8	6	—	2
Aylesbury	Manor House	184	182	—	2
Kettering	Rushden	224	204	—	20
Northampton	Princess Marina	291	282	1	8
Oxford	Bradwell Grove	42	41	1	—
	Hernes House	22	22	—	—
	Holyrood House	1	1	—	—
South Western Regional Health Authority					
Bristol and West	Yatton Hall	178	173	—	5
Frenchay	Stoke Park	115	107	1	7
Southmead	Horfham	91	90	—	1
	Brentry	2	2	—	—
Cornwall	Loreto House	1	—	—	1
	The Retreat	2	—	—	2
	St. Blazey for Children	9	3	—	6
	West Heath House	2	2	—	—
	Carn Brea House	20	17	1	2
Exeter	Royal Western CTS Starcross	587	565	1	21
	Langdon	1	1	—	—

Regional and District Health Authority	Hospital	Admitted during 1984	Discharges during 1984 of children admitted during 1984		Children admitted during 1984 but not discharged by end of 1984
			Length of stay		
			Less than 3 months	3 months or more	
North Devon	Kingsley	3	3	—	—
Plymouth	Tarmar House	4	3	—	—
Torbay	Steepway House	2	2	—	—
	Rosehill Childrens	492	481	—	11
Cheltenham	Windrush	12	10	—	2
Gloucester	Grangemoor	10	10	—	—
	Selsley Vicarage	12	12	—	—
	Thirlstaine Court	45	44	—	1
	Standish	2	2	—	—
	Twyver Unit	4	4	—	—
Somerset	Sandhill Park	2	2	—	—
	Norah Fry House	2	1	—	1
	Selwood House	1	1	—	—
West Midlands Regional Health Authority					
Hereford	1 Ledbury Road Hereford	407	403	—	4
Kidderminster	Lea	154	154	—	—
	Lea Castle	72	68	1	2
Mid-Staffordshire	White Lodge	97	95	—	2
North Staffordshire	Stallington	56	54	—	2
North Warwickshire	Chelmsley	70	65	1	4
South Warwickshire	Weston	128	123	—	5
South Birmingham	Monyhull	1	1	—	—
Coventry	The Birches	437	430	—	7
Dudley	Ridge Hill	269	265	—	3
Solihull	Middlefield	274	270	—	4
Walsall	St. Margaret's Birmingham	30	29	—	1
Mersey Regional Health Authority					
Crewe	Barony	13	13	—	—
	Carnage Hall	2	2	—	—
Halton	Crow Wood	2	1	—	1
Warrington	Newchurch	9	8	—	1
Eastern Sector	Olive Mount Childrens	1	—	—	1
Southport and Formby	Greaves Hall	29	24	2	3
Wirral	Ashton House	13	12	—	1
North Western Regional Health Authority					
Lancaster	Royal Albert	31	31	—	—
Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	Brockhall	99	99	—	—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	Calderstones	2	2	—	—
West Lancashire	Ormskirk Childrens	11	10	—	1
Bolton District	Childrens MH Unit Bolton	51	51	—	—
Rochdale	Scott House	81	77	—	4
Salford	Swinton	77	76	—	1
Stockport	Offerton House	2	2	—	—
Tameside and Glossop	The Willows Droylsden	288	279	—	9

Nicorette

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make available on National Health Service prescription nicorette and other such substitutes.

Mr. Whitney: No.

Child Abuse Officers

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authorities have child abuse officers.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Nursing (Flammable Material)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what assessment he has made of the fire risks arising from flammable materials used in nursing and in nurses' uniforms; what steps he takes to promote non-flammable materials for nurses' uniform dresses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the flammability of nurses' uniform dresses; if he has received any representations on the strength and flexibility of the materials used in nurses' uniforms; if any research has been done on the impact of material for nurses' uniforms on back pain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following the fire at Treliske hospital in 1983 the Department commissioned flammability tests at the Shirley institute, Manchester on a range of dresses made from a variety of materials and including a number of nurses' uniform dresses, and the report was placed in the Library. The report demonstrated that dresses made from 100 per cent. polyester had superior flammability properties to those of other materials.

A working group conducted a range of tests on dresses of various materials and I am arranging for copies of its report to be placed in the Library. The trials and tests demonstrated that there were no substantial differences except that dresses made from flame retardant polyester had superior flammability characteristics. The report has been considered by the Department and the Health Service Supply Council and following consultations within the National Health Service it was concluded that there were no grounds for changing the material of the present nurses' uniform dress. Copies of the report and of the Department's conclusions have been sent to the Royal College of Nursing.

The Department has not undertaken any research on the impact of the material of nurses' uniforms on back pain. However the Royal College of Nursing has made representations about the design of current dresses and restrictions on movement. Some small changes in design have been made. The northern regional health authority as the centre of responsibility for National Health Service purchase of textile products is, in conjunction with the Department, considering further and more wide-ranging design aspects.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute an inquiry into the professional qualifications of speech therapists; if he will publish in the *Official Report* the length of training and minimum qualifications required for a fully trained speech therapist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am satisfied with the present statutory arrangement whereby, in order to obtain employment in the National Health Service, speech therapists are required as a minimum to hold a certificate issued by the College of Speech Therapists certifying that they have successfully attended a degree course recognised by the college. Undergraduate courses are either three or four years in length. In addition there is one postgraduate course of two years' duration for graduates from other disciplines wishing to qualify as speech therapists.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, for England, what were *(a)* the costs of producing and distributing literature about exemption from prescription charges, *(b)* the costs of inspection for fraud in claiming exemption from prescription charges and *(c)* the cost of administering the sale of pre-payment certificates;

(2) for each quarter of the calendar year 1984, the first three quarters of 1985 and for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, for England, what were *(a)* the number of prescriptions dispensed, *(b)* the percentage of prescriptions exempt from charges, *(c)* the costs of prescriptions: (i) the payments by patients (excluding pre-payment certificates), (ii) the payments from public funds, (iii) the total costs and (iv) the average gross per prescription, *(d)* the number and type of pre-payment certificates and *(e)* the revenue from sale of pre-payment certificates.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Trauma (Research)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Eccles on 3 December, *Official Report*, column *211*, if he will now indicate what research is being funded by his Department into the effects of trauma on patients who have surgery performed upon them in National Health hospitals; if he will give his estimate of the number of people who suffer from trauma following industrial injuries, accidents in the home, as well as road accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities now run fully computerised systems for identifying women in the high risk category for cervical cancer.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 December 1985, c. *401-2*]: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 9 December 1985 at columns *490-1*.

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department was first aware that the acquired immune deficiency syndrome was a sexually communicable disease; and what action was then taken to seek to combat the dangers.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *494*]: The possibility that AIDS could be sexually transmitted was suggested following the first reports concerning the disease received from America in 1981. Following the isolation of the causative virus in America and France during 1983, it was confirmed that the condition was caused by an infection which was blood-borne and also sexually transmissible.

In 1982, the communicable disease surveillance centre set up a national surveillance scheme for AIDS cases in the United Kingdom. As medical knowledge of the disease has developed, a number of steps have been taken to control its spread. These measures were set out in my predecessor's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) on 20 February at columns *498-500* and in my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 2 December at columns *1-2*.

Childhood Cancers

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Her Majesty's Government are carrying out, or intend to carry out, any investigations into the incidence of childhood cancers in the areas around *(a)* Aldermaston and *(b)* Burghfield.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *495*]: I am advised that there is no established connection between nuclear plants and the incidence of cancers in the surrounding population. Regular monitoring is carried out on environmental levels of radiation in the vicinity of nuclear establishments. There are a number of

detailed studies currently in progress into the incidence of cancers in the United Kingdom. These include studies of areas both around and remote from nuclear establishments. The results of these will be considered by the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment as they become available.

In the meantime COMARE will consider any other relevant information put to it relating to the incidence of childhood cancers in the areas around Aldermaston and Burghfield. The establishment of COMARE was announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 25 July at column *771* with the objective of offering Government independent medical and scientific advice on the health effects of natural and man-made radiation in the environment.

Acheson Report

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the recommendations of the Acheson report have been implemented.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 December 1985, c. *496*.]: Many of the 115 recommendations of the Acheson report on primary health care in Inner London were directed at the wide range of bodies with responsibilities or interests in the primary health care field. These were asked to give the report urgent consideration as a basis for local action, but it would not be feasible to mount an exercise to monitor local implementation. Some recommendations raised more general issues, in relation to the future provision of services, which will be considered in the context of the Green Paper on primary health care; guidance on deputising services has already been issued. To promote action nationally on the Acheson report recommendations, the Government announced in 1983 a £9 million package, much of which has been passed to the relevant regional health authorities for projects that would benefit primary health care services locally. Other parts of this package are being used centrally to fund schemes and projects on the lines recommended by this report. These include more training opportunities for health visitors and district nurses and, for general practitioners in inner cities, enhanced premises improvement grants, funding for the improvement and monitoring of minimum standards in those premises, architectural advice on premises, additional incentives to form group practices, and training aids. Support has been provided for five academic departments of general practice, to enhance liaison between those departments and the local practices. Central funds have also been made available to promote projects to explore different ways of organising primary health care provision based on small areas, improving the dissemination of information about primary health care in inner cities, enhancing collaboration between family practitioner committees and health authorities, and promoting experimental schemes to provide primary health care for the homeless and rootless.

THE ARTS

Film Industry

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister for the Arts how much money the British film industry received from the Government over the last six years.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 December 1985, c. *337*]: The British film industry is funded by venture capital; it is not a subsidised industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has been responsible for recycling funds from the distribution side of the industry to the production side under the provisions of the former Films Acts 1960 to 1980.

I am responsible for the British Film Institute, and its grant-in-aid over the last six years has been:

Year	*£*
1980-81	5,829,000
1981-82	6,520,000
1982-83	*8,469,000
1983-84	7,243,000
1984-85	7,710,000
1985-86	8,075,000

* Includes £1·4 million supplementary.

CIVIL SERVICE

South Africa

Dr. McDonald asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many South African products, and in what quantities, and at what prices, are used in the preparation of meals in Civil Service canteens.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available as supplies for Civil Service canteens are not bought centrally.

Dr. McDonald asked the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has received regarding the use of South African foods in Civil Service canteens; if he will list the correspondents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

The Council of Civil Service Unions wrote to me on 15 November 1985 suggesting a boycott of South African foods in Civil Service canteens. In my reply of 28 November, I explained that it was not the Government's policy to impose economic sanctions on South Africa, which would cover imports of food products, and that I could not therefore agree to the request.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Advertising

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Brooke: The Treasury has incurred expenditure on the employment of advertising agents on four occasions since 1980 for work in connection with privatisation: the sale of BP in 1983, the sales of Cable and Wireless in 1983 and 1985, and the sale of Britoil in 1985. The agents employed are as follows:

BP 1983 — St. James's Advertising & Street's Advertising

Cable and Wireless 1983 — Street's Financial Advertising

Britoil 1985—Dewe Rogerson Ltd
Cable and Wireless 1985—Collett Dickinson, Pearce and Partners Ltd

It is not the practice to disclose the value of individual contracts between the Government and their advisers.

I regret that information about years before 1980 cannot be provided without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total estimated revenue accrued from value added tax on building alterations; and if he will estimate how much of this relates to building works on voluntary schools.

Mr. Brooke: Businesses registered for value added tax are not required to make returns of the tax charged on particular supplies of goods or services, and information of this kind is therefore not directly available. However, estimates of personal sector expenditure on improvements to dwellings suggest that the yield from value added tax in the fiscal year 1984-85 was of the order of £300 million. Of this it is thought that some £3 million relates to building works on voluntary schools, but funding arrangements mean that 85 per cent. of this is borne by the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Brian Moller-Butcher

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the estimated cost to the Crown of the recent case against Mr. Brian Moller-Butcher.

Mr. Brooke: The estimated cost of the investigation and legal expenses in the case of Mr. Brian Moller-Butcher is £14,000.

Deep Discount Securities

Mr. Stern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether notional interest on deep discount securities is to be calculated on the basis of issue price, or cost price to the individual holder.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The discount on deep discount securities is treated as income accruing over the life of the security. It is calculated by reference to the issue price and the redemption value.

Cable and Wireless

Mrs. Currie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about the sale of the Government's remaining ordinary shares in Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Moore: The sale has been successfully completed. About 220,000 applications were received from the general public, including employees and pensioners of Cable and Wireless plc, for a total of over 100 million shares. The public offer was therefore over two times subscribed.

In accordance with the Government's policy of encouraging wider share ownership, all applications for 200 shares or fewer are being met in full. Three quarters of the shares available to the public have been allocated to people who applied for 1,000 shares or fewer.

Details of allocations are as follows:

Number of shares applied for	*Number of shares allocated*
50	In full
100	In full
150	In full
200	In full
250-350	200
400-550	220
600	240
650	260
700	280
750-1,000	300
1,100 and above	30 per cent. of shares applied for

Independent Schools

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated loss of revenue arising from the charitable status of independent schools.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

PAYE and National Insurance

Mrs. Currie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the result of the pilot scheme of co-operation between the Inland revenue and the Department of Health and Social Security over inspections of employers' pay-as-you-earn and national insurance records.

Mr. Moore: In July 1983 my predecessor announced a pilot scheme to test whether procedures could be introduced to reduce the number of separate visits to employers by officers of the Inland Revenue and the Department of Health and Social Security.

In the exercise, carried out in 1983-84, certain DHSS inspectors, when visiting employers about national insurance matters, also made a limited review of the operation of the pay-as-you-earn scheme. The results indicate that if these arrangements were undertaken nationally, they could lead to a substantial reduction in the number of duplicated visits made to employers each year.

Accordingly, the Government have decided to implement the new arrangements on a nationwide basis. They should be fully operational in the middle of 1986.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many customs officers were employed in drug detection duties over the past 12 months; and what number he estimates will be so engaged over the forthcoming year.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 December 1985]: The number of customs preventive officers, whose main priority is drugs detection, is as follows:

1 April	*Number*
1985	2,823
1986*	3,000
1987*	3,300

* Estimated.

In addition, the number of specialist drugs investigators is as follows:

1 April	Number
1985	212
1986*	262
1987*	297

* Estimated.

TRANSPORT

Car Registration Letter

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to change the date for the introduction of the annual letter for new car registrations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department is currently carrying out a detailed internal review of the impact of the August change in the year identification letter on the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre's system and costs. I also wish to take account of the views of the motor trade and the other main interests involved before dealing with any change.

Vehicle Statistics

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles per kilometre of surfaced road there are in each English region.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

Traffic flow on public roads by Department of Transport regions: 1982-84 average

	Vehicles kilometres per kilometre per day (rounded to nearest 500)
Northern	2,000
Yorkshire-Humberside	2,000
East Midlands	2,000
Eastern	2,500
South-Eastern	3,000
Greater London	5,000
South-West	1,500
West Midlands	2,500
North-West	2,500

Fixed Channel Link

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, before he announces any Government decisions on the construction of a fixed Channel link, he will produce a fully costed study indicating the benefits of a link to the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Ridley: The overall benefit of a link to the economy of the United Kingdom as a whole will be one of the matters discussed in the White Paper which the Government will issue when their decision is announced; it would be impossible to produce such a study earlier.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to seek the approval of the House for any agreement with the French Government on a fixed Channel link, before appropriate enabling legislation is introduced.

Mr. Ridley: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Stansted Airport (Rail Link)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has now received submissions from British Rail and the British Airport Authority on the feasibility of providing a rail link to Stansted airport; and if he will make it his policy to publish the submissions before he makes any determination upon them.

Mr. Ridley: I have received British Rail's submission on the financial case for a rail link to Stansted. It is not our policy to publish documents which contain commercially confidential material.

Deutsche Touring Company

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will find out from European Economic Community sources whether the Deutsche Touring company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the German State Railways, possesses a licence registered with the European Economic Community for the bus journey from Ostend to Frankfurt.

Mr. David Mitchell: The decision whether to authorise a service between Ostend and Frankfurt is a matter for the competent authorities in Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany under EEC regulation 517/72. Deutsche Touring is a partner in an authorised service between London and Munich on which passengers may be picked up and set down at Ostend and Frankfurt. It is not allowed to operate a separate service between these cities.

Bus Licensing

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether European Economic Community rules permit the German authorities licensing bus companies to discriminate against United Kingdom firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: EEC regulation 517/72 provides no grounds for discrimination against an applicant on the basis of the member state in which he is established.

Bus Operators (Controls)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the United Kingdom operates any restrictions on British bus operators from taking on contracts from German tour or travel operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The United Kingdom operates no such restrictions but the bus operator must comply with the legislation relevant to the type of service being provided.

Bus Link (Ostend-Frankfurt)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate discussions with the British Airways International Company about the implications for Southend airport of the refusal of a nationalised German company to operate a bus link from Ostend to Frankfurt which is an integral part of a major regular service from London to Frankfurt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The implications of this decision are a commercial matter for those concerned.

Taxi Dispute (Heathrow)

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of the British Airports Authority, he will raise with him the current dispute between the authority and licensed taxi drivers at Heathrow; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of the British Airports Authority, he will raise with him the surcharge levied by the British Airports Authority on taxi drivers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets the chairman of BAA regularly to discuss a variety of issues. The introduction of a charge for entry to the taxi feeder park at Heathrow is a matter for the BAA. The Government support the principle of the recovery of costs from those who benefit from the provision of facilities.

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect of the current dispute between licensed taxi drivers and the British Airports Authority on *(a)* road safety and *(b)* traffic flow on those roads near Heathrow for which he is responsible.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am advised that neither the police nor our agent authority have observed any changes either in road safety or traffic flows.

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the effect of the current dispute between licensed taxi drivers and the British Airports Authority on *(a)* the maintenance of public order and *(b)* the uninterrupted movement of passengers and vehicles at Heathrow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department have received any representations on these aspects of the dispute.

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he takes of charges imposed by the British Airports Authority on taxi drivers when setting the fare structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have taken account of these charges but decided that it was unnecessary to provide for a surcharge on fares from Heathrow airport. I will, however, review the situation if, in the longer term, these charges affect the supply of taxis at Heathrow.

Flags of Convenience

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what additional United Kingdom shipping tonnage is now operating under flags of convenience compared with 1970, 1975 and 1980.

Mr. Ridley: The information is not available in the form requested. However, it has been estimated that, in 1984, shipping registered outside the United Kingdom but beneficially owned by United Kingdom residents amounted to about 3 million gross registered tonnes. Estimates are not available for earlier years.

A40 (Swakeleys Road Junction)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the effects of the opening of the M25 on congestion at the Swakeleys road junction with Uxbridge Circus on the A40; what plans he has to expedite planned works at this junction; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the M25 opened, daily traffic on the A40 at Uxbridge Circus has increased by about 5 per cent. mainly off-peak. Draft proposals for an underpass at this junction were published on 5 December and the speed with which the scheme proceeds will depend upon the nature and weight of objections received, and whether a public inquiry proves necessary.

Roads

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek means to expedite statutory processes connected with urgent major road improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment are considering ways of speeding up the preconstruction procedures for all national road schemes in the light of the Civil Engineering EDC's report "A Fairer and Faster Route to Major Road Construction".

ENVIRONMENT

Advertising

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Figures are available for the past five financial years only. To go back further would involve disproportionate costs.

The following table lists names of the agencies employed by my Department, the subject of the campaigns and the amount spent through the agency on each campaign.

Agency	*Campaign*	*Expenditure £'s*
1980-81		
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Housing Act/Landlord	169,600
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Housing Act/Right to Buy	642,700
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Ancient Monuments	4,500
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Home Insulation Grants	202,900
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Keep Britain Tidy	28,500

Agency	Campaign	Expenditure £'s
1981-82		
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Right to Buy	219,300
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Housing Act	61,900
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Home Insulation Grants	25,000
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Rent/Rate Rebates	274,400
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Historic Monuments	19,000
1982-83		
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Housing Booklets	81,900
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Land Register	22,500
J. Walter Thompson	Home Improvement Grant	446,400
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Right to Buy Reminder	79,800
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Tenant Exchange	74,300
1983-84		
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Historic Monuments	15,000
1984-85		
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Kensington Palace	10,400
Doyle Dane Bernbach	Historic Houses	2,500
J. Walter Thompson	Right to Buy	495,700

Lambeth Council (Housing Subsidies)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of housing subsidies to Lambeth council.

Sir George Young: On its first advance claim for 1985-86, Lambeth LBC estimated its entitlement to housing subsidy as £36·8 million. On its second advance claim form, the council estimated its entitlement as £42 million. Pending a satisfactory explanation of the reason for the increase, payments of subsidy are continuing on the basis of the first advance claim form. Payments will be subject to adjustment in any case when the audited final claim for the year has been received.

Unused Land

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much unused land for disposal is recorded in the Land Registry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: At the end of October just under 100,000 acres of land were recorded on the registers of unused and underused land. At the time of registration, the owners of about 44 per cent. of the land now on the registers stated that it was their intention to dispose of it.

House Prices

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average change in house prices over the last year in each English region and in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The percentage increases in dwelling prices between the years ending September 1984 and September 1985, are as follows:

Increase in dwelling prices between October 1983 to September 1984 and October 1984 to September 1985

	Percentage
North	5
Yorkshire and Humberside	5
East Midlands	7
East Anglia	11
Greater London	14
South East (excluding Greater London)	11
South West	8
West Midlands	6
North West	5
United Kingdom	9

Source: Sample survey of building society mortgages completed for house purchase: indices adjusted to allow for changes in the mix of dwellings purchased, excluding sales to sitting tenants.

The sample is not large enough to provide reliable regional quarterly figures, but shows a price rise in the United Kingdom as a whole of 8 per cent. between the third quarter 1984 and the third quarter 1985.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the average price of a three-bedroomed detached house and a terraced house in each English region and in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The available information on the average prices of detached and terrace houses in 1984 is as follows:

Average dwelling price: £

	Detached houses	Terrace houses
North	39,400	16,700
Yorkshire and Humberside	38,700	15,200
East Midlands	37,500	15,900
East Anglia	42,000	20,500
Greater London	77,500	38,900
South East (excluding Greater London)	60,800	28,600
South West	46,900	23,000
West Midlands	40,400	16,200
North West	43,700	16,000
United Kingdom	46,800	22,000

Source: Sample survey of building society mortgages completed for house purchase.

Local Authorities (Economic Development)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to introduce legislation to give local authorities further statutory powers to promote economic development in their areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so. The Government have, however, asked the Widdicombe inquiry, as part of its terms of reference, to clarify the limits and conditions governing local authorities' use of their discretionary spending powers, particularly under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 83 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. These powers are widely used for economic development. We shall consider the position in the light of the inquiry's eventual recommendations.

Football Grounds (Closed circuit Television)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many football grounds in Great Britain are in possession of closed circuit television; and what proportion these are of the total.

Mr. Tracey: 27 grounds in the Football League and the Scottish Football League now have closed circuit television systems. This represents 21 per cent. of the total number of grounds in the two leagues. The aim of the football authorities is to have CCTV at all clubs in divisions 1 and 2 in England and the premier division in Scotland as quickly as possible.

Trinity and St. Matthias Estates, Salford

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and Salford city council concerning proposals for the redevelopment of public housing in the Trinity and St. Matthias estate areas of Salford; and whether he is satisfied that the residents of the area have so far been adequately informed and consulted about any proposals for the redevelopment of their homes.

Sir George Young: Salford City Council has informed my officials of various proposals which the city is considering for the Trinity and St. Matthias estate area. Chapter II of the Housing Act 1980 imposes on local housing authorities a continuing duty to consult their tenants on matters of housing management which will substantially affect them.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has received an application for financial assistance under the urban development grant scheme for the redevelopment of public housing in the Trinity and St. Matthias areas of Salford.

Sir George Young: No.

Urban Programme Grant

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what way his Department's offer of urban development grant for the provision of dwellings for sale by Barratts Urban Construction (Northern) Ltd. on part of the Spencerbeck housing estate owned by Langbaurgh borough council satisfies the criterion laid down in his Department's guidance notes for the urban development scheme, that projects aided by urban development grant should make a demonstrable contribution to meeting the special social needs of inner urban areas.

Sir George Young: The project comprises the refurbishment of part of an estate which had become difficult-to-let and which exhibited physical and environmental problems. It will provide 137 homes for sale and widen tenure choice in the area.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the application by Salford city council for urban development grant for the conversion by Barratt Urban Renewal (Northern) Ltd. of vandalised dwellings to provide flats and houses for sale in St Stephen's street, Salford.

Sir George Young: All applications for urban development grant are treated as commercially confidential.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much is being currently spent on urban regeneration projects in *(a)* Sheffield, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Brighton, *(d)* Leicester, *(e)* Coventry, *(f)* Portsmouth and *(g)* Southampton.

Sir George Young: Many agencies, public and private, are involved in urban regeneration. Figures for the urban programme, for which my Department is responsible are:

Authority	*Programme Allocation 1985-86* £000	*Urban Development Grant Scheme Approvals* £000	*Traditional Urban Programme total Approvals* £000	TOTAL £000
Programme Authorities				
Coventry	4,300	499	—	4,799
Leicester	5,430	250	—	5,680
Sheffield	4,010	370	—	4,380
Traditional Urban Programme				
Brighton	—	—	165·2	165·2
Bristol	—	—	707·0	707·0
Portsmouth	—	—	249·4	249·4
Southampton	—	—	138·4	138·4

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the estimated percentage of expenditure met by rate support grant, based on each authority spending at grant-related expenditure in 1986-87 and *(b)* the projected rate of change in that percentage between 1985-86 and 1986-87, assuming that balances

remain unchanged, for the metropolitan district councils of (i) Manchester, (ii) Liverpool, (iii) Sheffield, (iv) Newcastle, (v) Leeds and (vi) Birmingham.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decisions on the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 before the Christmas recess.

32 Monmouth Road, Paddington (Purchase Application)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the right-to-buy application made in November 1983 for the purchase of 32 Monmouth road, Paddington, W2, by the Monmouth Road Co-operative Ltd.; on how many occasions the application has been referred to his Department for legal advice; and when he expects the application to be approved.

Sir George Young: The applications by the three tenants of 32 Monmouth road to buy their flats have not been straightforward because of the conditions under which the co-operative obtained the property from the GLC, but at my hon. Friend's request, and following correspondence from one of the tenants involved, my Department has been investigating the applications. It has now been agreed between the Department and the GLC, which is the mortgagee of the property, that there is no legal obstacle to a formal offer under the right to buy. Further discussions will still be needed on the financial implications for the co-operative.

Disabled Persons Act 1981

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in measures to enable him to implement section 6 of the Disabled Persons Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My Department consulted in 1982 on proposals for implementing section 6, but the response indicated that new building regulations, applied and enforced by local authorities, would be a more effective alternative. After further consultation, new building regulations came into operation on 1 August 1985 requiring that new offices, shops, single-storey factories, educational and public buildings should be accessible to disabled people.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on research being undertaken into the use of lead for safe isolation and disposal of high level radioactive waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: Research is being undertaken into the suitability of lead as an infilling material in containers for heat-generating wastes or spent fuel in the European Community programme of research and in Sweden. The UK is kept informed of the results, but we are undertaking no research of our own since it is policy to store such radioactive waste for at least fifty years prior to disposal.

Property Services Agency (Health Screening)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements currently exist for health screening within the Property Services Agency for staff in Greater London and Chessington; and what changes in the existing arrangements have been proposed.

Sir George Young: There are no standing arrangements for health screening within PSA for staff in Greater London and Chessington. It is, however, proposed to mount an experiment early next year in which BUPA will provide free talks on health education to PSA staff in Greater London and Chessington and, if wanted, health checks for men and women staff at their own expense, but at a substantial discount. An announcement to the staff to this effect will be made on 10 January.

DEFENCE

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation base at Stornoway was used for any purpose during the Brave Defender defence exercise.

Mr. Stanley: A headquarters, for exercise purposes only, was set up within RAF Stornoway during Brave Defender.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what part of the Brave Defender defence exercise took place in the Western Isles; and who participated.

Mr. Stanley: Exercise activity in the Western Isles took place between 7 and 11 September when the ground defence of a number of exercise key points was practised. Members of the Regular Army, the Royal Air Force, and the Home Service Force took part.

Devonport Dockyard

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria he will use in assessing the bid announced by the management of Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport on Monday 10 December for the contract to undertake dockyard services at Devonport.

Mr. Heseltine: As the House knows, companies continue to show a growing interest in the future management of the dockyards. Additionally the managing director of Devonport dockyard, Mr. David Johnston, with a small team of managers at the dockyard, including serving royal naval officers as well as civil servants, have now formed a company, Devonport Dockyard Ltd., and have put together an outline plan to bid in competition with other companies for the contract to manage Devonport dockyard.

The management's proposal is fully in line with our overall policy of promoting competition and seeking increased efficiency in the way the dockyards are run. It has been made clear to the management team that its bid will have to compete on exactly the same terms as that of any other company, and that the criteria which will be used by my Department to evaluate the Devonport management response to the invitation to tender will be no different from those which will apply to other bidders. Such an assurance has been given to all those companies which continue to show an interest in managing the dockyards.

Before agreeing that the team should proceed with this initiative I considered the question of possible conflict of interest. However, I am satisfied that there is a broad

identity of interest for those concerned, both as managers of the dockyard and as potential bidders for the contract. In both capacities, for example, they have a commitment to supporting the Fleet, to increased efficiency and to the future well-being of the work force. I have, however, made it clear to the managing director that work on developing his team's bid will not be allowed to conflict with his prime responsibility for the operation of the dockyard up to 1 April 1987, nor with the requirement to make information available to other interested companies. Assurances have been given to companies on these matters and we shall be keeping the arrangements under close review.

The Government welcome this new interest and regard it as a strong sign of personal commitment by local management to a secure and promising future for the dockyard.

Defence Contracts (Naval Officers)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether serving naval officers have previously been given permission to bid for Ministry of Defence contracts, or to form companies to make such bids.

Mr. Lee: There are no similar precedents involving serving naval officers. Those serving naval officers who are members of the management team at Devonport dockyard, which has formed a company to tender for the contract to run the dockyard would, of course, be required to retire from the Royal Navy were the team to secure the contract and were the officers to remain in the company.

Rosyth Dockyard

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if serving naval officers and serving civil servants are to be permitted to form private companies to bid for the commercial franchise for running Her Majesty's royal dockyard at Rosyth.

Mr. Lee: If a request were to be made by the management at Rosyth dockyard to bid for the contract to manage the dockyard, it would, of course, be considered on its merits in exactly the same way as was the request by the management team at Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence which private contractors or their representatives visited Her Majesty's Rosyth dockyard on 9 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: None of the firms which have expressed an interest in the Government's plans for the commercial management of Rosyth dockyard made visits on 9 December. However, as part of a separate exercise, PA Management Consultants began on that day a study aimed at developing new management systems to improve efficiency, productivity and competitiveness within the dockyard.

Foxhunting

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Army horses have been used for foxhunting; if he will name the regiments, officers and hunts concerned; and if he will institute an inquiry.

Mr. Lee: Each winter a number of Army horses from the Household Cavalry, Kings' Troop RHA and the Guards Division, all based in London, are sent to the RAVC training centre at Melton Mowbray for exercising and training. As part of this training, and also to improve equestrian standards, some horses are ridden in hunts. Last winter — 1984-85 — 42 horses, 19 officers and 25 soldiers participated in the hunting. The officers and soldiers are all volunteers. The hunts involved were the Belvoir, Quorn and Cottesmore. All payments to the hunts were from non-public funds.

NATO (Expenditure)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the percentage increase in the defence spending of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation states over the period since 1979.

Mr. Stanley: The real increases in the defence spending of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation states over the period 1979-84 are as follows:

	Percentage
Belgium	5·1
Canada	28·6
Denmark	0·9
France	12·6
Germany	6·9
Greece	16·2
Italy	16·4
Luxembourg	36·2
Netherlands	12·6
Norway	10·0
Portugal	5·8
Turkey	5·3
United Kingdom	17·5
United States	38·9

Note: The figures are United Kingdom estimates based on NATO definition of defence spending. In the case of France the figures are indicative only. Iceland does not appropriate funds for defence. Spain was not a member of the alliance before 1982. Care is needed in making direct comparisons as different deflators are used by countries to calculate real growth.

9 and 14 Signals Regiments

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many former members of 9 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 February 1984;

(2) how many service men currently serving with 9 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 February 1984;

(3) how many service men currently serving with 14 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his answer*, 4 December 1985, c. *278*]: Some 300 people provided statements of evidence as part of the investigation into the alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts at 9 Signals Regiment that were the subject of legal proceedings this year. A larger number were interviewed but did not subsequently provide statements. It would not be possible to establish in respect of each and every person interviewed the unit in which they were serving at the time of their interview and the unit in which they are currently serving except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of 14 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation by military or civil police since 3 February 1984.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his answer*, 10 December 1985, c. *594*]: It would not be possible to establish in respect of each and every person interviewed whether they were former members of 14 Signals Regiment except at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13 December 1985

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Young Persons (Tobacco Sales)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of reports to procurators fiscal, prosecutions, convictions, and the average fine imposed for such convictions, for offences under section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 in each of the last 10 years.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: There are no available statistics in relation to contraventions of section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *450*, he will list the further actions which would need to be carried through by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation for Her Majesty's Government to consider rejoining the organisation.

Mr. Raison: Before considering rejoining UNESCO we would need to be convinced that the organisation had adopted thoroughgoing and comprehensive reforms and that all member states and the secretariat were once again fully committed to working towards its constitutional aims and objectives.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens presently work for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; what effect United Kingdom withdrawal will have on their employment; and what action he has taken to safeguard their interests.

Mr. Raison: About 225 British citizens are currently employed by UNESCO. The withdrawal of Britain from membership of the organisation will not affect their terms of employment as international civil servants.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect United Kingdom withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation will have on British citizens who are United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation scholarship holders and on overseas United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation scholarship holders within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Raison: At the moment there are no British citizens who are UNESCO scholarship holders. I know of no reason why the interests of UNESCO scholars at present at British institutions should be affected by our withdrawal. It is for UNESCO to decide its future policy on sending UNESCO scholars to Britain.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify which of the reforms mentioned in his letter to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation of 5 December 1984 have not been implemented or tackled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to my statement to the House on 22 November at columns 517-25.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all representations received by Her Majesty's Government which *(a)* approved and *(b)* disapproved of the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from UNESCO, specifying, in each case, the country from which the representation came.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 12 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) at column *707*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the conditions under which Her Majesty's Government would be prepared to rejoin UNESCO have been transmitted to UNESCO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: No. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 11 December.

PRIME MINISTER

Military Nuclear Installations (Cancer)

Mr. Harris asked the Prime Minister what research is already available and what research has been commissioned into the relative incidence of cancers in the vicinity of military nuclear installations; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I understand that the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys is sponsoring a study to compare the incidence and mortality of certain malignancies in areas around nuclear establishments with those in control areas. Other studies of the incidence of cancer in various parts of the country are also being undertaken, including one by the Royal Berkshire hospital.

Earlier this year the Government established a committee on the medical aspects of radiation in the environment. This committee was established for the specific purpose of offering the Government independent medical and scientific advice on the health effects of natural and man-made radiation in the environment. The committee will be able to advise whether, in the light of the current studies, further research into particular issues is necessary.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister how many workplace nurseries are operated by Government Departments; how many children use these nurseries; and what is the average total subsidy from public funds per child.

The Prime Minister: There are no workplace nurseries at present operated by Government Departments.

Research and Development.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish the factual material assembled for the 1985 annual review of Government funded research and development.

The Prime Minister: The annual review of Government funded R & D, announced in the Government's response (Cmnd. 8591) to the House of Lords Select Committee report "Science and Government", has now completed its third cycle. As in previous years, Departments' R & D plans were submitted for review by Government under the guidance of the Interdepartmental Committee of Chief Scientists, and for comment by the Advisory Council on Applied Research and Development (ACARD), which provides independent advice.

The factual material assembled for the 1985 review, with some commentary, will again be published by the Government in order to inform the debate on this important topic. It will be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office on Monday 16 December, and I am arranging to have copies placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dogs

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dog licences were purchased in Northern Ireland in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984; and what is the latest figure for 1985.

Dr. Boyson: The available information is as follows:—

	Number of licences purchased	*Number of dogs licensed*
1 April 1980 to 31 March 1981	36,971	50,776
1 April 1981 to 31 March 1982	32,867	45,259
1 April 1982 to 31 March 1983	35,230	48,686
1 April 1983 to 18 December 1983	24,892	33,936
19 December 1985 to 31 December 1984	84,137	*86,673
1 January 1985 to 30 September 1985	60,383	*62,619

* Licences issued since 19 December 1983 include block licences which are available in certain circumstances to people who keep three or more dogs is not known, but for statistical purposes is estimated at the minimum o three per block licence.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many dogs have been destroyed in Northern Ireland since 1 January 1985;

(2) how many dogs were destroyed in Northern Ireland during each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1984.

Dr. Boyson: The available information is as follows:

Year	*Number of dogs humanely destroyed*
1980	Not available
1981	9,580
1982	10,510
1983	11,100
1984	12,228
1 January to 30 June 1985	1,836 by USPCA
1 January to 30 September 1985	7,403 by district councils

Up to 18 December 1983 the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals dealt with stray dogs as agents of the Northern Ireland police authority; from 19 December 1983 responsibilitity has rested with district councils under the terms of the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.

The figures include not only stray dogs but also dogs which were either unwanted or which had to be put down by reason of infirmity of disease. Homes are found for about 25 per cent. of the stray and unwanted dogs dealt with by the USPCA and district councils.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost of collecting the dog licence in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has in relation to parents of children taking part in the assisted places scheme as to whether they are *(a)* separated or divorced, *(b)* unemployed, *(c)* retired, *(d)* disabled or *(e)* manual workers.

Mr. Dunn: Such information is not collected by the Department.

Overseas Students

Mr. Barry Jones: asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many overseas students pursue studies for further degrees, M.Sc. and Ph.D. through University College, Wales, Aberystwyth and Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth and in which broad areas of work; how this compares with 1979-80; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The number of students paying overseas fees at the Welsh Plant Breeding Station were as follows:

	Number
1979-80	
Ph.D. developmental genetics	1
Ph.D. herbage breeding	1
Ph.D. plant pathology	1
M.Sc. plant breeding	5
1984-85	
Ph.D. grass breeding	1
Ph.D. agriculture	1
M.Sc. plant breeding	7

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account was taken by the national advisory body for higher education of the European Economic Community directive requiring freedom to practise throughout the European Economic Community for professionals when it decided to restrict entry to the architectural profession; what savings will be made by this step; and what loss of revenue will be incurred as a result of deterring foreign students from coming to the United Kingdom to study architecture.

Mr. Walden: (i) The directive was drawn to the attention of NAB in representations from a variety of sources during its consideration of architecture intakes.

(ii) Assuming the reduction in part II intakes to architecture courses recommended by NAB and the UGC is implemented from 1989, there would be a minimum saving on mandatory awards to part II students of roughly £600,000 at current grant level.

(iii) None. Provision for overseas students wishing to study architecture is not at issue.

Education Expenditure (Comparisons)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures for the United Kingdom for the proportion of the gross domestic or gross national product spent on education comparable with those of other European countries referred to in his Department's publication "Selected National Education Systems".

Sir Keith Joseph: The information is as follows:

Country	*Financial year beginning in*	*Expenditure on education as a percentage of gross national product*
France	1980	*5·1
Germany, Federal Republic of	1980	4·7
Italy	1979	5·0
Netherlands	1981	†7·9
United Kingdom	1981	5·4
	1983	‡5·2

* Metropolitan France.
† Revised.
‡ Provisional.
Source: United Kingdom—Department of Education and Science
Other Countries — UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1984, republished by DES in "Selected National Education Systems".

Medical Research Council

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what machinery is available in his Department to monitor the administrative work of the Medical Research Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council is one of a number of bodies which have royal charters and are sponsored by the Department. The Department's relationship with the council is along the lines set out in the Cabinet Office (MPO) and Her Majesty's Treasury Publication "Non-Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments", a copy of which is in the Library. Monitoring functions are mainly discharged through the Department's science branch.

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if the Agriculture and Food Research Council through the Welsh Plant Breeding Station at Aberystwyth is considering investigating alternatives to current grassland and animal farming systems in the wetter western portions of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of the combined budget of the new animal and grassland research institute will be spent at the Welsh Plant Breeding Station Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will ensure that the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth will remain active in the research on oat breeding and related research; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if forage breeding and the related genetic expertise will form an important part of the Agriculture and Food Research Council's grassland research programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC) is committed to a strong research programme at the Welsh Plant Breeding Station (WPBS) related to the needs of livestock and grassland enterprises in the wetter west of Britain. Within this broad remit the precise content and balance of the research programme at the WPBS will be determined by the director of animal production and grassland research in the light of a number of factors including the level of his institute's grant-in-aid from the science budget through the AFRC, the commissioning needs of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and industrial and scientific advice available to him.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the grades of the new posts of the director of research and of site directors of the new animal and grassland reseach insitutue of the Agriculture and Food Research Council; what will be the preferred specialisations of the successful candidates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: No decision has yet been taken about the grade of the new post of director of the AFRC's animal production and grassland research institute. I understand that the successful candidate will be chosen on the basis of proven leadership ability in the relevant scientific discipline. I also understand that the management of sites within the new institute, including the grades of the heads of sites, will be a matter on which the director, when appointed, will be invited to make proposals.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what esimate he has of the Agriculture and Food Research Council's long-term commitment to its breeding programmes on various crops at its institutes under the reorganisation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Agricultural and Food Research Council's document "Forward Policy", which was published in October 1985, explained that crop breeding together with crop production and crop protection research will be a component of the research programmes of the council's new arable crops and horticultural research institutes. I understand that the AFRC is considering ways of increasing industrial funding of its plant breeding programmes.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the cuts in expenditure announced by the Agriculture and Food Research Council in September conform with the views of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food priorities board in relation to the Welsh Plant Breeding Station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the reductions announced in September reflected reductions in work commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food from April 1986. They include some reductions

in strategic work on crop physiology and grass cytogenetics and carried out with funds from the science budget. These changes in programmes are consistent with the interim advice given to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by the priorities board for research and development in agriculture and food.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on the length of appointments at the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth.

Mr. Walden: Although their employer is the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, I understand that the staff of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station are appointed on the standard terms and conditions of service of the Agricultural and Food Research Service. For staff on permanent appointments the normal retirement age is 60. In addition, fixed-term appointments are made from time to time to meet short-term requirements.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has redetermined the expenditure level for the Inner London education authority for the financial year 1986-87.

Sir Keith Joseph: In September I determined the expenditure level for the new ILEA for 1986-87 under the Rates Act at £902 million. The Inner London interim education authority subsequently applied to me for a redetermination of the expenditure level at £1,025 million. I have today informed the interim authority that I have redetermined the expenditure level at £915 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Licensed Premises (Exclusions)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of people excluded from licensed premises for each of the years since the Licensed Premises Exclusion of Certain Persons Act 1980 has been in force.

Mr. Mellor: Records available to me show no orders made under the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980 in the period 30 June to 31 December 1980, 52 in 1981, 146 in 1982, 165 in 1983, and 198 in 1984. Corresponding information for subsequent years is not being collected centrally because the figures are thought to be incomplete.

Strip Searches

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons and in what circumstances male and female prisoners are strip-searched in Her Majesty's prisons; and what contribution such searches make to prison security.

Mr. Mellor: The following information relates to prisons in England and Wales. Responsibility for prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Strip searching is a routine but essential security procedure whose purpose is to detect small items of contraband, in particular weapons and drugs, which can be easily concealed about the body and cannot be detected by other methods of searching. The justification for this method of searching, distasteful though it is to staff and prisoners alike, is that staff do discover items such as drugs, razors, plastic knives sharpened into daggers, and scissors which would not otherwise be detected; and the knowledge that these searches take place undoubtedly has a deterrent effect.

Rule 39 of the prison rules 1964 provides that every prisoner, male and female and including those on remand, shall be searched on reception into prison and thereafter as the governor thinks necessary. Standing instructions provide that the search on reception should be a strip search, and other times at which prisoners may be strip searched include before and after court appearances, before and after visits, at the time of cell changes and during wing and cell searches.

National Drugs Unit

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the police officers to be seconded to the national drugs unit under the command of Mr. Colin Hewitt are to remain on the strength of their existing forces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police (Bullets)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Metropolitan Police have available for use any soft-nosed bullets, or bullets specifically designed to break up when passing within or through the target.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The round available to the metropolitan police is a semi-jacketed soft-nosed round which has been tested extensively and is not designed to break up on contact with human tissue.

Immigration Regulations (Detainees)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) why the hon. Member for Leyton has not yet received a substantive reply to his question tabled for priority written answer on 18 November relating to the latest available information on persons detained under immigration regulations; and when the hon. Member can expect to receive a substantive reply;

(2) if he will list all people held in detention under immigration regulations as of 10 December, where they are detained and the date they were first held.

Mr. Waddington: I wrote to the hon. Member on 5 December giving the information he had requested about those detained for over seven days on 19 November. For the reasons explained in that letter information about all those detained on 10 December is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Remanded Persons

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were remanded in prison for medical reports in each of the last five years; and what proportion in each category eventually received a custodial sentence.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons remanded in custody awaiting trial, both male and female, at the latest date available.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985, about 7,860 untried males and 310 untried females were in prison department establishments in England and Wales. Information on how many were awaiting commencement of their trial is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons remanded in custody awaiting trial, at *(a)* Risley remand centre and *(b)* Brockhill remand centre at 31 December 1984, 30 June 1985 and the latest date available.

Mr. Mellor: The readily availble information is given in the table below. Information on how many were awaiting commencement of their trial is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Untried population of Risley and Brockhill remand centres
*Number of persons**

	31 December 1984	*30 June 1985*	*31 October 1985*
Risley remand centre†	690	715	770
Brockhill remand centre	195	205	195

* Rounded estimates.
† Males and females.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will express the number of remands in custody for *(a)* indictable and *(b)* all offences excluding driving offences, as a percentage of the total number of persons charged with offences in each category, using figures for the latest available 12 months period.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of persons remanded and the type of remand is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", chapter 8 of the issue for 1984. In 1984, seven per cent. of those proceeded against at magistrates' courts for indictable offences and four per cent. of those proceeded against for indictable or non-motoring summary offences had been remanded in custody. Of those tried at the Crown court in 1984, 23 per cent. had been remanded in custody either on committal for trial or during proceedings at the Crown court.

Custodial Sentences

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he gives to magistrates on the exercise of their sentencing powers with particular regard to the imposition on adult males of custodial sentences for indictable offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The sentence to be passed in any particular case is a matter for the courts, subject to the requirements of statute. But the Department takes opportunities to draw to the attention of the magistrates' courts relevant guidance of the Court of Appeal, including guidance on the use of custody, and to emphasise the value of using non-custodial measures wherever possible. A general guide to sentencing powers and principles is provided in the handbook "The Sentence of the Court", a new edition of which will be published shortly.

Sentencing

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent, and by what means his Department monitors *(a)* the implementation by magistrates of guidance on sentencing and *(b)* the consistency of sentencing patterns in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: In compiling the published criminal statistics, the Department collects details of the sentences imposed in each petty sessions area. Consistency of practice is one of the factors we have in mind in analysing this information, though variations in the use of different sentences will in some measure be attributable to differences in local circumstances.

Mohammed Fasih

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the hon. Member for Stretford can expect a reply to his letter to the Minister of State, dated 29 August concerning Mohammed Fasih (F177119/2);

(2) when Mr. Mohammed Fasih was interviewed; when he first applied for political asylum; and if he will indicate the reasons for the delay in reaching a decision in this case.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Fasih applied for asylum in August 1983, and was interviewed in respect of his application on 14 December 1983. It was necessary to make further inquiries about the information provided by Mr. Fasih in support of his application and this together with the general pressures on the Home Office refugee unit resulted in the long delay in dealing with the case, which I very much regret.

I shall write to the hon. Member very shortly with my right hon. Friend's decision on Mr. Fasih's application.

Political Asylum

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long on average an applicant for political asylum can expect to wait *(a)* before receiving a decision after an interview and *(b)* before an application for interview is granted.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. Interviews of applicants for asylum may be conducted throughout the country; the waiting time for such interviews at the Public Inquiry office at Croydon is currently about 12 weeks.

As regards the overall time taken to decide asylum applications, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 18 November at column 10.

Young Persons (Tobacco Sales)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the number of prosecutions, convictions, and the average fine imposed for such convictions, for offences under section 7 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information readily available to me, which may be incomplete, is published annually under offence classification 144 in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables", in the issue for 1984 in vol 1, table S1.1—for proceedings in magistrates' courts—and vol 4, table 4.4(B)—for amounts of fine. Amounts of fine have been published only from 1983.

Drug-dealing Offences

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to reform section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs Act to allow forfeiture orders for all drug-dealing offences.

Mr. Mellor: Legislation will be introduced very shortly to provide new powers for depriving convicted drug traffickers of the proceeds of their offences. These proposals are designed to remedy the deficiencies in section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 revealed by the "Operation Julie" case.

Probation Service

Mr. Charles Wardle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received the report of the working group reviewing the role of the probation service in prison establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The report of the working group has been presented to the Prison Board which broadly endorsed the principles of prisoner throughcare and shared working recommended by the working group. The report's implications are now being studied by my Department and, following consultation with the staff associations concerned, we intend to issue in the new year a joint circular to prison governors and chief probation officers on how the report's recommendations may be carried forward. Copies of the report are being sent to prison governors, chief probation officers and the relevant trade unions, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Coroners (Supporting Staff)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is proposed to implement recommendations 92 and 93, supporting staff for coroners, of the Brodrick committee on death certification and coroners, Cmnd. 4810.

Mr. Hurd: The organisation and methods branch of the Home Office has reviewed the work of the coroner's officer. It is intended that its report should be circulated shortly and a copy placed in the Library. This supports the conclusions of the Brodrick committee that the work of the coroners' officers should be carried out by civilians. We shall therefore suggest that civilian staff from the police service should be appointed to fill these posts in place of police officers.

Controlled Drugs

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is now able to announce the Government's response to the report of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs on the security of controlled drugs.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. The Government very much welcome this report and are grateful to the council for the thorough manner in which it carried out its review of this important topic.

Work on the report began in 1981, prompted by growing concern over the theft of controlled drugs. The report, which was published in November 1983, examined the adequacy of the security arrangements for the production, carriage, storage and supply of licit controlled drugs, concentrating mainly on those most at risk, including manufacturers, wholesalers, community pharmacists, practitioners and hospitals.

The report made a number of recommendations for improving security. The Government have examined these very carefully in the light of widespread consultations with trade and professional organisations and of its other priorities within the overall strategy for tackling drug misuse. As a result of the report we shall be taking action to: (i) encourage the police to make greater use of their powers to exempt pharmacies from present statutory arrangements were adequate non-standard security precautions are taken; (ii) issue revised guidelines to NHS hospitals; (iii) carry out a review by the Home Office drugs inspectorate of the security arrangements at premises of persons and organisations licensed to possess, supply or manufacture controlled drugs; (iv) implement a range of detailed recommendations in the report.

The report also recommended that, for retail pharmacies and dispensing practices, the existing detailed statutory security requirements should be replaced by flexible guidelines adaptable to the needs of individual premises but subject to police agreement and, if necessary, to Home Office arbitration and enforcement; and that enforceable new guidelines on security should be issued to hospitals and the transporters of controlled drugs. In considering these recommendations, the Government have taken account of the change in circumstances since the preparation of the report, in particular that the threat to licit stocks now appears less severe. We have concluded that we would not be justified in giving priority at present to full implementation of these recommendations. However, we urge all doctors and pharmacists, when assessing the adequacy of their security arrangements, to take account of the advisory council's recommendations, and we shall continue to keep under close review the risk of theft or diversion from licit stocks.

Fourth Television Channel, Wales

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has concluded his review of the operation of the fourth television channel in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 23 August, we announced the establishment of this review and that I would be consulting the broadcasting organisations most directly concerned with the operation of the channel. I also indicated that I would be glad to receive the views of any other groups or individuals in Wales.

During the past three months we have received letters and submissions from 83 individuals and from 56 organisations in Wales. Of these, 110 favoured the continuation of the present arrangements and 29 expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with them. All the broadcasting organisations who submitted evidence

favoured the present arrangements. Many organisations argued that the fourth channel in Wales had brought tangible benefits to Wales in terms of employment, cultural enrichment, the expansion of an independent production industry, and in strengthening the base of the Welsh language.

I have therefore concluded from the evidence of these submissions and the advice of the broadcasters that there is no widespread desire for change and that the continuation of the present arrangements for the channel is in the best interests of Wales and the Welsh language.

SCOTLAND

Child Leukaemia (Rosyth)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the incidence of child leukaemia in the vicinity of Rosyth naval base.

Mr. George Younger: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 12 December.

Tobacco-Related Disease

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the numbers of people under the age of 20 years in Scotland who use tobacco and the numbers of those people who show evidence of tobacco-related diseases.

Mr. John MacKay: Sample surveys conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys indicate that in Scotland about 187,000 people under the age of 20 smoke cigarettes. We have no information about the use of other tobacco products by this age group. There are no centrally held data to show how many of these persons are affected by tobacco-related diseases; but the adverse health effects of smoking are cumulative and would not begin to appear in the early years of smoking.

Controlled Drugs (Report)

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's response in Scotland to the report of the advisory council on the misuse of drugs on the security of controlled drugs.

Mr. George Younger: The Government very much welcome this report and we are grateful to the council for its thorough review of this important topic.

The Government have had widespread consultations with trade and professional organisations on the report's recommendations. There have been a number of developments since the report was published which have implications for the security of controlled drugs. In particular, since the threat to licit stocks of controlled drugs is not so severe at present as was feared likely several years ago, we have decided that we would not be justified in implementing in full the recommendations relating to the replacement of the existing statutory storage requirements on retail pharmacies and the issue of new enforceable guidelines to hospitals and the transporters of controlled drugs.

We shall however encourage community pharmacists and dispensing doctors to review their security arrangements in consultation with the police and to improve them wherever necessary, having regard to the council's recommendations. The police have power to exempt pharmacies from the present basic statutory arrangements where they have approved alternative security precautions. Many pharmacists are expected to be able to qualify for this exemption on the basis of the improved security procedures which they have already introduced. We wish to encourage full co-operation between the police and pharmacists in the possible use of these exemption procedures to effect better security of controlled drugs.

A range of procedural recommendations will also be commended to community pharmacists to prevent the diversion from their premises of licit supplies of controlled drugs for illegal use.

We shall also keep under review the adequacy of security arrangements in hospitals. In 1984 a circular was issued to health boards requesting security programmes to improve the effectiveness of these procedures. A recent review indicates that the security of drugs in pharmacies in NHS hospitals is currently sound. We shall continue to monitor the situation and additional advice on procedural aspects of drug security will, as appropriate, be issued.

Finally, the Home Office drugs inspectorate will carry out a review of the security arrangements at premises of persons and organisations licensed to possess, supply or manufacture controlled drugs.

Housing Association (Glasgow)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many housing association houses have been sold in Glasgow; and what is the total for each individual housing association.

Mr. Ancram: There were 601 sales of complete dwellings by housing associations in Glasgow City district up to 30 September 1985. Three of these sales were to sitting tenants; the remainder were sales of vacant properties, dwellings improved specifically for sale and houses sold by co-ownership societies to their members. The numbers sold by each housing association are listed below:

Housing association	*Number of dwellings sold*
Jordanhill (Southbrae)	61
Link (Cleveden)	46
Tweedsmuir (Kingsborough)	16
Partickhill (Woodend)	26
Link (Newlands)	30
Link (Whittingehame)	14
Strathclyde (Hyndland)	44
Second Anglo-Scottish (Bellahouston)	24
Mercat (Hyndland)	94
Strathclyde (Milngavie)	67
Clyde & Caledonian (Milngavie)	28
Govanhill	6
West of Scotland	1
Cathcart	1
Linthouse	7
Glasgow Fair	7
Milnbank	9
W. P. H. T. Scottish	2
Partick	7
Central Govan	2
Reidvale	6
Queen's Cross	29
Springburn and Possilpark	1
Shettleston	20

Housing association	Number of dwellings sold
Maryhill	16
Parkhead	5
Meadowside, Thornwood	4
Yorkhill	12
Whiteinch and Scotstoun	1
Sandyford	1
Rutherglen	14

Arts Council

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all the contributions made by the Scottish Arts Council to organisations or projects in the Shettleston constituency over the last five years.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

The Scottish Arts Council does not allocate its funds in terms of constituencies, but it gives extensive support to the arts in central Glasgow which benefit the neighbouring districts, including Shettleston, by providing productions close at hand including in some cases touring productions. Within the hon. Member's constituency, Mr. Oscar Marzaroli has received a grant of £1,500 for his film "Glasgow, the Changing City" and an artist-in-residence project has been jointly supported with the Scottish Development Agency.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General when he expects to be able to tell how many unemployed people in Lambeth are black.

Mr. Alan Clark: The collection of ethnic minority unemployment statistics was discontinued in August 1982 following the introduction of voluntary registration for employment at jobcentres. At present there are no immediate plans to introduce ethnic monitoring in Lambeth. The Department of Employment is to undertake pilot tests early in the new year to assess the feasibility of resuming the collection of these statistics.

The pilot tests will take place in the unemployment benefit offices in Stockton, Thornton Heath and Toxteth for a period of two weeks from Monday 6 January 1986. The benefit office staff will make a visual assessment of the ethnic origin of unemployed people and classify them under one of three broad categories: Afro-Caribbean, Asian and others. Participation will be voluntary. There will be a category for all those not wishing to be classified. Posters will be prominiently displayed to ensure that individuals are aware that an assessment of their ethnic origin is being made.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Paymaster General how many (i) employed and (ii) self-employed people there are in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Greater London; what information he has as to comparable figures for other European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of employees in employment in the United Kingdom was estimated to be 21,292,000. In Greater London the figure was 3,466,000.

Details are not available from the Department's statistics on the number of self-employed in Greater London, but the provisional estimate of the number of self-employed in the United Kingdom in June 1985 was 2,620,000.

Figures on the number of employees and self-employed in other European Community countries are given on pages 125 and 124 of "Employment and Unemployment 1985", published by the statistical office of the European Communities, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Ron Leighton asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of jobs lost in the London borough of Newham since 1979 analysed by the standard industrial classification.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job losses and job gains is not available from the Department's statistics. Net changes in employment can be given but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken.

The available information for the local authority district of Newham is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 census of employment and is as follows. net changes between 1981 and 1984 will become available following publication of the September 1984 census in the spring of 1986.

Net changes in the numbers of employees in employment June 1978 to September 1981

Standard industrial classification 1968	Thousands
All industries and services*†	−11·9
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	‡
Mining and quarrying	‡
Food, drink and tobacco	−1·2
Coal and petroleum products	‡
Chemicals and allied industries	−1·0
Metal manufacture	−0·3
Mechanical engineering	+1·5
Instrument engineering	‡
Electrical engineering	‡
Shipbuilding and marine engineering	−0·6
Vehicles	−0·1
Metal goods not elsewhere specified	−0·1
Textiles	‡
Leather, leather goods and fur	−0·1
Clothing and footwear	−0·5
Bricks, pottery, glass, cement, etc.	−0·1
Timber, furniture, etc.	−0·8
Paper, printing and publishing	−0·5
Other manufacturing industries	−0·3
Construction	−0·3
Gas, electricity and water	+0·1
Transport and communication	−2·7
Distributive trades	−1·0
Insurance, banking, finance and business services	−0·6
Professional and scientific services	−0·4
Miscellaneous services*	+1·3
Public administration and defence†	−4·4

*Excludes private domestic service.
†Excludes HM Forces.
‡Nil or negligible.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 9 December, he will provide information on the level of under-representation in particular work, the particular racial groups involved and geographical locations in such form as the information is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply,* 12 December 1985]: Successive research studies have shown

that people from the ethnic minorities are substantially under-represented in higher level occupations. In particular, a comprehensive survey of employment undertaken in 1982 for the Policy Studies Institute study "Black and White Britain" showed that the percentage of people in work classified as professional employers or managers were as follows:

	White	*West Indian*	*Asian*
Men	22	7	14
Women	9	1	7

This pattern is confirmed by the results of the EC labour force survey.

Against this general background, positive action initiatives under sections 37 and 38 of the Race Relations Act 1976 are based on judgments on the local level of under-representation in each individual case. In the case of section 37 this judgment is made by the training body concerned in the first instance. Action under section 38 is a matter for employers. No information is collected on the number of initiatives taken under this provision.

Ministerial Engagements

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General if he will list the official engagements of the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Employment, for 30 May 1984.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State's official engagements that day were as follows:

Approximately 11.30 am
Visit to water transfer station, Abbeystead, Lancashire.
Approximately 1 pm
Private meeting with the Reverend Lawrence Davies and local residents, Church Hall, St. Michael's on Wyre.
Approximately 2.15 pm
Visit to Royal Lancaster infirmary, Lancaster.

Accidents at Work

Mr. Hoyle asked the Paymaster General if he will give the total number of accidents at work and the total number of claims for compensation in the United Kingdom for the latest 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will give such equivalent information as is available for areas most nearly corresponding to the towns and cities of Widnes, Bolton, Blackburn, Burnley, Norwich, Derby, Plymouth and Exeter, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total reported number of people suffering a major injury or death as a result of work activity in the United Kingdom for 1984 was 19,899 (provisional figure).

The number of claims for industrial injury benefit over the period April 1982 to March 1983 was 345,000 for the United Kingdom.

This information is not available for the towns and cities referred to in the question.

TRANSPORT

Road Signs

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many road signs on the M1, M62, and A1, outside west Yorkshire, refer to Bradford; if he will ensure that Bradford is included on suitable new signs erected on these roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There are no advance direction signs on the M1, M62 and A1 outside west Yorkshire which refer to Bradford.

The existing direction signs comply with departmental practice in terms of the destinations mentioned. The number of names on any one sign must be limited in the interests of road safety. If extra names are placed on new signs, it becomes necessary to add the same names to existing signs closer to the destination thus adding substantially to the cost of signing.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to publish specific road accident figures for the Christmas and new year period.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department's annual statistical report, "Road Accidents, Great Britain", covers accidents in the December period, including the holiday periods and the weeks preceding Christmas. The last such analysis, covering December 1984, is contained in the 1984 edition, pages 28 and 29, a copy of which is in the Library. The 1985 figures will appear in the next edition, to be published in the autumn of 1986. This will also include detailed figures for all public holidays.

Leeds

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his proposed study of Leed's road system will begin its work; and who will be on the study team.

Mrs. Chalker: I have yet to decide who will carry out the study of traffic problems in and around Leeds, but I shall write to my hon. Friend when I have decided on the terms of reference and the persons chosen to carry it out. I expect the study to begin early in 1986.

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of his rejection of both the western and eastern motorway links round the city of Leeds, he will impose a time limit on the deliberations of his study into the city's road traffic system.

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot yet say whether it would be right to impose a time limit on the study, but I am anxious to reach conclusions as soon as possible in order to end local uncertainty about our intentions.

M1 Lighting

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport why lights on the M1 south of Rotherthorpe service station, near junction 15, are unlit for a stretch of 400 yards.

Mrs. Chalker: The short section of temporary motorway lighting just south of Rotherthorpe service area was erected to illuminate a crossover for contraflow working during 1984. It was switched off shortly after completion of road works.

It will be removed when permanent lighting is installed to this section of M1, anticipated in 1986.

Motorway Delays

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has covering incidents of delays of 30 minutes over normal travelling time on the motorway system in 1985; and if he will list these in the *Official Report*.

Mrs. Chalker: The information on traffic delays available to the Department is held locally by out 36 motorway agent authorities. This information, which is in various forms and not necessarily comprehensive, could only be collated and listed in the *Official Report* at disproportionate cost. Should the hon. Member require information about delay at a specific location, perhaps he would write to me.

Air Agreements

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the bilateral liberalised air agreements he has made in 1985 and the agreements he hopes to make in 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer this question shortly.

ENERGY

Sizewell Inquiry

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of his working time the inspector in charge of the Sizewell inquiry is required to spend on that inquiry; and if he is permitted to take on consultancy and other work during the time when his report is awaited.

Mr. Goodlad: The inspector was advised before his appointment that he could expect inquiry business to take much, if not all, of his time.

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much the inspector in charge of the Sizewell inquiry is being paid for his services.

Mr. Goodlad: Payment to the inspector is a confidential matter between the inspector and the Secretary of State for Energy. It is not customary to disclose such details.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions nuclear material has been withdrawn from safeguards under the tripartite safeguards agreement, Cmnd. 6730, March 1977; and in what proportion of the total number of such cases of withdrawal the material has been used *(a)* in nuclear warhead manufacture, *(b)* in the fabrication of submarine propulsion fuel, *(c)* for research purposes in a materials testing reactor and subsequently returned to safeguards within the civil stockpile and *(d)* sent to another sovereign state.

Mr. Goodlad: Details of withdrawals of material from safeguards under the tripartite safeguards agreement are supplied to the IAEA and Euratom on a strictly confidential basis. It would not be in the public interest to publish this information.

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he can now update his estimate of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *307*, regarding the date of delivery of the main recommendations of the inspector in charge of the Sizewell inquiry; and to what the change in date is attributable.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the written quesion of the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 19 November, at column *101*.

Plutonium

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the United Kingdom has ever transferred plutonium to France for intended use in *(a)* Phoenix or *(b)* Super-Phoenix fast-breeder reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: Since 1968 there have been occasional transfers of plutonium from the United Kingdom to France for research on and production of fast-breeder reactor fuel. All the material was subject to international safeguards which provide for the plutonium to be used for peaceful purposes.

European Fast Reactor Collaboration

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the extent to which nuclear material supplied to France by the United Kingdom under the inter-governmental memorandum of understanding on European fast reactor collaboration could have been obtained by the French Government from French domestic sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: None. I expect transfers of nuclear material between partners in the collaboration to occur whenever required for the purposes of the collaboration and appropriate under the terms of the inter-governmental memorandum of understanding.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to advise the Agriculture and Food Research Council that it should invest in research on a broader range of crops; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline his policy concerning the effect of the European Economic Community common agricultural policy on the more extensive systems for poorer land; and if he has considered alternative crops and systems for the less productive areas of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephones

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal what details or information is recorded on the number of faulty calls arising from the alteration of the new telephone system within the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: All faults reported by users of the Palace of Westminster telephone system are logged and analysed. The communications staff use this information to guide them towards any part of the telephone system which might require special investigation.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal what was the overall cost on an annual basis of telephone alterations within the Palace of Westminster for the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Biffen: The cost of telephone alterations within the Palace of Westminster for the years 1979-85 are as follows:

	£
1979	32,000
1980	42,825
1981	17,407
1982	32,013
1983	24,637
1984	103,090
1985*	984,016

* To 30 November 1985.

Notes

(1) The 1984 figure includes the cost of relocation of the Members' Message Bureau.

(2) The 1985 figure includes the cost of provision of the new Palace of Westminster telephone exchange.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax Payments

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual income tax payment by persons *(a)* on the pay-as-you-earn scheme and *(b)* those outside the scheme.

Mr. Moore: It is estimated that the average income tax liability in 1985-86 for taxpayers of working age is *(a)* about £1,900 for those whose main source of income is subject to pay-as-you-earn and *(b)* about £2,250 for those whose main source of income is outside PAYE. These averages are for tax units, that is after aggregating income for married couples.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Inland Revenue will make it its policy when it uses electoral registers in machine readable form to disclose the fact that it is doing so to the Data Protection Registrar.

Mr. Moore: I confirm that the Inland Revenue will comply fully with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Mutual Organisations (Recognition)

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of the Bank of England towards granting recognition under the Banking Act to mutual organisations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current position regarding progress towards recognition of the Trustee Savings Bank under the Banking Act.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Securities (Taxation)

Mr. Wood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Inland Revenue's practice regarding the tax treatment on sale and repurchase agreements in securities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Proposals will be brought forward in next year's Finance Bill to provide that section 469 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 will be treated as never having applied to sale and repurchase transactions involving overseas Government stocks denominated in foreign currency or Eurobonds provided that both parties to the transaction are dealers in securities.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council on 9 December.

Mr. Brooke: I represented the United Kingdom at this Council.

The Council had a further discussion of the Commission's annual economic report for 1985-86. The report was generally welcomed, although we and some other member states made it clear that we do not agree with every word in it. The report, as amended by some changes mainly to the country chapters in part 2, was adopted by the Council.

The Council continued its consideration of indirect tax harmonisation in the context of the internal market, it agreed in principle to the setting up of a high level group to consider the subject in greater depth.

The Council examined a progress report from the EC's economic policy committee on labour markets and employment. Its conclusion that labour market flexibility is a crucial element in tackling the problem of unemployment was broadly endorsed.

There was discussion also of aspects of the system of commercial interest reference rates for export credits; of tax measures to encourage co-operation between undertakings in different member states; and of Community competition rules and insurance. Consideration of these issues will be taken forward at future Councils.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Assisted Status Scheme

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, if he will detail, for the Birkenhead area, the number of firms, and the size of the grants paid to each of them, under the new extended assisted status scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I can now update the information given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in his letter of 27 November.

A total of £449,000 has been offered to firms in the Birkenhead constituency. Three firms have been offered a total of £155,000 under the regional selective assistance scheme. A further sum of £294,000 has been offered to nineteen firms under the new regional development grants scheme.

I regret I would have difficulty in supplying any itemised information to the hon. Member. Payments of grant above £5,000 are published in due course in "British Business" but it would undermine the commercial confidentiality of the scheme to make information available in advance of publication.

Tobacco Sales

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the number of cigarettes, cigars and individual packets of other tobacco products which have been sold through retail outlets in Great Britain in each of the last 10 years; and if he will estimate what proportion of those sales may have been made to young people under the age of 16 years.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Multi-Fibre Arrangement

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will insist, in considering the draft European Economic Community negotiating mandate for the multi-fibre arrangement renewal negotiations, that a new multi-fibre arrangement should include a social clause.

Mr. Channon: This is one possibility that will need to be considered by the Community in its consideration of the draft mandate.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will insist that the Council of Ministers does not at its meeting on 16 December finally approve the draft European Economic Community negotiating mandate for the multi-fibre arrangement negotiations but defers any decision until after Spain and Portugal have become full members of the European Economic Community and until the United States negotiating position has become clear.

Mr. Channon: There is no possibility that the Council of Ministers will approve the draft negotiated mandate at its meeting on 16 December.

Association of Accounting Technicians (Exhibition)

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Association of Accounting Technicians to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Howard: Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from 13 January to 17 January 1986.

Regional Aid

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans for reviewing regional aid budgets; and whether he will take steps to introduce a development agency for the North of England.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 December 1985, c. *716*]: I have no plans to review the regional aid budget in respect of England. Nor do I propose to introduce a development agency for the North of England. Such an agency would only impose a further layer of bureaucracy in the region. The region already has various bodies involved in promotional and inward investment activities including the North of England development council. INWARD and the Yorkshire and Humberside development association all of which are in receipt of Government funds.

ENVIRONMENT

Black Arts Groups

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to assist the establishment of black arts groups for live and recorded music and dance in areas with large ethnic groups.

Sir George Young: The urban programme continues to provide financial support to projects which develop music and dance skills, including those meeting the needs of ethnic minorities. I also hope shortly to commission an external research study to examine ways of increasing the opportunities for young black people to enter the music business.

Retail Superstore Developments

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if his Department has undertaken studies to assess the impact of large retail superstore developments in terms of *(a)* changes in consumer spending in a locality and *(b)* changes in employment in existing smaller retail outlets in a locality; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether his Department has undertaken studies to compile statistical evidence concerning the employment creation potential of large retail superstore developments in *(a)* inner city locations, and *(b)* out of town or suburban locations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No Departmental studies relating to the impact of large retail developments have been published since 1978; but a number of useful studies on impact and employment implications have been carried out by outside organisations and individuals.

Homes Insulation Scheme

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps during Energy Efficiency Year to widen the scope of the homes insulation scheme to allow for the inclusion of cavity walls and extend the qualification level to those householders currently with 1 in to 2 in loft insulation.

Sir George Young: The scope of the homes insulation scheme is kept under review. The scheme was extended only last year to make grants payable to householders to top up existing insulation of 30 mm or less. My right hon. Friend has no plans at present further to widen or extend the scheme.

Housing Investment Programme Allocation (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available to him about the capacity of the private sector in Waltham Forest to provide rented accommodation to meet local needs before he decides on the housing investment programme allocation for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: In making the allocation, my right hon. Friend has regard to the housing investment submission made by the borough council, which included an estimate of the size of the private rented sector in the 1990s, and a copy of which is in the Library. However, the long-term contribution from private rented accommodation would be affected by future national measures to increase the supply of such accommodation.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost to his Department of computer time devoted to the implementation or monitoring of policy in relation to rate support grant, including targets and penalties, and rate limitation in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87; what proportion of this work was undertaken outside the United Kingdom; and what proportion of the total costs this represented.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The estimated cost to this Department of bought-in computer time devoted to rate support grant including targets and penalties, and rate limitation in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87 is as follows:

Annual expenditure including VAT

	£'000
1981-82	606·4
1982-83	615·2
1983-84	606·6
1984-85	547·5
*1985-86	536·0
†1986-87	513·0

* Estimated outturn.
† Projected.

All this expenditure is now incurred with computer bureaux in the United Kingdom. The Department uses its own internal computing facilities to process and monitor statistical data on local authority financial matters. The MINIS 6 report shows that for 1984-85 total computing costs accounted for about 30 per cent. of all current expenditure in the local government and finance policy directorate.

Defective Dwellings (Designation)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have given him notice under section 12(6) of the Housing Defects Act 1984 of a designation of a class of defective dwellings; if he will give the class of dwelling in each case, and the qualifying defect involved; and whether he has prevented, or intends to prevent, the coming into operation of that designation by serving a notice under section 12(7).

Mr. John Patten: Dudley metropolitan borough council has designated, under section 12(6) of the Act, certain dwellings with steel slag, semi-raft foundations. My right hon. Friend did not exercise his powers under section 12(7) and the designation came into effect on 25 November 1985. Leicester City council and the London borough of Hounslow have submitted to my Department proposed local designations of Smith houses and Bison wall frame system houses respectively. Neither designation was, in our view, legally valid and, for the avoidance of doubt, my right hon. Friend exercised his powers under section 12(7) to prevent them coming into operation.

Urban Programme (Resources)

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain, in respect of each authority invited to bid for traditional urban programme resources in 1986-87, the reasons why it has been included, setting out the information in the format of table 3 of his Department's Census information note No. 2.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Planning Controls

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, when Her Majesty's Government expects to introduce legislation on planning controls on the basis of the "Lifting the Burden" White Paper.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend expects to present a Bill including these provisions shortly.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will put in hand the review of policy for the provision of gipsy sites recommended by the Environment Committee.

Mr. Tracey: A consultation letter and memorandum has today been issued to local authority associations and other interested bodies in England. Similar arrangements are being made by the Welsh Office to consult local authority and other interests in Wales. I have also written to a number of hon. Members who have shown a particularly close interest in this subject in recent months, including my hon. Friend. Copies of the documents are being placed in the Library and in the Vote Office. I am aware that the slow progress on site provision is to a large extent a reflection of some difficult problems that local authorities have had to face. However, I am very anxious that the opportunity should be taken by those consulted not only to give their views on the main difficulties experienced by them, but also to put forward constructive and workable suggestions for dealing with these problems so that the review we are undertaking may have a fruitful and positive outcome.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that those sections of the scientific services of the Greater London council whose function is largely, or wholly, related to the services of the London Fire Brigade are retained as a single coherent unit.

Mr. Tracey: This is a matter for the London fire and civil defence authority in consultation, as necessary, with other successor bodies.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests (Christmas Island)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence what procedure will be adopted regarding the Australian Royal Commission findings and report on the health problems of test veterans involved in the Christmas Island nuclear tests.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Australian Royal Commission was tasked by the Australian Government to inquire into the tests carried out in Australia. The Government are studying its report and will discuss with the Australian Government those recommendations which affect the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom health study undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) is examining whether harm has been caused to participants in all the United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapon tests, including those in the Christmas and Malden islands area. The NRPB expects to complete its study by October 1986.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence what procedure will be adopted to seek to establish that there are no genetic effects arising among any of the civilian or military personnel who participated in the Christmas Island nuclear tests.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth, (Mr. Butler) on 31 October 1984 (at columns 1120-1121).

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received from the Australian Royal Commission on the health problems which some of the test veterans are suffering allegedly due to their participation in the nuclear tests in the Christmas Island area.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None. The Australian Royal Commission was appointed by and has presented its report to the Australian Government, not to the British Government. It was tasked to inquire into the United Kingdom tests carried out in Australia in the period from 1952-1964 and had no concern with the tests conducted by the United Kingdom in the Christmas Island area. One of the Royal Commission's tasks was to inquire whether the health of persons was or had been adversely affected. The United Kingdom Government are studying the report.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many public servants will be involved in the strategic defence initiative participation office.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This matter is still under consideration.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of setting up and operating the strategic defence initiative participation office in *(a)* the current financial year and *(b)* 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The precise structure of this office is still under consideration and so I am unable to provide the information requested.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will take steps to prevent the managing director of Her Majesty's Devonport dockyard using his Department's official notepaper, envelopes and internal post to publicise a private company which he and other senior managers have formed to tender for the contract to manage Devonport dockyard from 1 April 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the extent to which the involvement of serving Royal Navy officers in a private company tendering for the contract to manage Devonport dockyard from 1 April 1987 is consistent with the terms of Queen's Regulations so long as those officers continue to occupy their present positions;

(3) if he will make a statement on the extent to which the actions of the managing director of Devonport dockyard and other senior civil service managers, in forming a private company for the purposes of tendering for the contract to manage the dockyard after 1 April 1987, are consistent with the regulations governing the ethical conduct of civil servants, so long as those persons continue to occupy their present positions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Fraud (Private Prosecutions)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Attorney-General what factors the Director of Public Prosecutions takes into account in deciding whether to take over private prosecutions in cases of alleged fraud; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 28 October 1985 at column 297 in which he outlined the general policy of the director in deciding whether to take over private prosecutions. He has no differing policy as regards fraud cases. I understand that the hon. Member has in mind a particular case and, if he provides me with the details of that case, I shall write to him.

Building Societies

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Attorney-General if the Government have reached a decision on the extent to which they propose that building societies and other institutions should be permitted to offer conveyancing services to the public; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 6 December 1985 at column 354.

Illegitimacy

Mrs. Peacock asked the Attorney-General what plans he has to introduce legislation aimed at removing the stigma of illegitimacy from the law.

The Solicitor-General: In its report No. 118 on illegitimacy, published in 1982, the Law Commission made a number of recommendations aimed at removing the legal disadvantages suffered by illegitimate children. These recommendations have been accepted by the Government and will be implemented when resources become available. It is not likely that this will be during the current Session.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

U.N. Agencies

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of what United Nations agencies the United Kingdom is currently in membership; and whether he has any plans to reconsider these.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom is currently a member of the following United Nations inter-governmental agencies.

FAO, Food and Agriculture Organisation
GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ITC, International Trade Centre
IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organisation
IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO, International Labour Organisation
IMO, International Maritime Organisation
IMF, International Monetary Fund
ITU, International Telecommunication Union
UNESCO, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UPOV, International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
UPU, Universal Postal Union
WHO, World Health Organisation
WIPO, World Intellectual Property Organisation
WMO, World Meteorological Organisation

We participate actively in the policy making of all United Nations agencies and seek, where necessary, to improve the management of the their programmes. Our continued membership is dependent on a conviction that the programmes are soundly based and offer good value for money. In the case of UNESCO this is no longer so and the United Kingdom's membership will cease from 31 December 1985.

Argentina (Football Match)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether visas will be granted to the Argentine football team for the proposed friendly match with Scotland; and if he will offer any form of assistance.

Mr. Eggar: There are no special restrictions on the granting of visas to Argentine sportsmen, applications are considered on their merits and in accordance with the immigration rules.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations in the United Nations, towards strengthening the enforcement of the drive against international traffic in cocaine and opium-based drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The primary objective of the United Nations commission on narcotic drugs and the United Nations fund for drug abuse control to which we have pledged £2·5 million this year is to strengthen international control on the production, trafficking and abuse of all illicit drugs, including cocaine and opium based drugs. We play an active and constructive role in the work of these bodies and have, at this year's United Nations General Assembly, co-sponsored resolutions which call for the drawing up of a third United Nations convention, to deal with all aspects of international drug trafficking, and the convening of a world conference on drugs in 1987. We will continue to encourage and support increased and concerted co-operation worldwide in efforts to control drug abuse and trafficking.

Libya

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on relations with Libya.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 11 November at column 59.

British Embassy (Moscow)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the additional annual cost to public funds of replacing the 79 Soviet citizens working in the United Kingdom embassy and residences by United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Eggar: The information required will take some time to obtain. I shall reply as soon as posible.

Falkland Islands-Chile (Air Link)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has recently considered for the establishment of air links between the Falkland Islands and Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. But I understand that the Falkland Islands development corporation has had contacts with commercial civil aviation interests. In the context of developing the tourist potential of the islands.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applicants for entry clearance in Bangladesh from the re-applicants' queue are interviewed on average each week.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *422*]: Thirty two.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many interviews are conducted in one day by an entry clearance officer at each post in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985 c. *422*]: The information is as follows:

	Interviews
Dhaka	6
New Delhi	4·4
Bombay	5·25
Calcutta	5
Islamabad	4·2
Karachi	4

These are average figures, which refer to the numbers of applicants seen, and reflect the different categories of entry clearance applications that are lodged. Certain posts receive more multiple family applications, while others receive more applications from husbands, fiancés(e)s, visitors and students, where there is only one principal applicant.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applicants for entry clearance for settlement are interviewed on average each week at each post in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *422*]: The information is as follows:

	Numbers	
Dhaka	278	(including 6 husbands/fiancé(e)s who are not granted immediate settlement on arrival)
New Delhi	44	(including 27 as above)
Bombay	46	(including 15 as above)
Calcutta	3	
Islamabad	209	(including 22 as above)
Karachi	7	(including 3 as above)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of applications for entry clearances for settlement in the Indian sub-continent is in the reapplications queue.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *422*]: Thirty six per cent., including husbands and fiancé(e)s.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applicants in Bangladesh for entry clearance for settlement have been allocated to the reapplicants' queue.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *422*]: As at 31 October—5,296.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals for change to housing benefit regulations.

Mr. Newton: I have today sent for consultation to the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations draft regulations to exclude from eligibility for housing benefit people who are provided by local authorities with accommodation under the National Assistance Act 1948, the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, or the National Health Service Act 1977.

Such provision has always been regarded as properly the responsibility of local authorities as part of their social services function. The Government do not regard it as appropriate for the housing benefit scheme to subsidise local authorities in the discharge of these responsibilities.

Legionnaires' Disease

Mr. Butler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to prevent further outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease in hospitals and other public institutions, and in private buildings such as hotels to which the public has access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: A circular on Legionnaires' disease and hospital water systems was issued to all health authorities in 1980, a copy of which is in the Library. Health authorities were reminded earlier this year of this guidance and the measures which should be taken to reduce the chances of an outbreak occurring.

It is hoped that the committee of inquiry into the outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in Stafford will also make recommendations on action necessary to reduce the danger of future outbreaks originating in other buildings and elsewhere in its final report, expected by the end of March 1986. My Department will be liaising with other Departments on the follow up action resulting from the Committee's report.

Management Consultants and Accountants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total expenditure by his Department in 1979-80 and each succeeding year on management consultants or accountants and other firms undertaking similar work, at constant prices.

Mr. Fowler: Expenditure on external consultancies was:

	*£ thousand**
1979-80	626
1980-81	502
1981-82	854
1982-83	1,437
1983-84	3,784
1984-85	7,726

* 1984-85 prices.

The substantial increase in recent years is mainly in connection with the several large computer projects being planed by my Department as part of the social security operational strategy.

Smoking

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the measures to implement Her Majesty's Government's plan to discourage teenagers from smoking.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are funding a £1 million campaign to test the effectiveness of media advertising in influencing teenagers against smoking. The

campaign, based on extensive research, will run for 12 months in the Tyne-Tees and TV South television regions. It will be carefully evaluated.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria Her Majesty's Government will use to assess the effectiveness of the campaign to discourage smoking.

Mr. Whitney: The campaign will be evaluated by an independent research company using large-scale surveys of teenagers in the two pilot television regions and in two control regions. Factors to be used in gauging its effect will include movements in smoking prevalance and smoking behaviour, changes of attitude toward smoking and penetration of the advertising among the target audience.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to seek to restrict advertising and promotion of tobacco.

Mr. Whitney: Discussions about a new voluntary agreement governing the advertising and promotion of tobacco products are being held with the tobacco industry.

Vaccinations

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of doses of pertussis vaccine and triple vaccine currently held in stock by his Department; and what is the value of the stock.

Mr. Whitney: Supplies of these vaccines are obtained by the National Health Service through the normal trade distribution channels. The Department does not hold stocks.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in each five-year period since 1964, what was the number of yellow card reports made to the Committee on Safety of Medicines regarding sudden death, within 48 hours after *(a)* vaccination against whooping cough and *(b)* other vaccinations; in each of these periods, how many vaccinations against whooping cough were carried out and what was the number of other non-whooping cough vaccinations; and what investigations were made by the Committee on Safety of Medicines as to the possibility of a causal relationship between vaccination and the reported deaths.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is set out in the table. The Committee on Safety of Medicines has a policy of examining clinical and pathological data relating to deaths reported as associated with whooping cough or other vaccines. In addition, the committee has considered the general issue of the safety of vaccination on a number of occasions since 1964. Its investigations have not lead the committee to attribute a causal relationship between vaccination and sudden death.

Deaths reported as suspected adverse reactions to Whooping Cough or other Vaccines

	1964-1968	*1969-1973*	*1974-1978*	*1979-1983*	*1984*
Total whooping cough vaccine primary courses completed by persons under age 16 (United Kingdom)*	3,921,040	3,369,194	¶1,607,644	1,980,462	471,033
Total reported deaths occurring in persons under age 16 during first two days following whooping cough vaccine (United Kingdom)	8	2	3	9	1
Total "other vaccine"† primary courses completed by persons under age 16 (England only)‡	3,382,236	6,069,096	¶5,366,385	5,756,189	1,121,946
Total reported deaths occuring in persons under age 16 during first two days following "other vaccines" (United Kingdom)	—	—	—	4	—

* Types of vaccine or dose included are Quadruple DTPP, Triple DTP, Pertussis/diphtheria, and Pertussis.
† "Other vaccines" refers to measles, diphtheria, tetanus and poliomyelitis except where administered in combination with whooping cough vaccine.
‡ Complete Information by type of vaccine is not available for all parts of the United Kingdom.
‖ 1966-1968 only. Data for total number of vaccine courses completed before 1966 are not available.
¶ From 1974 to 1976 excludes Avon area health authority for which data are not available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines or the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has had any discussions with the US authorities about the efficacy and safety of the whooping cough vaccine.

Mr. Whitney: Neither committee has had formal discussions with the United States health authorities about whooping cough vaccine, but they are kept informed of and take into account developments in the United States of America and other countries.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has made with its investigation of the Japanese whooping cough vaccine; whether it has received the report of the World Health Organisation trials; whether any information is available to it as to whether the Japanese have found evidence of any deaths or side effects resulting from the vaccine since they started using it in 1981; when it plans to have completed its investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The joint committee has studied the published papers concerning the Japanese whooping cough vaccine. It noted that among the limited numbers of children to whom this vaccine was administered the incidence of serious neurological reaction and sudden infamt death syndrome (SIDS) was minimal. However, administration of this vaccine was limited mainly to children who were aged 2 years or older and who were therefore out of the age range when coincidental serious neurological disease or SIDS occur.

The World Health Organisation has not directly organised formal trials of new whooping cough vaccines. The trials of a Japanese vaccine in Sweden by the Swedish Government are still in progress and no results have been published.

The Committee on the Development of Vaccines and Immunological Products (CDVIP) of the Medical Research Council (MRC) at the beginning of 1985 set up a sub-committee to consider improved forms of whooping cough vaccine. Products from Japan, Canada and the Centre for Applied Microbiological Research of the Public Health Laboratory Service have been considered by this sub-committee. As soon as a suitable candidate vaccine is identified and sufficient supplies of this vaccine are assured, carefully conducted field trials on the vaccine will be mounted in this country.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of whooping cough vaccinations carried out in each year since 1964.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is set out in the table.

Children under age 16 completing primary courses of immunisation against whooping cough: England

Year	*Number of children*
1964*†	679,382
1965*	697,653
1966	659,202
1967	676,352
1968	596,644
1969‡	433,364
1970	587,270
1971	608,483
1972	600,863
1973	556,535
1974‖	428,300
1975‖	247,900
1976‖	240,600
1977	191,899
1978	199,389
1979	250,250
1980	285,561
1981	320,496
1982	384,827
1983	405,744
1984	391,669

* England and Wales. Data for Entland only are not available prior to 1966.

† Children under age 15.

‡ Low figure reflects change in the recommended immunisation schedule.

‖ Includes estimated numbers for one area health authority.

Vaccine Damage (Pension)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has made any estimate of the cost of providing a pension scheme comparable to the industrial injuries scheme for all those who have received vaccine damage payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Whooping Cough

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in the last four-year cycle, how many children entered hospital because of the severity of their whooping cough; and what was the estimated average annual cost of hospital treatment for these children.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated numbers for England are as follows, based on the hospital in-patient inquiry (a 10 per cent. sample of discharge records from National Health Service, non-psychiatric hospitals), a copy of which is in the Library:

Children under 15 with a Main Diagnosis of Whooping Cough

Year	*Number*
1980	2,280
1981	2,580
1982	5,800
1983	2,550

Information on the cost of treatment is not held centrally.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated annual cost of the whooping cough immunisation programme and of the publicity campaign that supports it.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the cost of immunisation programmes is not held centrally. The current whooping cough publicity campaign has been funded by a special Government grant to the Health Education Council of £483,000, to which the council has added £100,000 from its own funds. Information is not held centrally on the cost of local campaigns mounted by individual health authorities.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the death rate per hundred thousand and the number of deaths of children under one year old caused by whooping cough in the last four year period for which figures are available and for each preceding four year period as far back as 1955; and if he will give figures showing the average take up of whooping cough vaccination in each of the four year periods.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is shown in the table.

Whooping cough: Deaths and vaccinations in England and Wales

Period	*Deaths of children aged under 1 year**	*Death rate per 100,000 relevant population*	*Average take-up rate of vaccination† Percentages*
1953-56	385	14·45	n/a
1957-60	128	4·42	n/a
1961-64	98	3·00	n/a
1965-68	76	2·28	77‡
1969-72	41	1·33	79
1973-76	26	1·03	63
1977-80	24	1·01	36
1981-84	17	0·68	55

* Cases where the certifier of death stated the underlying cause to be whooping cough.

† Percentage of children vaccinated by the end of the second year following their birth.

‡ 1966 to 1968. Age at immunisation is not available for earlier years.

Infant Deaths

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many sudden infant deaths have been in each year since 1964; and if he will express these as a proportion of all infant deaths in each year.

Mr. Whitney: The term "sudden infant death syndrome" was not widely used before about 1971. In 1971, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys introduced a special code to identify these sudden infant deaths also known as "cot deaths". Data before 1971 would therefore not be reliable, and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

The available information is given in the table. The figures relate to deaths of children under one year of age registered in England and Wales, where the term "sudden unexpected death in infancy" or "cot death" or a similar term was mentioned anywhere on the death certificate, regardless of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death. Infant deaths which may have been sudden and unexpected, but where no mention of "sudden" or "cot" death was made on the death certificate, cannot reliably be separately identified.

Sudden infant deaths: Numbers of mentions and as a percentage of all deaths under one year of age England and Wales 1971-1984

Year	*Number of sudden infant death mentions*	*Percentage of all infant deaths*
1971	489	3·56
1972	771	6·17
1973	922	8·08
1974	932	8·91
1975	912	9·61
1976	879	10·55
1977	911	11·62
1978	971	12·32
1979	1,079	13·19
1980	1,222	15·47
1981	1,265	18·02
1982	1,332	19·66
1983	1,315	20·61
1984	1,242	20·57

There is evidence that the use of the term sudden infant death has increased in recent years as a fashion of certification, rather than a reflection of increased frequency of this disease. This probably accounts for the rise in the number of mentions in the table. The percentage that these mentions form of all infant deaths has risen even more repidly due to the diminution in the number of deaths from other causes during the period 1971-1984.

Social Security Payments

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those social security payments which have been increased either not at all or only once since 1979; and where there has been one increase, if he will give the time that had elapsed since the previous increase and the size of the percentage increase that was made.

Mr. Newton: The following social security payments have not been increased since 1979:

Death Grant.
Maternity Grant.
Age addition to retirement pension (for over 80's).
Blind addition to supplementary benefit (for over 80's).
Christmas bonus.
Industrial death benefit (for relatives other than widows).
Death benefit under the pneumoconiosis, byssinosis and miscellaneous diseases scheme.

There are no social security payments which have been increased only once since 1979.

Vaccine Damage Payments

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have now received the £20,000 vaccine damage payment.

Mr. Whitney: One award of £20,000 has been made and will be paid shortly.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of vaccine damage payments made, *(b)* the real value of each payment based on 1979 prices, *(c)* the total cost to his Department of the payments made, in real terms based on 1979 prices, *(d)* the total cost to his Department of the payments scheme, including the cost of the payments and the administrative cost; and if he will give the figures in prices current at the time, in 1979 prices and in 1985 prices;

(2) what has been the total cost of the vaccine damage payments scheme since its inception; and if he will give separate figures for the cost of the payments and the administrative costs.

Mr. Whitney: The following table gives the information available. Information on cost could not be related to each of the payments concerned according to the date of payment except at disproportionate expense. Instead, the payments have been revalued by the average GDP deflator for that year.

Vaccine damage payments scheme: cost

	Financial year							
	1978-79 £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*Totals* £
Number of payments	6	353	254	68	40	40	36	797
Cost of payments at cash	60,000	3,530,000	2,540,000	680,000	400,000	400,000	360,000	7,970,000
Estimated administrative cost at cash	240,000	259,000	243,000	134,000	113,000	94,000	101,000	1,184,000
Total cost at cash	300,000	3,789,000	2,783,000	814,000	513,000	494,000	461,000	9,154,000
Real value of each £10,000 payment	10,000	8,600	7,200	6,500	6,100	5,800	5,600	—
Cost of payments at 1978-79 prices	60,000	3,020,500	1,829,800	444,900	244,500	234,000	201,000	6,035,300

	Financial year							
	1978-79 £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*Totals* £
Estimated administrative cost at 1978-79 prices	240,000	221,600	175,100	87,700	69,100	55,000	56,500	905,000
Cost of payments at 1984-85 prices	107,200	5,394,700	3,268,000	794,600	436,700	418,000	360,000	10,779,200
Estimated administrative cost at 1984-85 prices	428,600	395,800	312,600	156,600	123,400	98,200	101,000	1,616,200

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications there have been for the £20,000 vaccine damage payment; and what is the forecast departmental expenditure for vaccine damage payments in the current financial year and the subsequent three years.

Mr. Whitney: Thirty-four claims were received in the period between 18 June, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced the increase in the level of payment for successful new claims, and 18 November. It is estimated that payments will total £240,000 in the current financial year. The present estimates for expenditure in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 are £360,000, £420,000 and £450,000 respectively. However, the incidence of expenditure cannot be reliably predicted and the estimates will be subject to revision from time to time.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total number of applications for vaccine damage payments since the inception of the scheme in 1979; how many have been refused by his Department; how many have been rejected by tribunals; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Whitney: As at 8 November 1985, 3,139 claims had been received. An initial decision on 3,133 of these claims has been made by the Secretary of State, resulting in 397 awards and 2,736 disallowances. Of the 1,373 disallowances which have been reviewed by a vaccine damage tribunal, 415 cases resulted in an award and in the remaining 958 cases the disallowance was confirmed.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will categorise the number of rejected applications for vaccine damage payments according to the reason given for their rejection.

Mr. Whitney: Up to 8 November 1985, the latest date for which statistics are available, the information is given in the following table.

Claims for vaccine damage payments: disallowances

	Numbers
Disallowances on non-medical grounds	132
Disallowances on medical grounds	
Disablement of 80 per cent. or more accepted but vaccination not accepted as cause	1,629
Disablement less than 80 per cent. and vaccination not accepted as cause.	227
Disablement less than 80 per cent. but vaccination accepted as cause	14
Disablement substantially less than 80 per cent., cause not fully investigated	319

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each of the last three years for which figures are available, the number of cases heard by each of the vaccine damage tribunals; and if he will give the percentage that was accepted by each tribunal in each year.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows.

Awards following vaccine damage tribunal decisions

Tribunal	*1983*			*1984*			*1985**		
	Decisions	*Awards*	*Per cent. successful*	*Decisions*	*Awards*	*Per cent. successful*	*Decisions*	*Awards*	*Per cent. successful*
Belfast	1	—	—	2	1	50	—	—	—
Cardiff	4	2	50	1	—	—	2	1	50
Edinburgh	11	5	45	2	—	—	4	—	—
Leeds	4	3	75	2	1	50	5	3	60
London	23	9	39	13	4	31	10	2	20
Manchester	10	6	60	4	3	75	6	3	50
Nottingham	8	7	88	10	5	50	8	7	88

* Up to 8 November.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply, *Official Report*, 26 November, columns 545-6, he will categorise the vaccine damage payments made for a vaccination stated by the claimant to have included a pertussis element, according to the year in which the parents recalled that the child was vaccinated.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not readily available and could be extracted only at disproportionate expense.

Tobacco-related Diseases

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the numbers

of people under the age of 20 years who use tobacco and the numbers of those people who show evidence of tobacco-related diseases.

Mr. Whitney: It is estimated that in Great Britain some 1,600,000 people under the age of 20 smoke cigarettes. The effects of smoking are cumulative and manifest themselves over time. No statistics are available on the numbers of people under 20 years old who show evidence of tobacco-related diseases.

Nursing Staff (Physical Attacks)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the incidences of serious physical attacks on National Health Service nursing staff for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The Government are concerned about the level of crime in public life generally and a working party of the Health Services Advisory Committee of which officers of my Department are members is currently looking into the question of violence in the National Health Service. They are conducting a survey in a sample of health districts.

I look forward to considering the working party's report which is expected early next year.

NHS Staff (Compensation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish the outturn figures for 1984-85 for compensation payments to National Health Service staff in respect of redundancies and early retirements, in the manner described in the Government's reply to the First Report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85, breaking down the figures to distinguish between competitive tendering and other cases.

Mr. Hayhoe: The out-turn figures for 1984-85 are as follows:

	Number of cases	*Compensation cost* £	*Total cost including superannuation* £
Competitive tendering			
New cases	319	359,000	1,213,000
Continuing cases	Nil	Nil	Nil
Other cases			
New cases	1,445	3,827,000	13,522,000
Continuing cases	5,576	11,915,000	24,972,000

NHS (Efficiency Scrutinies)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether more National Health Service efficiency scrutinies will be undertaken.

Mr. Whitney: Efficiency scrutinies, along the lines of those undertaken in Whitehall were successfully extended to the National Health Service in 1982. Nine studies have already been published and health authorities have been given advice and policy instructions on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations. The studies identified more efficient methods of working and show that many millions of pounds can be saved which can be re-directed to improving patient care.

Scrutinies play an important role in the general drive for achieving value for money in the National Health Service. In order to build on the success of the first programme of studies, I have agreed with regional health authority chairmen that more scrutinies should be undertaken.

Subjects for study already agreed are:

Study	*Sponsoring region*
Maximising revenue from private and amenity beds in the NHS	Mersey
Creditor payment arrangements (improving efficiency and reducing costs in the way health authorities pay their bills)	Wessex
Ways of maximising revenue and generating additional income for the NHS aids and appliances in the community	North Western
Improving efficiency in organisation, ordering and distribution	Oxford
Liaison between the NHS and the private sector of medicine	Yorkshire
The cost of telephone services in hospitals	Trent
Equipment maintenance contracts (getting value for money on the maintenance of Health Service equipment)	Yorkshire*
Inventory management of medical gas cylinders (improving existing arrangements and examining alternatives)	South Western
Printing and distribution/publications and stationery in the NHS	Mersey

* Assisted by Mersey.

Some of these scrutinies have begun—the remainder will start soon. Other potential subjects for study are being considered with a view to there being a rolling programme of scrutinies as part of the drive for greater efficiency and economy in the National Health Service.

Child Abuse

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of children who died as a result of injuries inflicted by parents in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

The numbers of offences recorded as homicides in which the victim was the son or daughter of the suspect is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 4.4 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9621). Of the 67 such offences in 1984, 65 of the children were aged under 16.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 88**

SESSION 1985–86

2nd December—13th December 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

Abbeystead pumping station 540w
Explosions 540w
Ministerial statements 540w

Abortion
International Planned Parenthood Federation 361w

Access to buildings
Building regulations 346w
Cinemas 421-2
Handicapped 346w

Access to countryside
Common land 551w

Access to personal records 252w

Accident & emergency departments 447w, 756-8w
Morriston Hospital 447w
Singleton Hospital 447w

Accountability
Nurses 757

Acheson Committee see Primary Health Care in Inner London Study Group

Achille Lauro 39w
Hijacking 39w

Action on Smoking & Health 116w, 396w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 116w

Acupuncture
Drug abuse 339w

Acute beds 148w
Hampshire 148w

Adams, Mr Allen
Questions
Employment protection, Takeovers 81w
Glasgow University, Social work 329-30w
Government assistance to industry, Paisley 372w
Government assistance to industry, Textile industry 168w
House renovation grants, Building repairs 171w
Prescription charges, Unemployed 115-6w
Prescription drugs, Scotland 199w
Regional councils, Local government expenditure 255w
Regional development grants, Paisley 557w
Slaughterhouses, Scotland 691w
Teacher training, Scotland 255w
University finance, Scotland 330w

Adjournment debates
Speakers rulings & statements (11.12.85) 1039, (12.12.85) 1183

Adjudication officers 394w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 642, 649, 663, 673, 697-9
Questions
Air travel, Heathrow 391-2w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 14
Book piracy 558w
British Rail, Capital investment 2
Channel crossing, Employment opportunities 104w
Channel crossing, Railway timetables 429w
City of London, Law enforcement 424-5
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 320w
House of Lords, Bishops 421w
Hungary, Visas 637w
Ribblehead viaduct 429w
Sathananthian, Dr, Narcotics 464w
Teachers, Pay settlements 628w
Town & country planning, Central-local government relations 55w

Administrative delays
Cervical cancer 614-5w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 271w
Housing finance (06.12.85) 598-604
Immigration applications 815w
Insurance companies 434w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory 13-4w
Planning appeals 169-70w
Political refugees 794w

Adult education
Industrial training 176w

Adult training strategy 176w
Manpower Services Commission 176w

Advanced Further Education Pool 159-62w

Advanced gas-cooled reactors
Radiation hazards 751w

Advanced nuclear power stations
Gas-cooled reactors 423w

Advertising
Dept of Education & Science 365w
Dept of Employment 368w
Dept of Energy 359-60w
Dept of Health & Social Security 402w
Dept of the Environment 375w
Dept of Transport 391w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 384w
Home Office 357w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 480w
Ministry of Defence 386w
Northern Ireland Office 353w
Scottish Office 382w
Vacancies 132w
Welsh Office 353w

Advertising agencies
Dept of Employment 537-8w
Dept of Energy 749w
Dept of Health & Social Security 125-6w
Dept of the Environment 774-6w
Dept of Transport 656-8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 480-1w
Ministry of Defence 593w
Treasury 768-9w

Advertising controls
Tobacco 817w

Advisory Board for the Research Councils 226-7w

Advisory Committee on Gynaecological Cytology 614-5w

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs 490w

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 795-6w, 797-8w
Security 795-6w, 797-8w

Advisory services
Land drainage 668w
Small businesses 641w

Africa
Aid financed trade 586w
Debts 176w

Age of consent 318w

Agency nurses
Labour costs 338-9w

Agricultural advisory services 688w
Scotland 688w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 99-100w, 192-3w 193-4w, 270w, 484w, 727w
Government grants 99-100w, 193-4w
Income 99w, 270w
Land drainage 484w
Manpower 192-3w, 727w
Wales 192-3w

Agricultural Holdings Act 1948 (Variation of Fourth Schedule) Order 1985 (10.12.85) 891

Agricultural Holdings (Fee) Regulations 1985 (09.12.85) 736

Agricultural produce
Transport (04.12.85) 312

Agricultural production
Women 23w

Agricultural research 744-5w
Agricultural & Food Research Council 790w, 804w
Expenditure 727w
Horticulture 241w
Welsh Plant Breeding Station 789-90w

Agricultural subsidies
Cattle 100-1w
Expenditure 661-2w

Agricultural surpluses
Spirits 480w
Wines 486w

Agricultural & Food Research Council
Agricultural research 790w, 804w
Expenditure 790-1w
Public appointments 790w

Agriculture
EC grants & loans 667-8w
Expenditure 662-4w
Overseas aid 17
Scotland 914

Agriculture Select Committee (06.12.85) 597

Aid financed trade
Africa 586w
Bilateral aid 22-3w

AIDS 1-2w, 126w, 494w, 616w, 766w
Blood diseases 616w
Disease control 1-2w
Government grants 1-2w
Mersey Regional Health Authority 494w
North Western Regional Health Authority 494w
Notifiable diseases 494w
Research finance 126w

Aids for handicapped
Limited list prescribing 394w
School buildings 628w
Urinary system disorders 394w

Air fares
Europe 109w
Foreign tourists 25-6w

Air Force
Aircrew 350-1w
Disaster relief 16-7
Resignations 350-1w
Training 350w

Air pollution
Temperature 205w
Weather modification 6w, 205w

Air routes
Wardair 243-4w

Air safety 304w
Fire prevention 304w
Helicopters 660w

Air transport
EC Transport Council 105w
International cooperation 803w
Prime Minister visits abroad 575-7w
Restrictive trade practices 623-4w

Air travel
Canada 243-4w
Gatwick Airport 391-2w
Heathrow 391-2w

Aircrew
Air force 350-1w
Licensing 303w

Airlines
Lines of Communication Agreement 244w

Airports
Companies 10
Local authorities 10
Privatisation 10

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 688-93, 712
European Council (05.12.85) 435
Questions
Business statement 446-7

Alcoholism
Licensing laws 417

Alcoholism & crime
Licensing laws 416-7

Alexander, Mr. Richard
Questions
Sizewell Inquiry 803-4w
Sizewell Inquiry, Public appointments 803w

Alexander Howden Group 427w

Alfonsin, President Raul 165-6w

Aliens
Social security benefits rules 141w

Alley Eric 245-6w, 357-8w
Conditions of employment 246w
Departmental correspondence 357-8w
Local authorities 245-6w

Allied Lyons 425
Takeovers 425

Alternative medicine
Clinical trials 597w
Department of Health & Social Security 596-7w
Drug research 595w
EC law 596w
Licensing 595-6w, 597w
Ministerial advisory bodies 596w

Alternatives to prison 412
Prison population 413

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 452-3
Questions
Business statement 443, 1066
Channel crossing, Road haulage permits 429w
Chief constables, Ireland 1056-7
Equal Opportunities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Fish, Liverpool Bay 352w
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 602w
Inner city areas, Government grants to local authorities 264w
Local authorities, Interest rates 378w
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 19, 282, 378w
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w
Public Works Loan Board, Local government borrowing 356w
Trade union elections, Government grants 185w
Women, Agricultural production 23w

Alvey programme 434w
Members correspondence 434w

Ambulance services
Driving instruction 614w
Motorways 614w
Overtime 604w
Pay settlements 40w
Wales 40w

Amenity beds 499-506w

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 950-2
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 299-300

Ames, Mr David
Debates etc
Basildon Hospital, Public petitions (10.12.85) 892-3
Basildon Hospital, Maternity services (03.12.85) 274-7
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310
Questions
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, Security 795-6w
Birth rate, Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 605-6w
Construction, Basildon 258-9w
Driving tests, Basildon 6
Employment, Basildon 184w
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1985/86 760

Ammunition
Defence procurement 207w
NATO 207w

Ancient monuments
Expenditure 295
Government grants to voluntary organisations 295

Ancram, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under Secretary Scottish Office*
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 367-9
Questions
Building industry, Scotland 458w
Council house sales, Glasgow 690w
Council housing, Local authorities in Scotland 734-6w, 735-7w, 737-9w, 739-40w
Council housing, Scotland 739w
Crofting, Scotland 566w
EC poverty programme 694w
Flood control, Bridge of Allan 691w
Government grants to local authorities, Scotland 458w
Historic buildings, Cumbernauld 564w
Housing associations, Glasgow 798-9w
Housing associations, Scotland 687w
Housing standards, Local authorities in Scotland 740-2w
Housing & handicapped, Local authorities in Scotland 742-3w
Inner city areas, Scotland 564-5w
Land ownership & tenure, Cumbernauld & Kilsyth District Council 564w
Libraries, Scotland 198-9w
Local government services, Scotland 748w
Motorways, Scotland 256w, 693-4w
Railway transport, Strathclyde 46w
Rate rebates, Scotland 686-7w
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 202w, 336w
Rate support grants, Scottish councils 255-6w
Rates & rating, Scotland 688-9w
Regional councils, Local government expenditure 255w
Roads, Scotland 457w, 693-6w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 652, 658, 699-701
Questions
Airports, Privatisation 10
Armed forces, Johannesburg Airport 385-6w
Coal stocks, Wales 571w
Location of industry, South Wales 610
Severn crossing feasibility study 8
South Africa, Economic sanctions 15-6

Anderson, Martina 162w

Anglo-Irish Agreement 14, 299, 589w, 728w, 729w, 1047-9, 1049-50, 1050-1, 1051-2, 1052-3, 1056-7, 1057-8
Border security in Ireland 1052-3, 1062-3
Kinsale gas pipeline 1056
Ministerial speeches 299-300, 300-1, 302-3
Ministerial statements 301
Northern Ireland Government 1057, 1059
Paisley, Rev Ian 1057
Political parties 1051-2
Press releases 1059
Short Brothers 1058
Terrorism 1052-3
Ulster Unionists 1047-9, 1051-2
USA 728w

Anglo-Irish talks
Costs 5w
Departmental publications 1059
Hillsborough 5w, 731w
Security 731w

Animal feed
Butter 486w

Animal housing 726-7w

Animal husbandry
EC grants & loans 42w
Wales 42w

Animal liberation front
Trespass 416

Animal welfare
Royal commissions (11.12.85) 928
Slaughterhouses 726w

Animal Welfare (Royal Commission) Bill 1985/86
1R (11.12.85) 928

Annual reports 276w, 497-8w, 608-9w, 611w

Antidumping duties
Clothing 438w
Textiles 438w

Antismoking campaign 600w
Expenditure 116w
Government grants 116-7w, 396w
Health Education Council 116-7w
Opinion surveys 270w
Young people 816-7w

Appeals
Dentistry 682-3w
Income tax assessment (13.12.85) 1187-9
Scottish Examination Board 199w

Appropriation accounts 637w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 637w

Archaeological sites
Armagh 730w
Cresswell Crags 294w

Archbishop of Canterbury 299w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1050-1
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 299
Kinsale gas pipeline, Anglo-Irish Agreement 1056

Architects
EC law 788-9w
Vocational education 788-9w

Architectural conservation
Listed buildings 281

Architecture
College closures 366w
Higher education 366w

Area health authorities
Greater London 396-8w

Area manpower boards 579-80w
Leicester 579-80w

Arfon
Housing & elderly 155w

Argentina
Foreign policy 423
Visas 813w

Arlingford Road 462w

Armagh
Archaeological sites 730w

Armagh Prison 443-4w, 1058
Body searches 443-4w, 1058

Armed forces
Johannesburg Airport 385-6w
Publicity 710-1w

Armed forces civilians
Dockyards 206-8w

Armed forces dependents
Armed forces education allowances 593w
Education 544w

Armed forces deployment
9 Signal Regiment 277w

Armed forces discharges
14 Signal Regiment 278w, 593-4w, 594-5w, 783-4w
9 Signal Regiment 278w, 593w, 594w

Armed forces education allowances
Armed forces dependents 593w
Expenditure 544w

Armed forces housing
Empty housing 279w

Armed forces officers
Defence contracts 781w
Fox hunting 781-2w
Tenders 812w

Armed forces recruitment
School leaving 92w

Armed forces storage depots 545w
Privatisation 545w

Armed forces training 95w
Ashford training centre 95-6w, 96-7w
Interrogation 97w
Military Police 97w
Northern Ireland 546w
South Africa 546w

Arms control
International conferences 323w

Arms control treaties
International conferences 708-9w

Arms embargoes
South Africa 636w

Army
Horses 781-2w
Northern Ireland 1053

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
Hospital waiting lists, Regional health authorities 753-4w
Lloyds of London, Fraud 5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Fo
Higher civil servants 98-9w

Arrests
Fraud 5w
Pahoomal family 5w
Scotland 168w

Art works
Civil defence 465w
Emergency planning 465w

Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 490w

Artificial sweeteners 660-1w
Epilepsy 685w

Arts
Mobility of disabled 543w

Arts Council grants
Arts finance 620

Arts finance 543w
Arts Council grants 620
Film industry 622
Glasgow 799w
Income 619-20
Local government reform 620
Music 543w
Private sector 619-20
Public sector borrowing requirement 192w
Southern Arts 544w

Arts sponsorship 544w
Local authorities 621
Private sector 621

Asbestos Products (Safety) Regulations 1985 (09.12.85) 736

Asbestos stripping 297-8w
Emerald Club 297-8w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 507, 511, 515-6, 517

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1197, 1216-23, 1224, 1235-6
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1207-8
Westland Helicopters, Standing Order No 10 applications (03.12.85) 164
Questions
Cable & Wireless, Privatisation 175w
Criminal statistics, Crime 308-9w
Defence research, Nuclear test ban 387w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Trade & Industry 17-8w, 18-9w, 251w
Export controls, USA 168w, 373w
Export promotion, Computer industry 625-6w
Hinckley Point B, Nuclear power stations 726w
Hinckley Point B, Nuclear safety 423w, 751w
Hypermarkets, Research 808w
Legal costs, Moller-Butcher, Brian 769w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 360w
Nuclear accidents, Hinckley Point B 751-2w
Nuclear power stations, Scotland 747-9w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 751w
Nuclear test ban 385w
Nuclear test ban, Trident 385w
Plutonium, Nuclear reactors 387w
Power station closures, Hinckley Point B 751w
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w
Radiation hazards, Advanced gas-cooled reactors 751w
Radiation hazards, Hinckley Point B 750-1w
Retail trade, Government assistance to industry 626w
Small businesses, Billing 641w
Trident missiles, Costs 97w
Trident missiles, Design 98w
Trident submarines, Costs 97w
Trident submarines, Design 98w
Trident submarines, Nuclear reactors 97-8w

Ashford training centre 95-6w, 97w
Armed forces training 95-6w, 96-7w
Commonwealth 96-7w
Interrogation methods 95w, 96w, 97w
Police training 96w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 96w
Special Air Service 95w
Ulster Defence Regiment 96w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Questions
Business statement 1068
Cancer, Health Education Council 493-4w
Cot deaths 820-1w
Crime victims, Rape 317-8w
Cruelty to children 275-6w
Cruelty to children, Personal records 275w
Fraud, City of London 1059-60
Health Education Council, Finance 494w
Health & Safety Inspectorate, Manpower 539w
Hospital admissions 686w
Hospital safety, Environmental health 601w
Hypothermia, Elderly 754
Mental hospitals, Child patients 758-64w
"Review of Child Care Consultation Paper" 275w
Road traffic, A50 115w
Social security benefits uprating 821-2w
Vaccination 817-8w
Vaccine damage tribunals 824w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 822-4w
Vaccine damaged children, Pensions 819w
Whooping cough, Death 820w
Whooping cough, Hospital admissions 819-20w
Whooping cough, Vaccination 817-9w, 820w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc
Members interests (10.12.85) 762
Questions
Unemployment 176w

Asian Mother & Baby Campaign 210w
Health service staff 210w

Aspartame 660-1w
Epilepsy 685w

Aspinwall, Mr Jack
Questions
Civil defence, Local authorities 415

Assisted areas
Rural development areas 268w

Assisted places scheme
Expenditure 568-9w
Glasgow 692w
Parental contributions 570w
Parents 788w

Association of Accounting Technicians 807-8w
Exhibitions 807-8w

Association of Chief Police Officers 247w, 582w, 702w
Public order policing 247w, 582w

Astles, Bob 651w
Entry clearances 651w

Atkins, Rt Hon Sir Humphrey
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 43

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 200
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 939, 998, 1000
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 211, 214
Questions
Childrens hospitals, Wrightington Hospital 598w
Derelict land, Inner city areas 290-1
Diplomatic service, Defence attaches 590w
Industry, Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1058
Military aircraft, Early warning systems 545-6w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Defence expenditure, NATO 782w
Libraries 543w
Oral contraceptives, Young people 339w
Primary health care 274w
Retirement pensions 401w
Social security abuse, Housing benefits 604w
Supplementary benefits, Religious orders 274w

Atkinson, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 487
Questions
Cancer, Medical treatments 751
Civil disorder, Tottenham 314w
Local radio, Greater London 581-2w
Police, Tottenham 247w
Supplementary benefits, Repatriation 622w

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
Cancer 351w

Audit
Civil Aviation Authority 389w
Companies (06.12.85) 532

Ault & Wiborg 641w
Industrial health & safety 641w

Austin Rover (09.12.85) 636
Standing Order No 10 applications (09.12.85) 636

Australia
Foreign tourists 179w
Nuclear weapons tests 422, 424

Austria
Wines 268-9w

Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1079-164
Economic policy 758
Employment level 147
Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee 758

"Autumn statement, 1985" (12.12.85) 1079-164

Availability for work
Social security benefits rules 88-9w, 148
Unemployment benefits 88-9w

Average earnings 187w, 723w
Family income 173-4w
Manufacturing industries 640w

Avon County Council 161w

A1 242w, 391-2w, 801-2w
Road works 242w

A5 658w
Road construction 658w
Road traffic 658w

A40 774w
Road traffic 774w

A50 115w
Road traffic 115w

A405 388w

Badgers
Clouts Wood 487w
Costs 488w
Pest control 488w

Bagier, Mr Gordon A T
Questions
Motorways, Lighting 9

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 937-46
Questions
Advertising, Dept of the Environment 375w
Advertising agencies, Dept of the Environment 774-6w
Block grant 472w, 672-3w
Block grant, Inner London boroughs 475w
Block grant, Rate limitation 473-4w
Canary Wharf, Public inquiries 292
Chatham dockyard, Enterprise zones 670-1w
Church of England, Inner city areas 288
Control of Pollution (Special Wastes) Regulations 1985 549-50w
Dept of the Environment, Legislation 476-7w
Derelict land grants, Glanford 288
Derelict land grants, Government grants 287
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of the Environment 373-4w
Government grants to local authorities, Inner city areas 291-2
Local authorities, Interest rates 378w
Local government expenditure 472-3w
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 475w, 553w
Local government expenditure, Inner city areas 293
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 19-20, 20-1, 21-2, 22-3, 282, 378w
Local government reform, Local government expenditure 475w
Local government reform, Waste disposal 376-7w
London Docklands Development Corporation 292
Manchester Airport, Privatisation 21
Planning permission, Land use 55-6w
Rate precepts, Greater London Council 473-4w
Rate support grants 284, 475-6w
Rate support grants, Computers 809w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 282
Rate support grants, Greater London 284
Rate support grants, Inner city areas 283-4
Rate support grants, Local government expenditure 282-3
Urban Development Corporations 291, 292-3
Urban programme, Costs 261w
Vacant land, Manchester 287

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Pike, Malcolm (05.12.85) 523-6
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1047-9
Council house rents, Rent arrears 59-60w, 468w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Fraud 812w
Insurance companies 557w
International Fund for Agricultural Development, UK contributions 17
Motorcycles, Noise control 107-8w

Baking industry
Sex discrimination 145

Balance of payments
Oil prices 757-8

Balance of trade
Cereals 438-9w
Drugs 251w
Motor vehicles 438-9w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 863, 865, 879-80, 890
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 769
Questions
Drugs, Cyanocobalamin 490w

Bangladesh
Immigration applications 814w, 815w
Immigration controls 460-1w

Bank of England
Members correspondence 4w
Unit trusts 806w

Banking supervision 103w
Essal Commodities 103w

Bankruptcy 14w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
A1, Road works 242w
Civil defence, Identity cards 312w
Common land, Access to countryside 551w
Police custody, Drunkenness 415
Port Stanley Hospital 22w
Tourist industry, Employment opportunities 137

Banks, Mr Tony
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Education & Science 365w
Advertising, Dept of Employment 368w
Advertising, Dept of Energy 359-60w
Advertising, Dept of Health & Social Security 402w
Advertising, Dept of the Environment 375w
Advertising, Dept of Transport 391w
Advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 384w
Advertising, Home Office 357w
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 480w
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 386w
Advertising, Northern Ireland Office 353w
Advertising, Scottish Office 382w
Advertising, Welsh Office 353w
Arts finance 543w
Birds, EC law 57-8w
Bus services, London Regional Transport 392w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 621-2
Civil defence, Local authorities in Scotland 335-6w
County Hall 477w
Emergency centres, Government grants to local authorities 29-30w
Equal opportunities, Treasury 103-4w
European Charter of Local Self-Government 422w
Heads of state, Official receptions 325w, 575w
Housing improvement, Local government reform 377w
Industrial development, Northumberland Wharf 477w
International Year of Peace 37w
Land pollution, Greater London Council 298-9w
Local government expenditure, Greater London Council 671w
Local government expenditure, Local government reform 297-8w, 671-3w
Local government property, Greater London Council 377w
Local government reform, Consultants 470w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 470w
Local government reform, Local government staff 376w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land acquisition 375-6w
London Regional Transport, Pay 108w
London Residuary Body 284-5
London Residuary Body, Training 470w
Metropolitan Police, Crimes of violence 583w
Metropolitan Police, Criminal damage 582-3w
Metropolitan Police, Pay 651w
Metropolitan Police, Police custody 582w
Metropolitan Police, Racial attacks 583w
Prime Minister visits abroad, Air transport 575-7w
"Protect & Survive" 322w
Public appointments 422-4w
Public participation in planning, Canary Wharf 470-1w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 477w
Regional land drainage committees, Public appointments 663-8w
Special protection areas 553w
Taxicards, Greater London 303w
Vacant land, Nationalised industries 290
Waste disposal, Greater London 376w
Waste disposal, Newham 470-1w
Waste disposal, Orders & regulations 376w
Water authorities, Civil defence 299w
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 307-8w

Barnet Health Authority 142w

Barnett, Mr Guy
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 471-3
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 122-3
UNESCO (05.12.85) 451
Questions
Robbery, Criminal statistics 308w

Barnsley
Textile industry 443w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Defective housing (06.12.85) 598-601, 602-3
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 813, 816-20
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1208

Basildon
Construction 258-9w
Driving tests 6
Employment 184w

Basildon Hospital (03.12.85) 274-80, (10.12.85) 892-3
Maternity services (03.12.85) 274-80
Public petitions (10.12.85) 892-3

Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority (03.12.85) 274-80, 605-6w (10.12.85) 892-3, (13.12.85) 1253-60
Birth rate 605-6w
Hospital closures (03.12.85) 274-80, (10.12.85) 892-3 (13.12.85) 1253-60

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Questions
Petroleum exploration licences, Land drilling 750w
Roads, Sound insulation 658-9w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Local education authorities 185w

Batley
Unemployment 538w

Battery hens
EC action 726-7w

BBC
Broadcasting finance 307w
Broadcasting programmes 307w
Television programmes 761

BBC value for money review
Peat Marwick Mitchell 307w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 932, 957-8
Questions
Rate support grants, Inner city areas 283

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc
Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1167-70
Questions
British Rail, Capital investment 1-2
Child benefit, Social security benefits disqualification 131w
High rent schemes, Local authorities 343-4w
Housing benefits, Housing amenities 340w
Housing benefits, Local authorities 340w
Housing benefits, Local government staff 343w
Housing benefits, Non-dependent deductions 341w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits reductions 339-40w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 341w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 341-2w
Housing benefits review boards 342-3w
Occupational pensions 746
Rent rebates, Income 340-2w
Severe weather payments 804w
Severe weather payments, Energy prices 754
Social security benefits rules, Housing benefits 131-2w
Social security benefits rules, School leaving 130-1w
Social security benefits rules, Training allowances 131w
Social security benefits rules, Young people 130w
Supplementary benefits, Students 607w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 131w

Beckford, Jasmine
Cruelty to children 150-1

Bedfordshire
Social security abuse 579w

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 872-4, 889-90
European Regional Development Fund (11.12.85) 1033-5
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 170, 173
Questions
Costs, Weekly Information Bulletin 619
Equal opportunities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 37w
Fish conservation, Scotland 697w
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w
Rural development areas, Assisted areas 268w
Women, Refugees 24w

Belgium
Buses 772w
Channel ferries 585w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 436
Northern Ireland Loans Bill, Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 392, 394, 398-9
Questions
Flags, Northern Ireland 729w

Bellew Parry Raven
Inquiries 443w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial statements 301
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 490w
Employment opportunities, Local enterprise agencies 144-5
Eye disorders, Research finance 627-8w
Local enterprise agencies 187w
NHS, Efficiency scrutinies 825-6w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
CR6 taxis 438w
USSR, Religious freedom 636-7w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 432
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 772, 797-801, 843
UNESCO (05.12.85) 450
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 300
Business statement 443-4
Rate support grants, Inner city areas 283

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 477-8
Private bills, Members attendance (05.12.85) 428, 457-8
UNESCO (05.12.85) 453
Questions
Education, Expenditure 789w
Educational buildings, Property transfer 449w
Inland Revenue, Bradford 252w
Plastic bullets, Greater Manchester 414
Public footpaths, Menwith with Darley 277w
Public order policing, Manchester University 420
University finance, University Grants Committee 161w, 633-5w
University Grants Committee 362-3w

Bennett, Judith 463-4w

Benyon, Mr W
Questions
Business statement 1068-9

Berkshire
Structure plans 262w

Berkshire County Council 262w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1011, 1013, 1019-20
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 485, 486, 489, 498, 509-13, 519
Questions
Business statement 1074
Cement, Industrial production 552w
Channel crossing, Cement 584w
Hospital closures, Mental hospitals 144-5w
Hospital closures, Research 144w
Iron & steel industry, Productivity 716w
Kent University, Personal social services research unit 145-7w, 534w
Magistrates, Sentencing 793-4w
Mental health community care, Day centres 143-4w
Mental illness, NHS 144w
Mentally ill, Expenditure 143w
Remand in custody 793w
Remand in custody, Greater London 650w
Risley Remand Centre, Remand in custody 793w

Best, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 646
European Council (05.12.85) 439
UNESCO (05.12.85) 456
Questions
Animal husbandry, Wales 42w
Business statement 446
Cheese, Food imports 251w
Drinking & driving, Christmas 112w
Electromagnetic interference, Nuclear war 316-7w
Hospital patients, Wales 605
Housing finance, Wales 305w
Libraries, Wales 353w
Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 457w
Nuclear weapons tests, Seismic monitoring 636w
Public sector assets, Privatisation 3-4w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 589w
Unemployment, Wales 613
Welsh language 608

"Better Schools White Paper" 283w, 568w

Betting Gaming & Lotteries Act 1963 (Schedule 4) (Amendment) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1179

Bevan, Mr David Gilroy
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 704-5
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1224-7, 1236

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Questions
Speed limits, Publicity 104w
Taxis, Heathrow 723w

Biffen, Rt Hon John, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Points of Order (04.12.85) 308
Temporary immigrants, Members correspondence (04.12.85) 308
Questions
Bishops, Public appointments 152
Business statement 440-7, 1065-75
Church of England, Church & state 152
Church of England, Inner city areas 151-2, 152-3
Cruelty to children, Child care 150-1
Education, Privatisation 150
Falkland Islands, Foreign policy 165-6w
Financial services, European Communities 151
Foreign policy, Reagan, President 166w
Health services finance, Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 154
House of Lords, Personnel 1w
Local government staff, Leicester 152
Members facilities, Facsimile transmission 299w
Palace of Westminster, Telephone systems 805w
Parliament, Anniversaries 207w
Prime Minister 166w
Redundancy, Defence industries 150
Transport & General Workers Union, Trade union elections 153-4
Unemployment, Statistics 165w

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Debates etc
Northern Ireland Loans Bill, Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 391-2, 393, 394
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 729w, 1050
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 456w
Identity cards 313w
NHS, Privatisation 610w
Opposition days, Inner city areas 1062
Prisoners, Body searches 791-2w

Bilateral aid
Aid financed trade 22-3w

Billing
Companies 182-3w
Small businesses 641w

Binder Hamlyn Report 677-8w

Birds
EC law 57-8w
Nature conservation 57-8w

Birkenhead
Regional selective assistance 807w

Birse-Farr 428w

Birtenshaw farm 170w
Planning appeals 170w

Birth rate
Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 605-6w

Bishops
Durham 618
House of Lords 421w
Lincoln 618-9
Public appointments 152

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates, etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 174
Questions
Debts, Africa 176w
Income tax, Partnerships 592w
Public sector assets, Income 102-3w
Public sector assets, Land acquisition 103w
Public sector borrowing requirement 101-2w
VAT, Building alterations 769w

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Tourist industry, Government assistance to industry 179w

Blind
Handicapped children 685w
Mentally handicapped 685w

Block grant 472w, 672-3w
Inner London boroughs 475w
Outer London boroughs 475w
Rate limitation 473-4w

Blood
Imports 125w
Viruses 125w

Blood diseases
AIDS 616w

Blood products laboratory 393-4w
Finance 393-4w

Bloomsbury Health Authority 605w
Health services finance 605w

Board & lodging charges 129w, 130w, 595w, 608w, 617w, 684w
Old peoples homes 608w
Supplementary benefits 129w, 130w, 595w, 617w

Body, Mr Richard
Questions
Horses, Exports 660w

Body searches 162w, 278w, 443-4w, 463w, 791-2w, 1058
Armagh Prison 443-4w, 1058
Brixton Prison 162w, 463w
9 Signal Regiment 278w
Prisoners 791-2w

Bolton
Magistrates 2w
Social workers training 617-8w
Vacant land 289-90
Venture capital 144

Bone marrow disorders
Transplant surgery 605
Wales 605

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc
Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310
Criminal Records Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 178
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 302

Book piracy 558w

Books
Local government expenditure 198-9w

Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Questions
Crime prevention 309-10w

Bootle
Derby Road 111w
Road works 111w

Border security in Ireland 1050
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1052-3, 1062-3

Borstals
Young offenders 307w

Bottomley, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 213-7, 218, 224, 228-30, 243-9
Questions
Abbeystead pumping station, Ministerial statements 540w
Advertising, Dept of Employment 368w
Advertising agencies, Dept of Employment 537-8w
"Careers Bulletin", Civil servants 228w
"Careers Bulletin", Civil service manpower 228-9w
"Careers Bulletin", Costs 229w
"Careers Bulletin", Departmental publications 229w
Conditions of employment, Working hours 145
Employment, Ethnic minorities 800-1w
Employment discrimination, Ethnic minorities 536w, 725w
Employment protection, Takeovers 81w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Employment 81-2w, 82-3w, 83-4w, 87w
Equal Opportunities Officers, Dept of Employment 537w
Factory Inspectorate, North West region 540w
Falkland Islands, Government contracts 188-9w
Gas safety, Gas cookers 560w
Gas safety, Privatisation 542w
Gummer, John Selwyn, Official engagements 801w
Handicapped workers, Manpower 81w
Health & Safety Inspectorate, Manpower 539w
Industrial accidents, Industrial injuries scheme 801w
Industrial health & safety, Ault & Wiborg 641w
Industrial training, European Social Fund 640-1w
Industrial training, Injuries 149
Industrial tribunals, Public appointments 724w
Industrial tribunals, Termination of employment 87w
Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 725w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 178w
Minimum wage, International Labour Organisation 180w
Minimum wage, Vacancies 180w
National Communications Union, Political levy 84w
National Freight Company, Sheffield 725w
Racial discrimination, Employment discrimination 88w
Sex discrimination, EC law 87w
Strikes, Lost working days 191w
Textile industry, European Social Fund 626w
Trade union elections, Government grants 185w
Trade union elections, Strike ballots 185w
Trade unions, Political levy 186w
Training opportunities scheme, Training allowances 368w
UK repayments from EC budget, European Social Fund 725-6w
Wages councils, Women 180w
Wages Inspectorate, Foreign languages 539w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 538-9w, 640w
Wages Inspectorate, Prosecutions 188w
Womens employment, Wages councils 228w
Womens employment, Working hours 145
Youth training scheme, Government grants 541w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1252
Questions
Arts sponsorship 544w
Chatham dockyard, Enterprise zones 670-1w
Child benefit, Supplementary benefits 756
Crime victims, Women 316w
Equal opportunities, Civil service 337w
Nature Conservancy Council, Government grants 265w
NHS, Merit awards 489w
Pornography, Crime prevention 321w
Prison staff, Recruitment 317w
Science & technology research, Research finance 787w
Weather modification, Air pollution 6w, 205w
Women, Diplomatic service 348w
Women, United Nations 348w
World Bank, Rain forests 22w
Youth custody 645w
Youth training scheme 181-2w

Bovine tuberculosis
Cattle 487w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Dog licences 551w
Dog licences, Northern Ireland 787w, 788w
Literacy, Departmental coordination 420w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits uprating 207-9w
Severe weather payments 602-3w
Severe weather payments, Departmental publications 603w
Slaughterhouses, Animal welfare 726w
Stray dogs, Northern Ireland 787-8w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Questions
British Tourist Authority, Government grants 142-3
Bus lanes, Greater London 107w
Electromagnetic interference, Nuclear war 316-7w
Inner London Education Authority, Expenditure 791w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 169, 186-7
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 631
Questions
Business statement 445, 1070-71
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Local government reform 289
Railway catering 3-4
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 595w

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, *Minister of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc
Northern Ireland Loans Bill, Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 395-7, 399
Questions
Advertising, Northern Ireland Office 353w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 443w
Coal reserves, Northern Ireland 1054
Dog licences, Northern Ireland 787w, 788w
Economic situation, Northern Ireland 1055-6
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 1055
Hotel & catering industry, Northern Ireland 306w
Industry, Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1058
Kinsdale gas pipeline, Anglo-Irish Agreement 1056
Northern Ireland, Public expenditure 728w
Stray dogs, Northern Ireland 787-8w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 1054-5

Bradford
Inland Revenue 252w
Mental health community care 746

Railway electrification 2
Railway transport 107w
Rented housing 172w
Road signs 801-2w

Brailsford Road 462w
Police raids 462w

"Brain Drain" 226-7w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc
St Andrews Hospital (13.12.85) 1255-6, 1258
Questions
Business statement 442
Licensing laws, Alcoholism & crime 416-7

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1128-9, 1140, 1151
Toys & games, Safety (09.12.85) 740
Questions
Building societies, Conveyancing 812-3w
Womens employment, Working hours 145

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1086, 1120-5
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 902
Questions
Business statement 1069
Garteosh Steelworks, Factory closures 690w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 906

Bridge of Allan 691w
Flood control 691w

Bridges
Weedon 296w

Brinton, Mr Tim
Debates etc
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 256, 259, 262-3, 270

British Airports Authority
Income 585-6w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 555-7w
Taxis 773w

British Airways
Investment income 110w
Public dividend capital 584w

British Association of Social Workers 754
Social Fund 754

British Atlantic Committee 710w
Government grants 710w

British embassies
Business 248w

British Film Institute
Film industry 620-1
Government grants 620-1

British Gas Corporation
External financing limits 291w
Licensing 426w
Privatisation (10.12.85) 767-858, 1060-1

British Lions 172w, 262w
South Africa 172w, 262w

British National Oil Corporation
Government assistance to industry 425w

British national (overseas) 248w
Passports 248w

British Rail
Capital investment 1-2, 2-3
Corporate plans 105w
Factory closures (10.12.85) 892
Government assistance to nationalised industries 244-5w
Manpower 107w
Procurement 107w
Rolling stock 300w

British Rail Engineering (10.12.85) 892
Contracts for services 1-2
Public petitions (10.12.85) 892
Swindon 2-3

British Rail Property Board 427-8w

British residents abroad
Libyan Arab Republic 385w, (05.12.85) 523-30, 703w

British Steel Corporation
Government assistance to industry 910
Iron & steel industry 910

British Technology Group 623w

British Telecom
Shareholders 718w

British Tourist Authority 142-3
Government grants 142-3

British War Widows & Associates 637-8w
Ministers correspondence 637-8w

Brittan, Rt Hon Leon, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry
Questions
Air transport, Restrictive trade practices 623-4w
Employment opportunities, Government grants 19-20w, 287-91w
Employment schemes, Government grants 439-42w
Government assistance to industry, Monklands 372w
Regional aid, Cumbernauld 20w
Regional aid, Northern region 20-1w
Regional selective assistance, Cumbernauld 20w
Regional selective assistance, Yorkshire & Humberside 19w

Brixton
Greater London Enterprise Board 55w
Job creation schemes 55w

Brixton Prison 162w, 463w
Body searches 162w, 463w
Prisoners on remand 162w

Broadcasting controls
Satellite broadcasting 31w

Broadcasting finance
BBC 307w

Broadcasting licences
Ethnic minorities 581-2w

Broadcasting programmes
BBC 307w
Home Office 463w

Broadleaved woodland grant scheme
Tax allowances 911

Brockhill Remand Centre 793w
Remand in custody 793w

Brodrick Committee see Death Certification & Coroners Departmental Committee

Brooke, Mr Peter, Minister of State at the Treasury
Questions
Advertising agencies, Treasury 768-9w
Catering, Civil service 768w
Customs officers, Manpower 770-1w
Customs & Excise, Evidence 591w
Drug crimes, Equipment 652w
EC budget 337w
EC budget, Spain 337-8w
EC budget, UK contributions 653w
EC Finance Council 806w
EC Finance Council, Greece 101w
Financial institutions, European Communities institutions 590-1w
Legal costs, Moller-Butcher, Brian 769w
Tax harmonisation, Spirits 355w
VAT, Building alterations 769w
VAT, Small businesses 591-2w
VAT threshold, Costs 253w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 34, 35, 37, 62, 66, 79-87
European Regional Development Fund (11.12.85) 1028, 1030-3, 1036, 1037
Questions
Arrests, Scotland 168w
Common agricultural policy, UK repayments 667-8w
Company liquidations 368w
Dockyards, Contracts 386w
Dockyards, Personnel 206-8w
Dockyards, Privatisation 781w
Dockyards, Shareholders 386-7w
EC budget, UK contributions 653w
Employment by sector 78-80w
European Regional Development Fund, EC grants & loans 559w
Health services, Scotland 745w
Leukaemia, Rosyth Dockyard 382w
Leukaemia, Scotland 382w
National Pensioners Convention, Costs 578w
Severe weather payments 134w
UK repayments from EC budget, European Social Fund 725-6w
Unemployment, Scotland 383w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Questions
Council house sales, Glasgow 690w

Brown, Mr Michael
Questions
Antismoking campaign, Government grants 396w
Criminal Proceedings arising from Fraud Review Committee 165w
M25, Road works 428w
Nurses, Recruitment 126w
Visas, Foreign tourists 311w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1021-3
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, Conditions of service 14-15
Fraud investigation group, Prosecutions 13
Redundancy, Shipbuilding 183w
Youth custody, Young offenders 307w

Brown, Mr Robert C
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 673
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 803-6, 838-9, 844
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 198-9

Brown, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 356
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 162
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting finance 307w
British residents abroad, Libyan Arab Republic 385w
Industrial training, Injuries 149
Libyan Arab Republic, Foreign policy 814w
Prisoners, Libyan Arab Republic 703w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 1054-5
Youth unemployment, Lothian 689w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 774-5, 784, 788-93
Parliamentary papers (13.12.85) 1211
Questions
Northern Ireland Assembly 728w
Rates & rating, Scotland 688w

Brucellosis
Cattle 487w

Bruinvels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 829-31
Questions
Achille Lauro, Hijacking 39w
Area manpower boards, Leicester 579-80w
Business statement 447, 1071
Church of England, Inner city areas 299w
Civil servants, Emergency planning 351w
Clergy, Divorce 615-6
Contraceptives, Young people 597w
Drinking & driving, Christmss 429w
Employment, Ethnic minorities 800-1w

Employment discrimination, Ethnic minorities 536w, 725w
Forensic science, Leicester University 315w
Hijacking 247w
Hijacking, Police 582w
Hijacking, Stansted Airport 32-3w
Local education authorities, Greater London 158w
Local government expenditure, Publicity 257-8w
Motorways, Lighting 8-9
Motorways, Scotland 256w, 693-4w
M1, Lighting 802w
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w
Prisoners, Costs 30w
Pupils, Greater London 8-10w
Pupil-teacher ratios 7-8w
Racial discrimination, Employment discrimination 88w
Racial discrimination, Government contracts 164-5w
Racial discrimination, Young people 164w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Chief constables 730w
School population, Leicestershire 225-6w
Small businesses 188w
Social security benefits rules, Aliens 141w
Suckler cow premiums 100-1w

Bryan, Sir Paul
Questions
Multifibre arrangement, EC action 434-5w
Textiles, Hong Kong 435w

Buchan, Mr Norman
Questions
Arts finance, Local government reform 620

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, *Minister of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 841-8
Questions
British National Oil Corporation, Government assistance to industry 425w
Gas disconnections, Pensioners 426w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, Dept of Energy 359w
Natural gas, Norway 292w
Petroleum exploration licences, Land drilling 750w

Buck, Sir Antony
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 88, 89

Buckinghamshire
Educational finance 364w
Pupil-teacher ratios 285w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1088, 1089, 1094, 1102, 1116, 1148-9, 1158
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Points of Order (04.12.85) 306-7
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 333
European Council (05.12.85) 439
Questions
Employment discrimination, Ethnic minorities 140-1

Building alterations
VAT 769w

Building industry
Capital investment 467-8w
Employment 458w, 468w
Housing construction 56w
Manpower 458w, 538w
Northern Ireland 443w, 589w
Scotland 458w
Terrorism 1059
Unemployment 264w, 589w

Building regulations
Access to buildings 346w

Building repairs
Council housing 293-4
Defective housing 446w
Historic buildings 295w
House renovation grants 171w
Housing investment programmes 293-4

Building societies
Companies 355w
Conveyancing 812-3w
Legislation 354w

Building Societies Bill 1985-86
1R (05.12.85) 457

Bullets
Metropolitan Police 792w

"Burdens on Business" 580-1w

Bureaucracy
Small businesses 55-6w, 180w, 183w, 420w, 580-1w

Burglary
Crime 322-3w
Lambeth 646w

Burt, Mr Alistair
Questions
British Technology Group 623w
Youth training scheme 181-2w

Bus lanes
Greater London 107w

Bus services
London Regional Transport 392w
Tenders 392w

Buses
Belgium 772w
Germany 772w
Licensing 772w
Ministerial responsibility 712w
Motor vehicle safety 659w
Motorways 388-9w
Public transport 712w
Road accidents 109w, 659-60w
Road safety 109w
Tachographs 104-5w
Travel restrictions 772w

Business
British embassies 248w

Business expansion scheme
Employment opportunities 144-5

Business sponsorship incentive scheme 621-2
Education Science & Arts Select Committee 622

Business statement 440-7, 1065-75
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 427, 447, (12.12.85) 1070, 1073

Butcher, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc
English sewing, Regional development grants (11.12.85) 1042-46
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1231-7, 1239
Questions
Alvey programme, Members correspondence 434w
Citizens band radio, Standardisation 14w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Trade & Industry 17-8w, 18-9w, 251w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Trade & Industry 433-4w
Iron & steel industry, Productivity 716w
Manufacturing industries 15-6w
Motor industry, Industrial production 557w
Motor industry, Pay settlements 286w
National income 717w
Regional aid, Hull 432-3w
Regional development grants, Garscadden 431-2w
Regional selective assistance, Garscadden 431w
Systime UK, Foreign investment in UK 558w
Systime UK, Government grants 558w
Systime UK, Millshaw Park 558w
Textile industry, Capital investment 16-8w
Tobacco, Retail trade 807w
Westland Helicopters, Government assistance to industry 438w

Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Questions
Legionnaires disease 816w
Sunday trading 410

Butter
Animal feed 486w
Food subsidies 486w
Food surpluses 485-6w
USSR 485w

Butterfill, Mr John
Questions
Tourism, United Kingdom 178-9w

Buy British 430w
Transport 430w

Bye laws
Water supply 466w

Cabinet papers
Thirty year rule 323-4w

Cable & Wireless 175w, 769-70w
Privatisation 175w, 769-70w
Shares 175w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Debates, etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 972-5, 1000
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 178w
National Freight Company, Sheffield 725w

Caithness
Tree planting 911

Calder Hall 359w

Calder Valley 660w
Motorways 660w

Callaghan, Rt Hon James
Questions
Prison population 412

Calling of Members (04.12.85) 397
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 445, (11.12.85) 990-1, (12.12.85) 1071, 1075

Camden
Supplementary benefits 133w

Campbell, Mr Ian
Questions
Spirits, Agriculture surpluses 480w
Viruses, Scotland 693w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates, etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 647, 654, 659
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 172-3, 197-8
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1198, 1221, 1226, 1237-43
Members interests (10.12.85) 763-4
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 212, 215, 221, 226, 234, 239, 244
Questions
Business statement 1074
Church & State, Church of England 619
Community health services, District health authorities 400w
Defence equipment 349-50w
District health authorities, Economic planning 399w
Falkland Islands, Defence equipment 350w
Inner London Education Authority, Income 705-6w
Inner London Education Authority, Public sector borrowing 705w
Local enterprise agencies 143-4
Local government borrowing 267-8w
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 22, 241-2w
NHS, House purchase 399w
NHS, Privatisation 599w
NHS, Rented housing 399w
NHS, Tenants 399-400w
Ports, Maryport Harbour 291
Prime Minister official engagements 324w

Canada
Air travel 243-4w

Canary Wharf 262-3w, 470-1w
Employment opportunities 262-3w
Environmental impact assessment 262w
Industrial development 263w
London docklands 262w
London docklands railway 389-90w
Public inquiries 292
Public participation in planning 470-1w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 161
Teachers, Standing Order No 10 applications (04.12.85) 304
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1047-8
Complaints against police, Scotland 918
Football Association 263-4w
Hospitals, Crown immunity 346w
Members, Scotland 761
NHS administration, Scotland 336w
Teachers, Scotland 688w, 904

Cancer
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 351w
Death 345w
Government grants 345w
Health Education Council 493-4w
Holy Loch 459-60w, 746-7w
Medical research 345w
Medical treatments 535w, 751-2
Middlesex Hospital 751
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 751-2
North Middlesex Hospital 751
Patients 751
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 344-5w
Rosyth 459-60w
Royal ordnance factories 351w

Cancer hazards
Children 766-7w
Inquiries 766-7w
Nuclear fuel cycle 786w
Rosyth 797w

Capital assets
London Residuary Body 285

Capital investment
British Rail 1-3
Building industry 467-8w
Defence 637w
District health authorities 141-2w
Educational buildings 449w
Environment 669w
Further education 706w
Hospitals 404-8w, 684-6w, 695w, 756-8w
Housing 669w
Infrastructure 1
Local authorities in Scotland 748w
Local education authorities 706w
Local government expenditure 153w, 475w, 553w
NHS 43w, 598w, 613w, 614w
NHS finance 754-5w
Northern Ireland health & social services board, 45-6w
Police stations 650w, 694w
Prisons 650w
Railway electrification 2
Regional health authorities 684-6w
Road construction 112-5w, 659w, 693-6w
Rolling stock 3, 300w
Schools 633-4w
Scotland 747-8w
Scottish health boards 53-4w
Sewers 467w
Textile industry 16-8w
Wales 609, 654-6w
Water authorities 59w
Yorkshire Water Authority 58w

Caravan sites
Gypsies 810w

Caravans
Parking 445w

Cardiff
Coastal protection 446w

Cardiff Prison 320w
Prison accommodation 320w

Cardigan
Employment opportunities 445w

Care proceedings
Scotland 193-8w

"Careers Bulletin" 228-9w
Civil servants 228w
Civil service manpower 228-9w
Costs 229w
Departmental publications 229w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1013, 1016-8
European Council (05.12.85) 434
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 488, 491, 498, 500, 502, 504-7, 515
Questions
British Lions, South Africa 172w
Crime, Stock Exchange 412
Crown Prosecution Service 555w
Customs & Excise, Evidence 591w
Dunbar, Rony Kevin, Trials 555w
Health services, Powys 446w
Licensing laws, Drinking & driving 417
Local government, Open government 260-1w
Police informers 582w
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w
Probation officers, Manpower 315w
RAF Greenham Common, Police vehicles 464w
Trials, Drug crimes 554-5w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
British Lions, South Africa 262w
Football, Prime Minister domestic visits 708w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 774
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 300-1
Local enterprise agency grant scheme 90-1w
Marine nature reserves 258w
Trade union elections, Strike ballots 185w
Tree planting, Caithness 911

Carlisle, Rt Hon Mark
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1018-9
UNESCO (05.12.85) 451
Questions
Chief constables, Police equipment 413-4

Carpet industry
Imports 436-7w
Manpower 437w
Multifibre arrangement 437w
Yorkshire & Humberside 437w

Carter-Jones, Mr Lewis
Questions
Injuries, Death 211w
Kidney donor cards, Computer applications 749
Kidney failure, Death 533-4w
Manpower Services Commission, Open Tech 185w
Medical Research Council 789w
Nurses, Uniforms 763-5w
Speech therapy, Professional qualifications 765-6w
Surgery, Medical research 766w
Trauma, Medical research 158w

Carttiss, Mr Michael
Questions
Enterprise allowance scheme, Training 184-5w

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc
St Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead (12.12.85) 1180-3, 1185-6
Strategic Defence Initiative (09.12.85) 628
Questions
Council housing, Building repairs 293-4
Initial teacher training, Student numbers 450-4w
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 21-2
London docklands railway, Dept of Transport 389-90w
Teachers, Pay 363-4w
Woolwich Prison, Construction 320w
Woolwich Prison, Land pollution 294w
Woolwich Prison, Prison accommodation 319-20w
Woolwich Prison, Prison staff 320w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1203, 1214, 1217, 1229
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1207 •
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 301
Railway catering, Privatisation 5
Small businesses 182-3w
Trespass, Transient people 415

Cash limits
Social Fund 754

Castle Bromwich (09.12.85) 636

Category A prisoners 27-8w
Prison population 27w
Solitary confinement 27-8w
Terrorism 27-8w

Catering
Civil service 768w
Equipment 296w
Import penetration 296w

Cattle
Agricultural subsidies 100-1w
Bovine tuberculosis 487w
Brucellosis 487w
Hormone treatments (09.12.85) 719-36

Cement
Channel crossing 584w
Exports 552w
Industrial production 552w

Cemeteries
Repairs & maintenance 50w
Scotland 50w

Central America
Disaster relief 16
Overseas aid 360-2w

Central Office of Information
Publicity 711w

Central Scotland
Prime Minister domestic visits 323w

Central-local government relations
Liverpool City Council 19-20, 21
Town & country planning 55w

Cereals
Balance of trade 438-9w

CERN
UK contributions 450w

Cervical cancer 535w
Administrative delays 614-5w
Computer applications 490-1w, 681-2w, 766w
Death 401w
Family practitioner committees 680-1w
Screening 490-1w, 535w, 680-1w, 681-2w, 766w
Testing 614-5w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc
Calling of Members (04.12.85) 397

Newspaper press, House of Commons chamber (10.12.85) 882
Scope of debate (04.12.85) 392, 394, 395, 396, (10.12.85) 890

***Chalker, Mrs Lynda,** Minister of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Severn bridge, Ministerial statements (13.12.85) 1205-10
Questions
A1, Road works 242w
A5, Road traffic 658w
Buses, Motor vehicle safety 659w
Buses, Road accidents 659-60w
Calder Valley, Motorways 660w
Compulsory seat belt wearing 304w
Drinking & driving, Christmas 429w
Driving tests, Motorways 388-9w
Driving tests, Speed limits 301w
Heathrow, Road signs 584w
Lorries, Spray suppression 390w
Motor vehicles testing, Departmental forms 428w
Motorways, Death 301w
Motorways, Lighting 429w
Motorways, Repairs & maintenance 391w
Motorways, Road traffic 388w, 803w
M1, Lighting 802w
M1, Road construction 657w, 658w
M1, Road traffic 658w
M20, Road construction 302w
M25, Road accidents 428-9w
M25, Road works 428w
Road accidents, Statistics 802w
Road construction 242w, 391-2w
Road construction, Capital investment 659w
Road construction, Costs 243w
Road construction, Employment 243w
Road construction, Finance 243w
Road construction, Vauxhall 243w
Road signs, Bradford 801-2w
Road traffic, A40 774w
Road traffic, Leeds 802w
Road traffic, Vauxhall 243w
Road works, Planning inquiries 774w
Road works, Road accidents 390w
Roads, Greater London 243w
Roads, Newham 301-2w
Roads, Sound insulation 658-9w
Tyre industry, Licensing 392w
Woolwich, Road traffic 301w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Inner city areas 1061

Channel crossing 14w, (09.12.85) 639-718
Cement 584w
Channel ferries 584w
Construction 104w, 716w
Cost benefit analysis 771w
Employment opportunities 104w
Environmental impact assessment 430w
France 104w, 772w
Public expenditure 104w
Railway timetables 429w
Road freight transport 429-30w
Road haulage permits 429w

Channel ferries
Belgium 585w
Channel crossing 584w

Channel Islands
Official visits 419
Tax evasion 419

Channel tunnel
Members interests 760

***Channon, Rt Hon Paul,** Minister of State for Trade*
Questions
Cotton velvet, Turkey 17w
Drugs, Balance of trade 251w
Export credit, Nigeria 15w
Exports, South Africa 14w
Manufacturing industries, Manufactured exports 169w
Multifibre arrangement 807w
Multifibre arrangement, EC action 434-5w
Textiles, EC trade 16w
Textiles, Hong Kong 435w

Chapelcross Power Station 359w, 387w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Air force, Disaster relief 16
Arts sponsorship, Private sector 621
Clergy, Pay 447-8w
Dartford tunnel, Construction 105w
Employment 177w
Esal Commodities, Banking supervision 103w
Esal Commodities, Company liquidations 19w
Listed buildings, Architectual conservation 281
Private rented housing, Housing stock 57w
Private rented housing, Judgments 57w
Private rented housing, Rent control 56-7w
Property transfer, NHS 606w
Resident landlords, Private rented housing 56w
Road construction 115w, 242w
Road construction, Capital investment 112-5w

Chatham Dockyard 670-1w
Enterprise zones 670-1w

Cheese
Food imports 251w

Chemical & biological warfare
Departmental publications 322w

Chemists shops
Prescriptions 496w
Wales 446w

Chief constables
Ireland 1056-7
Police equipment 413-4
Royal Ulster Constabulary 730w

Chief Nursing Officer 209w

Child benefit 173-4w, 605w
Social security benefits disqualification 131w
Social security benefits rates 208w
Supplementary benefits 756
Wolverhampton 273w

Child care
Cruelty to children 150-1
Department of Employment 87w
Social workers training 752-3w

Child dependency additions 208w
Social security benefits rates 208w

Child patients
Mental hospitals 758-64w

Child safety
Cruelty to children 752w

Child support
Family benefits 252-4w

Childbirth
Scottish health boards 51w

Children
Cancer hazards 766-7w
Homicide 647-50w
Mental patients 212-22w
Nutrition & health 610-1w
Pornography (04.12.85) 309
Scotland 733-4w
Social security recipients 130w
Special educational needs 13w
Tobacco (04.12.85) 311

Children in care (04.12.85) 309, 310
Cruelty to children 618-20w
Parents rights 254-5w
Scotland 194w, 197-8w, 254-5w

Children & Young Persons Act 1933 794-5w
Tobacco 794-5w

Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 309

Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937
Tobacco 785w

Childrens hospitals
Wrightington Hospital 598w

Cholesterol
Diet & disease 128w
Medical research 128w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 491-2
Questions
Crimes of violence, Prison accommodation 318w
MV Bridgeness, Oil pollution 304-5w
Small businesses, Venture capital 183w

Christianity
Social problems 422

Christmas
Drinking & driving 112w, 429w
Road accidents 802w

Christmas Island 92w, 811w
Nuclear weapons tests 204w, 811w

Church commissioners
Expenditure 616-7
Finance 616
Inner city areas 616
Investment 617-8
South Africa 617-8

Church of England
Church & State 152, 618, 619
Inner City areas (02.12.85) 25-6, 151-2, 152-3, 283-4, 286, 287, 288, 299w

Church & State 424
Church of England 152, 618, 619
Iron & steel industry 565w
Teachers 565w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 661, 679
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 309
Prime Ministers question time point of order (05.12.85) 426
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 629-30

Cinemas
Access to buildings 421-2
Mobility of disabled 421-2

Citizens band radio
Crime 563w
Scotland 563w
Standardisation 14w

City of London
Fraud 4w, 29w, 358w, 649w, 1059-60, 1061-2
Law enforcement 424-5

City of London Polytechnic 707w

City University 707w

Civil aviation
Falkland Islands 814w

Civil Aviation Authority
Audit 389w
Fees & charges 245w
Meteorology 430w

Civil defence (04.12.85) 310
Art works 465w
Civil Defence College 313w
Departmental correspondence 357-8w
Emergency centres 29-30w
Emergency planning 313w, 547-8w
Home Office 312w
Identity cards 312w
International Scientific Community on Problems of the Environment 311w
Local authorities 313w, 415
Local authorities in Scotland 335-6w
Nuclear shelters 311w
Police 312w
Publicity 312w
Rescue services 312w
Research finance 312w

Volunteer reserve 313w
Wales 246w
Water authorities 299w

Civil Defence College 313w
Civil defence 313w
Libraries 312w
Local government functions 313w

Civil disorder (05.12.85) 457
Inner city areas 309w, 418
Legal representation 25w
Public order policing 322w
Tottenham 25w, 314w

Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill 1985 86
1R (04.12.85) 310

Civil servants
"Careers Bulletin" 228w
Emergency planning 351w
Pay 351w, (11.12.85) 1009-26
Tenders 812w
UNESCO 785w

Civil servants secondment
Educational finance 456w
European Communities Institutions 456w

Civil service
Catering 768w
Equal opportunities 337w
Youth training scheme 542w

Civil service manpower 652w
"Careers Bulletin" 228-9w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 271w, 272-4w
Strategic defence initiative 811-2w

Civil service recruitment
Diplomatic service 248w
Equal opportunities 592-3w
Equal opportunities officers 383w, 388w
Nairobi Conference 337w

Civil service unions
Immigration 26w

Civilian Pay Records Office 545w
Manpower 545w

Clark, Mr Alan, *Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 203-5
Questions
Average earnings 187w, 723w
Average earnings, Manufacturing industries 640w
Building industry, Manpower 538w
Clothing, Prices 85-6w
Clothing industry, Employment 229w
Clothing industry, Employment level 229-30w
Community programme 180-1w
Community programme, Propaganda 181w
Community programme, Social security recipients 181w
Company liqudations 368w
Computer industry, South Yorkshire 190w
Employment 177w
Employment, Basildon 184w
Employment, EC countries 799-800w
Employment, Lancashire 177-8w
Employment, Statistics 368-71w
Employment by sector 78-80w
Employment level, Economic regions 721-2w
Employment level, National insurance contributions 367-8w
Employment level, North West region 539-40w
Employment opportunities, Glanford 86-7w
Employment opportunities, Performing arts 192w
Employment opportunites, Wages councils 180w
Employment schemes 325-6w
Employment schemes, Glanford 86w
Employment schemes, Lambeth 640w
Employment schemes, Manpower 641w
Hotel & catering industry, Vacancies 329w
Hotel & catering industry, Vocational guidance 329w
Job centres, Job start scheme 184w
Job centres, Vacancies 178w
Job release scheme, Early retirement 367w
Job release scheme, Teachers 541w
Job start scheme 540-1w
Labour market 177w
Labour mobility 541-2w
Manpower Services Commission, Public appointments 724-5w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 189w
Minimum wage, Hairdressing 191w
Motor industry, Manpower 191w
Overtime 190w
Part-time employment 191w
Pay 187w
Pay, Men 188w
Pay, Textile industry 187-8w
Redundancy, Manufacturing industries 722w
Redundancy, Merseyside 186-7w
Redundancy, Newham 800w
Redundancy, Northern region 721w
Redundancy, Shipbuilding 183w
Social security abuse, Hertfordshire 579w
Temporary employment, Normanton 178w
Textile industry, Manpower 85w, 191-2w
Unemployment 148, 176w, 177w, 326w, 539w, 721w, 722-3w
Unemployment, Batley 538w
Unemployment, Ethnic monitoring 799w
Unemployment, Glanford 86w
Unemployment, Gravesham 537w
Unemployment, Job centres 190w
Unemployment, Job start scheme 186w
Unemployment, Lambeth 579w
Unemployment, North West region 177w
Unemployment, Northern region 77-8w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 327w
Unemployment, Training 138-9
Unemployment, West Midlands 79-80w, 538w
Unemployment, Women 77w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 88-9w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 89w
Vacancies, Travel-to-work areas 183-4w
Vacancies, Unemployment 723w
Vacancies, West Midlands 189-90w
Youth employment 326-7w

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Badgers, Clouts wood 487w
Badgers, Pest control 488w
Bovine tuberculosis, Cattle 487w
Brucellosis, Cattle 487w
Forestry Commission, Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 459w
Grazing land, Norfolk Broads 484-5w
Internal drainage boards, Nature conservation 484w
Norfolk Broads 297
Norfolk Broads, Hybrid Bills 471w
Regional aid, Northern region 20-1w
Regional development grants, Northern region 435w
Tuberculosis, Notifiable diseases 140w, 141w
Vacant land, Water authorities 290
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Finance 469w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 773, 793-7
Questions
Cancer, Medical treatments 752

Clark, Sir William
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1094, 1095
European Council (05.12.85) 439
Industrial Training Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 312
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 107, 115-6
Questions
Business statement 443, 1066

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Paymaster General*
Questions
Availability for work, Social security benefits rules 140
British Tourist Authority, Government grants 142-3
Economic situation, Interest rates 148
Employment discrimination, Ethnic minorities 140-1
Employment level, Autumn statement 147
Employment opportunities, Glasgow 141
Employment opportunities, School leaving 141
Employment opportunities, Tourist industry 143
Employment opportunities, Western Europe 147-8
Enterprise allowance scheme 91-2w
Historic Buildings Council, Tourism 137-8
Licensing hours 138
Take-up of employment, Taxation 147
Tax thresholds 148-9
Tourist industry, Employment opportunities 137
Tourist industry, Ross & Cromarty District Council 138
Unemployment 139-40, 141-2
Unemployment, Economic policy 147

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 308-9
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 901
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 161
Questions
Business statement 1072
Community care, Scotland 696-7w
Ministers domestic visits, Garscosh 907
Progress in Partnership 685-6w
Scottish health boards, NHS finance 696w

Clay, Mr Bob
Questions
Building industry, Unemployment 264w

Clergy
Divorce 615-6
Pay 447-8w
Separated wives 616
Widows benefits 615-6

Clinical trials 597w
Alternative medicine 597w

Clinics
Test tube babies 604w

Closed circuit television
Military intelligence 302w
Sportsgrounds 777w
Warning signals 7
Warning signs 6-7

Clothing
Antidumping duties 438w
EC trade 16w
Imports 435w
Prices 85-6w

Clothing industry
EC grants & loans 626w
Employment 229w
Employment level 229-30w
Manpower 191-2w

Clouts Wood 487w
Badgers 487w

Clubs
Small businesses 145-6

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 188
Private bills, Members attendance (05.12.85) 427, 428
Television Act 1964 (Amendment) Bill, 1R (09.12.85) 638
Questions
Crime, Law enforcement 417-9

Equal opportunities 33w
Equal opportunities, Departmental coordination 33-4w
Equal opportunities, Home Office 34w
Equal opportunities, Welsh Office 42-3w, 43-4w
Equal Opportunities Commission, Finance 36w
Equal Opportunities Commission, Manpower 36w
Manpower Services Commission, NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 89-90w
Severn bridge, Toll bridges 8
Surgery, Wales 445w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 628w
UN Decade for Women 1976-85 33w
Unemployment, South Wales 612
Unemployment, Training 138
Vocational education, Educational qualifications 450w
Welsh Office, Public appointments 41w

Coal
South Wales 607

Coal firing scheme 420-1w, 425w

Coal mine closures
South Wales 606-7, 613-4
Training 89-90w
Wales 610

Coal mining
EC countries 233-42w
Industrial disputes 7w, 168w, 700-1w
Redundancy 426w
Redundancy pay 6-7w, 750w
Subsidence 424w

Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 424w

Coal reserves
Northern Ireland 1054

Coal stocks
Wales 571w

Coastal protection
Cardiff 446w

Coastal shipping 108w
EC Transport Council 108w

Cockeram, Mr Eric
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 926
Questions
Intimidation of witnesses, Television programmes 761
Pharmacists, NHS 598w

Cocks, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 326-8
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1206

Codes of practice
Housing associations 692w
Police powers (05.12.85) 484-521
Royal Ulster Constabulary 1050-1

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 990, 991
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 488-9
Questions
Home Office, Broadcasting programmes 463w
Immigrant detainees, Members correspondence 792w
Immigration controls, Temporary immigrants 581w
Immigration rules 581w
Inland Revenue, Data Protection Act 1984 805w
Metropolitan Police, Bullets 792w
Metropolitan Police, Detection rates 307w
Metropolitan Police, Powers of entry 581w

Coking coal
Wales 606-7

Coleman, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Marriage, Wales (06.12.85) 531
Marriage (Wales) Bill, 1R (06.12.85) 531
Questions
National Coal Board, Wales 447w

College closures
Architecture 366w

Colliery review procedure (10.12.85) 894-900

Columbia
Disaster relief 24w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980 791w
Light dues, Fees & charges 4-5
Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) Act 1985 319w
Trespass, Indictable offences 317w
VAT threshold, Costs 253w

Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment 786w

Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 704w

Common agricultural policy
Expenditure 661-2w
Marginal land 804w
UK repayments 667-8w

Common fisheries policy 588w

Common land
Access to countryside 551w
Property rights 551w

Common starch regime (02.12.85) 107-27

Commonwealth
Ashford training centre 96-7w

Community care
Local government social services 746
Scotland 696-7w

Community health services 600w
District health authorities 400w
Health services finance 598w
North West region 598w

Community policing 316w

Community programme 180-1w
Propaganda 181w
Social security recipients 181w
Training 138, 139
Women 181w

Companies 280-2w
Airports 10
Audit (06.12.85) 532
Billing 182-3w
Building societies 355w
Criminal investigation 463-4w
Development of Tourism Act 1969 180w
Directors (06.12.85) 532
Energy Efficiency Year 638w
Enterprise allowance scheme 184w, 580w
Manchester Airport 10

Companies Acts 435w

Companies Bill 1985/86
1R (06.12.85) 532

Companies Registration Office 624-5w

Company investigations 168-9w
Fraud 358w

Company liquidations 14w, 250-1w, 368w
Esal Commodities 19w
Scotland 381w
Small businesses 381w, 447w
Wales 447w

Company registration 624-5w

Compensation
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 701-2w
Health service staff 825w
Industrial training 149
Nuclear weapons tests 424
Sequestration of assets 718-20w
Vaccine damaged children 822-4w

Complaints against police
Procurator fiscal service 918
Scotland 918

"Compulsory Seat Belt Wearing" 304w

Computer applications
Cervical cancer 490-1w, 681-2w, 766w
Kidney donor cards 749

Computer industry
Export promotion 625-6w
South Yorkshire 190w

Computers
Rate limitation 809w
Rate support grants 809w

Conditions of employment
Alley, Eric 246w
University teachers 455w, 707w
Welsh Plant Breeding Station 791w
Working hours 145

Conditions of service
Crown prosecution service 14-15

Confederation of British Industry
Skilled workers 579w

Conferences
Crime prevention 419w

Congenital abnormalities 608w

Conservation
Forests 910-11

Conservative Medical Society 276w

Consolidated Fund debates
Speakers rulings & statements (12.12.85) 1076

Consolidation Bills 655-6w

Construction
Basildon 258-9w
Channel crossing 104w, 716w
Conwy tunnel 611
Dartford tunnel 105w
Flats 448w
Hospitals 44w, 54w, 306-8w, 404-8w
West Lothian Hospital 911-2
Woolwich prison 320w

Consultants
Hospital waiting lists 401w
Local government reform 470w

Consumer protection (04.12.85) 312, (09.12.85) 737
Information 250w

Consumer Safety (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 312

Consumption
Liquid milk 732-3w

Contact lenses
Eye disorders 609w

Contempt of Court
Sequestration of assets 426w

Contraceptives
Prescriptions 339w
Young people 597w

Contract cleaning
Leicestershire Health Authority 760

Contracts
Dockyards 386w

Contracts for services
British Rail Engineering 1-2
Defence research 204-5w
Health services ancillary staff 599w
NHS 756-7
Private health services 529-33w

Contracts of employment
Pharmacists 598w, 609w

Control of Pollution (Special Wastes) Regulations 1985 549-50w

Conveyancing
Building societies 812-3w

Convictions
Drug crimes 26-7w
Homicide 28w
Pornography 320-1w
Scottish courts 333w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates, etc
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 269-71
Questions
Debt collection, Rents 353-4w
EC Agriculture Council 663w
General development orders, Public participation in planning 266w
Heathrow, Road signs 584w
Insurance companies, Administrative delays 434w
NHS finance, Shropshire Health Authority 748
Planning permission 266w
Regional health authorities, Surplus land 606w
Small businesses, Clubs 145-6
Vacant land, Public sector 261w

Conwy tunnel 611
Construction 611

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 437
Questions
Motor vehicle testing, Departmental forms 428w
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 422

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 355
New Towns (Access to Information) Scotland Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310
Questions
West Lothian Hospital, Construction 911-2

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Asian Mother & Baby Campaign, Health service staff 210w
British Rail, Capital investment 2-3
Gas safety, Gas cookers 560w
General certificate of Secondary Education, Teacher training 570-1w
Road construction, Finance 243w
Road construction, Local government expenditure 243w

Copeland
Government assistance to industry 372-3w

Copyright
Overseas aid 448w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Austin Rover, Standing Order No 10 applications (09.12.85) 636
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1082, 1114-8, 1155, 1158
Questions
Crime victims, Criminal injuries compensation 702w
Criminal injuries compensation 701w
Criminal injuries compensation, Government grants to voluntary organisations 701w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Compensation 701-2w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Drug rehabilitation centres 421
National Association of Victim Support Schemes, Manpower 701w
Rate support grants, Metropolitan districts 777-9w
Theft, Homeowners insurance 702w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 950, 956, 981, 983
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, USA 728w
Business statement 1074
Emerald Club, Asbestos stripping 297-8w
Gas disconnections, Pensioners 426w
Local government expenditure, Greater London Council 298w
Occupational therapists, Local government social services 138-40w
Occupational therapists, Manpower 137-8w
Occupational therapy, Student numbers 11-3w
Occupational therapy, Waiting lists 137w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 643
Criminal Records Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310
Questions
Education Science & Arts Select Committee, Business sponsorship incentive scheme 622

Corneal Tissue Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 312

Cornwall
Redundancy (10.12.85) 765-6

Coronary bypass operations 602w, 678w
Death rate 678w
Hospital waiting lists 602w

Coroners 795w

Corporate plans
British Rail 105w

Corrie, Mr John
Questions
"Future Strategy for Higher Education in Scotland" 459-60w
Scottish Transport Group, Government grants 697-8w

Cosmetic Products (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (11.12.85) 1038

Cost benefit analysis
Channel crossing 771w
Vaccination 609w

Cost effectiveness 204w, 555-7w, 574-5w, 597-8w, 611w, 746-7, 748-9, 825-6w
Government departments 574-5w
NHS 746-7
NHS finance 747, 748-9
Regional health authorities 597-8w, 611w

Cost of living
Mandatory student grants 226w

Cost per pupil
Hertfordshire 364w

Costs
Anglo-Irish talks 5w
Badgers 488w
"Careers Bulletin" 229w
Early warning systems 545w
Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985 142w, 497-8w
Health services finance 611w
Independent prosecution service 299-300w
Kidney machines 446w
Mandatory student grants 226w
Meteorological Office 279w
Ministers domestic visits 111w
National Pensioners Convention 578w
Official receptions 575w
Prescriptions 700w
Prisoners 30w
Retirement pensions 207-9w
Road construction 243w
Trident missiles 97w
Trident submarines 97w
Urban programme 261w
VAT threshold 253w
"Weekly Information Bulletin" 619

Cot deaths 820-1w

Cotton velvet 174
Turkey 17w

Couchman, Mr James
Questions
Local enterprise agencies 143

Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas
Government grants 265w

Council house rents
Rent arrears 59-60w, 263w, 468w

Council house sales 103w
Council tenants 257w
Glasgow 690w
Local government finance 467w
Local government revenue 285-6, 286-7, 294
Norwich 257w

Council housing
Building repairs 293-4
Debts 379w
Demolition 379w
Difficult to let properties 64-78w
Hampshire 64w
Housing construction 294
Housing finance 286
Housing standards 55w, 260w, 297w
Leicester 260w
Local authorities 62-4w
Local authorities in Scotland 734-6w, 735-7w, 737-9w, 739-40w
Management 377-9w
Nottingham City Council 552-3w
Repairs & maintenance 469w
Scotland 739w
Tenants cooperatives 296
Thamesmead 296
Wales 571w

Council of Europe
Local government 422w

Council of Ministers 248-50w

Council tenants
Council house sales 257w

Councillors (04.12.85) 309

Country houses 377w

Countryside Commission
Government grants 265w

County Hall 284-5, 477w
Local government reform 284-5

Coventry
Defective housing 295

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 569-73
Questions
Area health authorities, Greater London 396-8w
Fuel aid, Disadvantaged 603w
Life imprisonment, Prison sentences 163w

Craigen, Mr Jim
Questions
Crown Agents, Property development 24w
Nuclear test ban 38w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Central Scotland 323w

Cranborne, Viscount
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 646, 650
UNESCO (05.12.85) 452

Cresswell Crags 294w
Archaeological sites 294w

Crime
Burglary 322-3w
Citizens band radio 563w
Criminal investigation 411, 412
Criminal statistics 308-9w
Disadvantaged 314w
Inner city areas 314w
Law enforcement 417-9
Merseyside 311w
Remand in custody 793w

Research 321w
Stock Exchange 412
Theft 322-3w

Crime prevention 309-10w
Conferences 419w
Finance 310w
Home Office Circular 8/1984 310w
Metropolitan Police 310w
Pornography 321w

Crime victims
Criminal injuries compensation 702w
Government grants 35-6w
Metropolitan Police 317-8w
Personal records 308w
Rape 317-8w
Women 316w

Crimes of violence
Health service staff 825w
Metropolitan Police 583w
Prison accommodation 318w
Sentencing 315-6w
Social problems 417-9
Women 583w
Young people (06.12.85) 533-87

Criminal damage
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 128w
Law enforcement 417-8
Metropolitan Police 582-3w

Criminal injuries compensation 36w, 701w
Crime victims 702w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 701w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Compensation 701-2w

Criminal investigation
Companies 463-4w
Crime 411, 412
Drug crimes 770-1w
Fraud 5-6w, 15w, 29w
Loan guarantee scheme 642-4w
Police relations with public 411

Criminal proceedings
Director of Public Prosecutions 13

Criminal Proceedings arising from Fraud Review Committee 165w

Criminal records
Disclosure of information (04.12.85) 310

Criminal Records Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 310

Criminal statistics
Crime 308-9w
Robbery 308w

Crofting
Road construction 566w
Scotland 566w
Severe weather payments 915

Crop spraying 383w, 481w
Glyphosate 383w, 481w
Scotland 383w

Cross border cooperation in Ireland 728w
Industry 1058
Terrorism 14

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 675-8

Crowd control 777w
Football 777w

Crown Agents
Property development 24w

Crown Agents (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
Ref to 2R Committee (10.12.85) 766

Crown immunity 257w, 346w
Hospitals (04.12.85) 310, 346w
Institution of Environmental Health Officers 257w

Crown Immunity Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 310

Crown prosecution service 14-15, 299-300w, 555w, (11.12.85) 1009-26
Conditions of service 14-15
Duty solicitors 15

Crown Prosecution Service (Transfer of Staff) Regulations 1985 (11.12.85) 1009-26

Crown suppliers 286w, 296w
Exports 286w
Fees & charges 286w

Cruelty to children 275-6w
Beckford, Jasmine 150-1
Child care 150-1
Child safety 752w
Children in care 618-20w
Government grants to local authorities 617-8w
Health services 606-7w
Information 496w
Local government social services 763w
Parents 826w
Personal records 275w
Social Services Inspectorate 496w

CR6 taxis 438w

Cumbernauld
Historic buildings 564w
Maternity services 381-2w
Regional aid 20w
Regional selective assistance 20w

Cumbernauld Development Corporation 564w
Land ownership & tenure 564w

Cumbernauld & Kilsyth District Council
Land ownership & tenure 564w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 929-37, 939, 942-3, 945, 1002
Questions
Block grant 472w, 672-3w
Block grant, Inner London boroughs 475w
Block grant, Rate limitation 473-4w
Dept of the Environment, Legislation 476-7w
Government assistance to industry, Copeland 372-3w
Local government expenditure 472-3w
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 475w, 553w
Local government expenditure, Inner city areas 293
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 23
Local government reform, Local government expenditure 475w
Members facilities, Facsimile transmission 299w
Rate precepts, Greater London Council 473-4w
Rate support grants 284, 475-6w
Rate support grants, Computers 809w

Curriculum 283w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 969
Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1170-2
Questions
Cable & Wireless, Privatisation 769-70w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 294
Married women half test, Retirement pensions 276-7w
National insurance, Departmental coordination 770w
Occupational pensions 745

Customs officers 770-1w
Manpower 770-1w

Customs & Excise
Evidence 591w

Cyanocobalamin
Drugs 490w
Limited list prescribing 490w

Cycling
Road safety 105-6w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1147-8
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 644, 645, 694, 703-4, 711
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 925
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 315
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 868
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 720, 730, 735
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 162
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 631
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 729w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1059
Business statement 1073
CERN, UK contributions 450w
Dental charges, NHS 617w
EC Poverty Programme 694w
Falkland Islands, Disclosure of information 165w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 709w
Falkland Islands, Foreign policy 165-6w
Falkland Islands, Government contracts 298
Health services finance, West Lothian Hospital 912
Historic Buildings Council, Tourism 137-8
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission, Skilled workers 281
International Ocean Drilling Programme 627w
International Ocean Drilling Programme, Departmental coordination 711-2w
Land drainage, Advisory services 668w
Land drainage, Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 484w
Transplant surgery, Human organs 617w
War Cabinet, Official secrets 572-3w

Darlington bypass 111w
Ministers domestic visits 111w

Dartford tunnel 105w, 110w
Construction 105w
Private sector 110w
Tenders 110w

Dartmouth
Guildhall 295w

Dartmouth Castle 295-6w
Old Battery 295-6w

Dartmouth Town Council 295w

Data Protection Act 1984
Inland Revenue 805w

Data Protection Registrar 805w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 30, 38-44, 98, 99
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 624, 634

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 734
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Government grants 193-4w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Income 270w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Manpower 727w
Agricultural research, Expenditure 727w
Coal mining, Redundancy 426w
Crop spraying, Scotland 383w
Educational finance, Engineering education 366w
Forestry Commission, Forests 49-50w
Forestry Commission, Public appointments 49w
Forestry Commission, Public meetings 47-9w

Forestry Commission, Public participation 910-11
Forestry Commission, Voluntary organisations 47w
Forests, Forestry grants 49w, 50w
Further education, Capital investment 706w
Glyphosate, Crop spraying 481w
Health services finance, Mid-Glamorgan Health Authority 154
Higher education, Education finance 366w
Higher education, Mergers 707w
Hill livestock allowances, Forestry grants 269w
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 488w
Hospital waiting lists, Mid-Glamorgan Health Authority 606
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Wales 609-10
Overseas aid 360w
Redundant mineworkers payments scheme 6-7w
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 599w
Severe weather payments, Wales 230-1w
Social security appeals tribunals, Public appointments 228w
Staff-student ratios, Universities 706-7w
Universities, Northern Ireland 731w

Davis, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1149-54, 1156, 1159

Day centres
Mental health community care 143-4w

Day nurseries
Government departments 786w
Scotland 731-2w

De Lorean
Government assistance to industry 1054-5

Deaf
Developing countries 586w
Overseas aid 586w

Deakins, Mr Eric
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 925
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 328, 344, 345-7
European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 860, 862, 876-7
European Council (05.12.85) 432-3
Oral question time point of order (05.12.85) 427
UNESCO (05.12.85) 452
Questions
Dept of Energy, Public appointments 166-7w
EC budget 337w
EC budget, Spain 337-8w
EC Finance Council, Greece 101w
EC reform, Science & technology 383-4w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Energy 166w, 167-8w
EURATOM, EC internal relations 358w
European monetary system, Treaty of Rome 36-7w
Foreign tourists, Air fares 25-6w
Hospital catering, Margarine 616w
Housing investment programmes, Waltham Forest 809w
Immigration controls, Pakistan 357w
Immigration controls, Temporary immigrants 462w
Intergovernmental Conference 324-6w
International Fund for Agricultural Development, UK contributions 17
Manpower Services Commission, Public appointments 724-5w
Motor industry, Pay settlements 286w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 423w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Nuclear non proliferation treaty 291-2w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 359w
Nuclear test ban 202w
Nuclear test ban, USSR 202w
Nuclear weapons tests, Information 202w
Parliament, Anniversaries 207w
Severe disablement allowance 605w
Supplementary benefits, Waltham Forest 615w
Water authorities, Water supply 171w

Death
Cancer 345w
Cervical cancer 401w
Hypothermia 608w
Injuries 211w
Kidney failure 533-4w
Kidney patients 533-4w
Leukaemia 382w
Motorways 301w, 572w
NHS & private practice 521-30w
Police 322w
Private patients 513-522w
Road accidents 404w
Tuberculosis 134-5w
Vaccination 818w
Whooping cough 820w

Death Certification & Coroners Departmental Committee 795w

Death rate
Coronary bypass operations 678w

Debt collection
Rents 353-4w
Scotland 651-2w

Debts
Africa 176w
Council housing 379w
English National Opera 367w
Yorkshire Water Authority 58w

Deep discounted stock
Interest charges 769w

Deeside
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 597w

Defective housing 260w, 446w, (06.12.85) 598-604, 734-6w, 735-7w, 737-9w, 739-40w, 809-10w
Building repairs 446w
Coventry 295
Reinstatement grants (06.12.85) 598-604

Defence
Capital investment 637w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 423w
Plutonium 423w
Publicity 711w

Defence Act 1842 277w

Defence attaches 590w
Diplomatic service 590w

Defence contracts 280-2w
Armed forces offices 781w
Rosyth dockyard 781w
Westland Helicopters 545w

Defence equipment 349-50w
Falkland Islands 350w

Defence expenditure
Gibraltar Dockyard 38w
NATO 782w

Defence housing 260w

Defence industries
Redundancy 150

Defence procurement 574w
Ammunition 207w

Defence research
Contracts for services 204-5w
Nuclear test ban 387w
USA (09.12.85) 623-35

Demolition
Council housing 379w
Factories 261w
Historic buildings 281-2

Demonstrations
RAF Greenham Common 319w

Dental amalgam 132w
Dentistry 132w
Health hazards 132w

Dental charges 755-6w
Dentistry 458w, 492-3w, 753w
NHS 617w

Dentistry
Appeals 682-3w
Dental amalgam 132w
Dental charges 458w, 492-3w, 753w
Hospital waiting lists 753w
Scotland 458w

Departmental coordination
Equal opportunities 33-4w
International Ocean Drilling Programme 711-2w
Literacy 420w
National insurance 770w
PAYE 770w
Rates & rating 4w
Research 241w

Departmental correspondence 230w, 357-8w, 377-9w
Alley, Eric 357-8w
Civil defence 357-8w

Departmental forms
Dept of Transport 428w
Motor vehicle testing 428w

Departmental publications
Anglo-Irish talks 1059
"Careers Bulletin" 229w
Chemical & biological warfare 322w
Housing stock 55w, 260w
Severe weather payments 603w

Departmental records 252w
Inland Revenue 252w

Dependants
Mothers 127w
Social security recipients 133w

Dept of Education & Science
Advertising 365w
Equal opportunities officers 363w
Redundancy 705w
Termination of employment 705w

Dept of Employment
Advertising 368w
Advertising agencies 537-8w
Child care 87w
Equal opportunities 81-2w, 82-3w, 83-4w, 87w
Equal opportunities officers 537w
Nairobi Conference 81-2w
Public appointments 83-4w
Small businesses 188w

Dept of Energy
Advertising 359-60w
Advertising agencies 749w
Equal opportunities 166-7w, 167-8w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 359w
Public appointments 166-7w
Public dividend capital 359w

Dept of Health & Social Security 749
Advertising 402w
Advertising agencies 125-6w
Alternative medicine 596-7w
Equal opportunities 534-5w
Management consultants 816w
Manpower 126-7w
Nairobi Conference 534-5w

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices
Administrative delays 271w
Civil service manpower 271w, 272-4w
Criminal damage 128w
Deeside 597w
Security guards 128w
Wolverhampton 272-4w

Dept of the Environment
Advertising 375w
Advertising agencies 774-6w
Equal opportunities 60-1w, 61-2w
Equal opportunities officers 373-4w
Legislation 476-7w

Nairobi Conference 61-2w
Public appointments 60-1w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Equal opportunities 17-8w, 18-9w, 251w
Equal opportunities officers 433-4w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 373w
Nairobi Conference 17-8w, 19w, 251w
Public dividend capital 373w
Soft loans 169w

Dept of Transport
Advertising 391w
Advertising agencies 656-8w
Departmental forms 428w
Equal opportunities 115w
Equal opportunities officers 388w
London docklands railway 389-90w
Nairobi Conference 115w
Small businesses 9

Derby Road
Bootle 111w

Derbyshire County Council 702-3w

Derelict land
Greater London 262w
Inner city areas 262w, 290-1
Land acquisition 289-90
Land reclamation 374w
West Derbyshire District Council 670w

Derelict land grants 59w, 287
Glanford 288
Government grants 287
Inner city areas 287
Scunthorpe 288

Design
Trident 97w
Trident missiles 97w, 98w
Trident submarines 97w, 98w

Detection rates
Metropolitan Police 307w

Detention centres
Prison staff 645-6w
Violence 645w
Young offenders 645w

Developing countries
Deaf 586w
Food 17

Development of Tourism Act 1969 180w
Companies 180w

Devonport Dockyard (02.12.85) 27-106, 205-6w, 545w, 780-1w
Fixed assets 205-6w
Management 812w
Privatisation 812w
Shipbuilding 206w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Gartcosh Steelworks, Standing Order No 10 applications (12.12.85) 1077
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 901
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 155-6
Scottish Affairs Select Committee (11.12.85) 1008
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 907
Regional development grants, Garscadden 431-2w
Regional selective assistance, Garscadden 431w

DHSS Circular HC (85)19 603-4w

Dial-a-ride
Motor vehicles 424

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Employment opportunities, Western Europe 147-8
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Local government reform 288-9
Homicide 316w
Homicide, Convictions 28w
Road accidents, Statistics 802w

Dicks, Mr Terry
Questions
British Airports Authority, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 555-7w
Holy Trinity Church, Paddington 299w

Diet & disease
Cholesterol 128w

Diethylene glycol 483w
Wines 483w

Diets
Family income supplements 132w

Difficult to let properties 64-78w
Council housing 64-78w

Diplomatic service
Civil service recruitment 248w
Defence attaches 590w
Women 348w

Diplomatic service education allowances 590w
Expenditure 456w

Director of Public Prosecutions (11.12.85) 1009-26
Criminal proceedings 13
Fraud 812w

Directors
Companies (06.12.85) 532

DIR75/319/EEC 596w

DIR77/489/EEC 586w

DIR/79/409/EEC 57-8w, 553w

DIR80/778/EEC 466w

Disabled Persons Act 1981 779w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985/86 1R (04.12.85) 308-9

Disadvantaged
Crime 314w
Fuel aid 603w
Health services 492w
Northern Ireland 1054-5

Disaster relief
Air Force 16-7
Central America 16
Columbia 24w
EC action 18
Ethiopia 16-7, 306w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 18
Research finance 17-8

Disciplinary proceedings 12
Lloyds of London 12

Disclosure of information
Criminal records (04.12.85) 310
Falkland Islands 165w
Health Service Commissioner 682w
Lloyds of London 13
Local government 260-1w, (04.12.85) 312
New towns (04.12.85) 310
Occupational pensions 608-9w, 683-4w

Disease control 1-2w, 256w, 395w
AIDS 1-2w
Tuberculosis 395w

Dismissal
Prison staff 645-6w

Dispersal prisons 163w

Distillers Company
Mergers 1063

Distinction certificates 283w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 283w

District councils 268-9w, 330-4w

District health authorities
Capital investment 141-2w
Community health services 400w
Economic planning 399w
Foreign patients 118-26w
Greater London 396-8w
Hospital beds 133w
Hospitals 133w
Income 143w
Lancashire 489-90w
NHS finance 615, 748
Wales 154w

Divorce
Clergy 615-6

Divorced people 788w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 199-203
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 237
Questions
Redundant mineworkers payments scheme 6w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Questions
Amenity beds 499-506w
Cancer, Medical treatments 751-2
Cervical cancer, Death 401w
Cervical cancer, Screening 490-1w, 535w, 680-1w
Cervical cancer, Testing 614-5w
Children, Nutrition & health 610-1w
Coronary bypass operations 678w
Coronary bypass operations, Death rate 678w
Coronary bypass operations, Hospital waiting lists 602w
Cruelty to children, Child safety 752w
District health authorities, Capital investment 141-2w
District health authorities, Hospital beds 133w
District health authorities, Hospitals 133w
Educational health services 611w
Fraud, Greater London 426w
Health Service Commissioner, Disclosure of information 682w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985" 142w, 497w, 498w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985" Costs 142w, 497-8w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985", HMSO 497w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985", Production 497w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985", Press releases 498w
Health service staff, Manpower 612w
Health service staff, Pay 613w, 679w
Health services, Greater London 615w
Health services, Speeches 276w
Health services, Voluntary organisations 612w
Health Services Board, NHS & private practice 678w
Health services finance, Bloomsbury Health Authority 605w
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 610w
Hip replacements, Surgery 610w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland health & social services boards 45-6w
Hospital beds, Scottish health boards 47-8w
Hospital beds, Wales 42w
Hospital patients, Research 612w
Hospital waiting lists, Out-patients 491w
Hospitals, Construction 404-8w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland health & social services boards 44w, 306-8w
Hospitals, Scottish health boards 46-8w, 54w
Hospitals, Wales 42w, 44w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 678w
Management consultants, Dept of Health & Social Security 816w
NHS, Capital investment 613w, 614w
NHS, Expenditure 679w
NHS, Housing 403w
NHS, Management 756-7
NHS, Spectacles 610w
NHS finance, Northern Ireland health & social services boards 45-6w
NHS finance, Wales 43w
NHS & private practice 529-33w

NHS & private practice, Death 521-30w
Prescriptions, Chemists shops 496w
Primary health care 677-8w
Primary health care, Inner city areas 767w
Private patients, Out patients 498-500w, 505-6w, 506-14w
Private patients, Pay beds 513-522w
Regional health authorities, Cost effectiveness 611w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 673-6w, 676-7w
Scottish health boards, Expenditure 53-4w
Social security recipients, Nursing homes 142w
Supplementary benefits, Camden 133w
Surgery, Infectious diseases 678-9w

Dockyard Services Bill 1985/86
2R (02.12.85) 27-106
Money res* (02.12.85) 106

Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 27-8

Dockyards
Armed forces civilians 206-8w
Contracts 386w
Pensions 206w
Personnel 206-8w
Privatisation (02.12.85) 27-106, 206w, 545w, 781w
Shareholders 386-7w

Doctors
Medical malpractice (06.12.85) 531

Dog Fighting (Penalties) Bill 1985/86
1R (09.12.85) 638

Dog licences 551w
Northern Ireland 787w, 788w

Dogs (09.12.85) 628

Domestic electrical appliances (06.12.85) 588-97

Domestic rates
Scotland 688-9w

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough 479w
Intervention stocks 479w

Donors
Publicity 617w

Dormand, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 461, 474-6
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 166-71, 174
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 261
Questions
Cycling, Road safety 105-6w
Government grants, British Film Institute 620-1
Unemployment, Northern region 77-8w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1094, 1130-4, 1152
European Council (05.12.85) 437
Questions
Urban development corporations 292-3

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Canada) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 409

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Finland) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 409

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ivory Coast) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 409

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Norway) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 409

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Soviet Union) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 409

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1080
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 27, 30, 31, 47, 56-61, 63, 64
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 778, 834-5, 842
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 901-2
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 160-1
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 627
Questions
Oil prices, North Sea oil 760
Teachers, Scotland 687w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Debates etc
Law Reform (Parent & Child) (Scotland) Bill, 1R (11.12.85) 928
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 354-9, 360, 361, 363, 364, 366, 370, 383
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 158
Questions
Agricultural research 744-5w
High Court, Scotland 652w
Prison overcrowding, Scotland 691-2w
School closures, Scotland 336-7w
Teaching hospitals, West Lothian Hospital 912

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Calder Valley, Motorways 660w
Civil defence, Publicity 312w

Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 311

Drift nets 697w

Drinking & driving
Christmas 112w, 429w
Licensing laws 417
Publicity 112w
Scotland 651w

Driving
Road accidents 301w

Driving instruction
Ambulance services 614w
Examinations 430-2w

Driving tests
Basildon 6
Motorways 6, 388-9w
Speed limits 301w
Waiting lists 7

Drug abuse
Acupuncture 339w
Falkland Islands 298
Government grants 39w
Gwynedd 39w
Health education 420-1
Methadone 339w

Drug crimes
Convictions 26-7w
Criminal investigation 770-1w
Equipment 652w
Income 420-1
International cooperation 814w
Prison sentences 26-7w
Proceeds of crime 320w, 795w
Public appointments 701w
Trials 554-5w
United Nations 814w

Drug industry
Foreign investment in UK 274-5w, 286w
USA 274-5w, 286w

Drug rehabilitation centres 610w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 421, 610w
Hemel Hempstead 610w

Drug research
Alternative medicine 595w

Drug seizures 554-5w
Police informers 554-5w

Drugs
Balance of trade 251w
Cyanocobalamin 490w
Family doctors 756w
Licensing 685-6w
Orovite 199w
Parallel imports 601w, 683w, 756w
Patents 434w, 557-8w
Pricing 273w
Scotland 797-8w
Security 795-6w

Drunkenness
Police custody 415

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1047-8
Bangladesh, Immigration applications 814w, 815w
Hospital closures, Inner city areas 748
Immigration applications, Indian subcontinent 815w
PAYE, Income tax 805w
Regional health authorities, Housing 603-4w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 629
Questions
Computer industry, South Yorkshire 190w
Northern Ireland Government, Ulster Unionists 1063-4

Dunbar, Rony Kevin 555w
Trials 555w

Dundee District Council
Travelling people 916-7

Dunn, Mr Bob, *Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Expenditure 568-9w
Assisted places scheme, Parents 788w
Cost per pupil, Hertfordshire 364w
Education support grants 223w
Educational institutions, Research finance 269w
Educational standards, Research 364w
Free school meals, State education 703w
Handicapped pupils 364-5w
Local education authorities, Greater London 158w
Poundswick School, Members correspondence 455w
Pupils, Greater London 8-10w
Pupil-teacher ratios 7-8w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Buckinghamshire 285w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Hertfordshire 285w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 285w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Tameside 704w
School administration, Judgments 161w
School buildings, Aids for handicapped 628w
School leaving 704w
School leaving, Educational qualifications 704-5w
School meals, State education 703w
School population, Leicestershire 225-6w
Special educational needs 454w, 705w
Special educational needs, Children 13w
Special educational needs, Expenditure 223w
Special educational needs, Handicapped pupils 365w, 630-4w
Special educational needs, Information 228w
Special educational needs, Judgments 628w
Special educational needs, Pupils 629-32w
Teachers, Pay 363-4w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates, etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 650, 655, 657, 686-8
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1208
Questions
Cruelty to children, Health services 606-7w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Rape 162-3w
Tuberculosis, Disease control 395w
Tuberculosis, Notifiable diseases 394-5w
Tuberculosis, Vaccination 395-6w

Durham
Bishops 618
Redundant churches 618
Regional development grants 432w
Regional selective assistance 432w

Duty solicitors
Crown prosecution service 15

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates, etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 342
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 866-8, 881, 882
European Council (05.12.85) 436
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1067
Artificial sweeteners 660-1w
Aspartame, Epilepsy 685w
British Gas Corporation, External financing limits 291w
Channel crossing, Construction 104w
EC reform, Luxembourg Summit 708w
Fraud investigation group, Finance 12-3
Job centres, Job start scheme 184w
Salesmanship, Employment 625w
Shops Bill (HL) 1985-86, Sunday trading 309w

Dysentery 682w

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Questions
Members correspondence 36w
Veterinary services, Lasswade 687w, 914

Ear disorders
Wales 445w

Ear nose & throat 445w, 754w

Early retirement
Job release scheme 367w
Local government staff 376w

Early warning systems
Costs 545w
Military aircraft 545-6w

Earnings rules
Unemployment benefits 616w

Earthquakes
Research finance 205w

Easdale Island Shipping Line (05.12.85) 522

East London river crossing 105w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 453-4
Questions
Crime, Criminal investigation 411
Manchester Airport, Privatisation 21
Wages councils, Women 180w

EC
Regional grants and loans (11.12.85) 1027-38

EC accession
Portugal (04.12.85) 313-53, (10.12.85) 859-91
Spain (04.12.85) 313-53, (10.12.85) 859-91

EC action
Battery hens 726-7w
Disaster relief 18
Exhaust emissions 259w
Fishing quotas 482-3w
Import duties 355w
Multifibre arrangement 434-5w
Sea pollution 100w
Small businesses 420w
Sugar (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Agricultural Council
Ministerial statements (11.12.85) 922-8

EC Agriculture Council 663w

EC budget 337w
Portugal 337-8w
Spain 337-8w
UK contributions 653w

EC Cons Doc 9506/85 (11.12.85) 1027-38

EC Cons Doc 9563/84 (11.12.85) 1027-38

EC countries
Coal mining 233-42w
Employment 799-800w
Manufacturing industries 233-42w
Plutonium 589-90w
Self-employed 799-800w
Textile industry 85w

EC Draft 11172/84/1 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 11172/84/2 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 11172/84/3 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 11172/84/4 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 7832/85 (03.12.85) 165, (12.12.85) 1179

EC Draft 7948/84 (09.12.85) 719-36

EC Draft 8253/85 (11.12.85) 1027-38

EC Draft 8687/85 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 8688/85/1 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 8688/85/2 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 8688/85/3 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 8688/85/4 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 8781/85 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 9178/85 (02.12.85) 107-27

EC Draft 9193/84 (03.12.85) 165, (12.12.85) 1179

EC economic policy
EC reform 419-20w

EC Environment Council 259w

EC external trade
Hong Kong 435w

EC Finance Council 806w
Greece 101w

EC grants & loans
Agriculture 667-8w
Animal husbandary 42w
Clothing industry 626w
European Regional Development Fund 559w
Greece 101w
Textile industry 640-1w
Webbers Yard 171-2w

EC internal relations
EURATOM 358w
Nuclear safety 358w

EC Poverty Programme 694w

EC reform
EC economic policy 419-20w
Environmental policy 383-4w
European Assembly 419w
Luxembourg Summit 708w
Science & technology 383-4w
Voting methods 419w

EC trade
Clothing 16w
Textiles 16w

EC Transport Council
Air transport 105w
Coastal shipping 108w

Ecology
Greater London Council 292w
Local government reform 292w

Economic growth
Employment opportunities 148
Merthyr Tydfil 613
Rhymney Valley 613
Wales 612-3, 614

Economic planning
District health authorities 399w

Economic policy
Autumn statement 758
Employment opportunities 611-2
Enterprise allowance scheme 146
Unemployment 147

Economic regions
Employment level 721-2w
Tourism 723-4w

Economic sanctions
Front line states 15-6
South Africa 15-6

Economic situation (12.12.85) 1079-164
Interest rates 148
Northern Ireland 1055-6

Economic & Social Committee 203w
Public appointments 203w
Travelling expenses 203-4w

Edinburgh
Exceptional needs payments 492w

Edinburgh Western Relief Road
2R (04.12.85) 353-87

Education
Armed forces dependents 544w
Expenditure 789w
Privatisation 150

Education Act 1981 223w, 364-5w

Education Science & Arts Select Committee
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 622

Education support grants 223w, (05.12.85) 459-83

Education & industry
Higher education 157w

Education (Amendment) Bill 1985-86
2R (05.12.85) 459-83
Money res* (05.12.85) 483

Educational buildings
Capital investment 449w
Property transfer 449w

Educational finance 706w
Buckinghamshire 364w
Civil servants secondment 456w
Engineering education 366w
Higher education 366w
Local government revenue 705-6w
Manpower Services Commission 225w
Mergers 707w
Polytechnics 159-62w
Technical education 366w

Educational health services 611w

Educational institutions
Research finance 283w

Educational qualifications
School leaving 704-5w
Scottish Certificate of Education 199w, 200w
Scottish Certificate of Technical & Vocational Education Council 52w
Social workers 679-80w
Vocational education 450w

Educational standards
Research 364w

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Advertising, Welsh Office 353w
Animal husbandry, Wales 42w
Capital investment, Wales 609, 654-6w
Coal, South Wales 607
Coal mine closures, Wales 610
Coastal protection, Cardiff 446w
Coking coal, Wales 606-7
Company liquidations, Wales 447w
District health authorities, Wales 154w
Economic growth, Merthyr Tydfil 613
Economic growth, Wales 612-3
Economic policy, Employment opportunities 611-2
Employment opportunities, Cardigan 445w
Employment opportunities, South Wales 610-1
Equal opportunities, Welsh Office 42-3w, 43-4w
"Faith in the City" 614
Hotel & catering industry, Wales 305w
Housing Corporation, Wales 155w
Housing & elderly, Arfon 155w
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 153w
Local government finance, Wales 608-9

Local government staff, Wales 230w
Location of industry, South Wales 610
National Coal Board, Wales 447w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Wales 609-10
Pigs, Wales 445w
Planning appeals, Wales 155-7w
Quangos, Wales 232w
Severe weather payments, Wales 230-1w, 699w
Unemployment, Ogmore 613-4
Unemployment, South Wales 612
Unemployment, Wales 154-6w, 611, 612, 613, 614
Welsh Development Agency, Expenditure 445w
Welsh Office, Public appointments 41w
Youth unemployment, Wales 612

Efficiency scrutinies 574-5w
Government departments 574-5w
NHS 825-6w

Eggar, Mr Tim, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates on
Pike, Malcolm (05.12.85) 526-30
Questions
Achille Lauro, Hijacking 99w
Advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 384w
Argentina, Visas 813w
Bangladesh, Immigration applications 814w, 815w
Diplomatic service, Defence attaches 590w
Diplomatic service education allowances 590w
Diplomatic service education allowances, Expenditure 456w
Equal opportunities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 37w
Equal opportunities officers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 383w
European Communities institutions, Civil servants secondment 456w
Falkland Islands, Civil aviation 814w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 456w
Falkland Islands, Fishing limits 385w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Appropriation accounts 637w
Gibraltar, Pensions 38w
Hungary, Visas 637w
Immigration applications, Indian subcontinent 815w
International Organisations, UK contributions 37-8w
International Year of Peace 37w, 38w
Libyan Arab Republic, Foreign policy 814w
Nuclear weapons tests, Seismic monitoring 636w
Peace, Government grants 347-8w
Plutonium, Exports 589-90w
UN agencies, UK contributions 813w
United Nations, Drug crimes 814w
USSR, Embassies 814w
USSR, Sequestration of assets 718-20w
Women, Diplomatic service 348w

El Salvador
International Planned Parenthood Association 361-2w

Elderly
Hypothermia 608w, 754
Registered Homes Act 1984 495w
Residential care 599w, 608w
Stoke on Trent 754

Electoral reform
Proportional representation 1062

Electorate
Hampshire 464-5w

Electrical safety
Private Members motions (06.12.85) 588-97

Electricity disconnections
Pensioners 426w

Electromagnetic interference
Nuclear war 316-7w

Electronics industry
Government assistance to industry 625-6w

Embassies
Export promotion 636w
Personnel 814w
USSR 814w

Emerald Club 297-8w
Asbestos stripping 297-8w

Emergencies (04.12.85) 310

Emergency centres 29-30w
Civil defence 29-30w
Government grants to local authorities 29-30w, 335-6w

Emergency planning 246w, 313w, 335-6w, 351w, 465w, 547-8w
Art works 465w
Civil defence 313w, 547-8w
Civil servants 351w
Local authorities 313w

Emigration
Jews 590w

Employees contributions
National insurance contributions 495w

Employment 177w
Basildon 184w
Building industry 458w, 468w
Clothing industry 229w
EC countries 799-800w
Ethnic minorities 800-1w
Lancashire 177-8w
Manufacturing industries 241w
Portsmouth 545w
Road construction 243w
Salesmanship 625w
Scunthorpe 59w
Social security benefits 147
Statistics 368-71w
Supplementary benefits 756
Textile industry 229w

Employment by sector 78-80w
Scotland 78-80w

Employment discrimination
Ethnic minorities 140-1, 536w, 725w
Racial discrimination 88w
Smoking 126w
Young people 164w

Employment level
Autumn statement 147
Clothing industry 229-30w
Economic regions 721-2w
International Labour Organisation 141-2
National insurance contributions 367-8w
North West region 539-40w

Employment opportunities 4w, 439-42w
Business expansion scheme 144-5
Canary Wharf 262-3w
Cardigan 445w
Channel crossing 104w
Economic growth 148
Economic policy 611-2
Enterprise allowance scheme 146
Ethnic minorities 140-1
Garrcosh 909
Glanford 86-7w
Glasgow 141
Government assistance 613
Government assistance to industry 141
Government grants 19-20w, 287-91w
Historic Buildings Council 137-8
Hotel & catering industry 328w
"Lifting the Burden White Paper" 580-1w
Local enterprise agencies 143, 144-5
London docklands 262-3w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 612
Performing arts 192w
School leaving 141
Scotland 690-1w
Scunthorpe 86-7w
South Wales 610-1
Textile industry 168w
Tourist industry 137, 143
Wages councils 180w
Western Europe 147-8

Employment protection 81w
Takeovers 81w

Employment Protection (Variation of Limits) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 457

Employment schemes 325-6w
Glanford 86w
Government grants 439-42w
Lambeth 640w
Manpower 641w

Employment Select Committee (06.12.85) 597

Employment statistics
Women 167w

Empty housing 60w
Armed forces housing 279w
Hampshire 64w
Kirklees District Council 468-9w

Empty property
Government grants to local authorities 261w

Energy conservation
NHS 603w

Energy consumption
Petrol 115w

Energy efficiency 638w

Energy efficiency campaign 638w

Energy efficiency year 638w, 808-9w
Companies 638w

Energy prices
Severe weather payments 754

Energy Select Committee (06.12.85) 597

Engineering education
Educational finance 366w

English National Opera 367w
Debts 367w
Government grants 367w

English sewing (11.12.85) 1039-46
Regional development grants (11.12.85) 1039-46

English Tourist Board
Government grants 179w

Enterprise allowance scheme 91-2w
Companies 184w, 580w
Economic policy 146
Employment opportunities 146
Training 146, 184-5w

Enterprise zones
Chatham Dockyard 670-1w

Entry clearances
Astles, Bob 651w

Environment
Capital investment 669w

Environment protection
Regional planning & development 709-10w

Environmental health
Hospital safety 601w

Environmental impact assessment 262w, 430w
Canary Wharf 262w
Channel crossing 430w

Environmental policy
EC reform 383-4w

Environmental Pollution Royal Commission 294-5w

Epilepsy
Artificial sweeteners 685w
Aspartame 685w

Equal opportunities 33w
Civil service 337w
Civil service recruitment 592-3w
Departmental coordination 33-4w
Dept of Employment 81-2w, 82-3w, 83-4w, 87w
Dept of Energy 166-7w, 167-8w
Dept of Health & Social Security 534-5w
Dept of the Environment 60-1w, 61-2w

Dept of Trade & Industry 17-8w, 18-9w, 251w
Dept of Transport 115w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w, 24w, 37w, 348w
Home Office 34w, 316w, 321w
Ministry of Defence 592-3w
Public appointments 724w
Statistics 34w, 43w
Treasury 103-4w
Welsh Office 42-3w, 43-4w

Equal Opportunities Commission 33w
Finance 36w
Manpower 36w
Nairobi Conference 33w

Equal opportunities officers 352w, 356w, 363w, 373-4w, 383w, 388w, 433-4w, 537w
Civil service recruitment 383w, 388w
Dept of Education & Science 363w
Dept of Employment 537w
Dept of the Environment 373-4w
Dept of Trade & Industry 433-4w
Dept of Transport 388w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 383w
Home Office 356w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 352w

Equipment
Catering 296w
Drug crimes 652w

Esal Commodities 103w
Banking supervision 103w
Company liquidations 19w
Johnson Matthey 103w

Espionage
Israel 324w

Ethiopia
Disaster relief 16-7, 306w
Food aid from UK 306w

Ethnic groups
Youth training scheme 641-2w

Ethnic minorities
Broadcasting licences 581-2w
Employment 800-1w
Employment discrimination 140-1, 536w, 725w
Employment opportunities 140-1
Music 808w
Prison staff 317w

Ethnic monitoring 799w
Unemployment 799w

EURATOM
EC internal relations 358w

Europe
Air fares 109w

European Assembly 573w
EC reform 419w

European Charter of Local Self-Government 422w

European Communities
Financial services 151

European Communities institutions
Civil servants secondment 456w
Financial institutions 590-1w

European Communities institutions
Civil servants secondment 456w
Financial institutions 590-1w

European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL) 1985/86
2R (04.12.85) 313-53
Rem stages (10.12.85) 859-91

EC law
Alternative medicine 596w
Architects 788-9w
Birds 57-8w
Gibraltar 590w
Sex discrimination 87w
Transport of animals 586w
Water pollution 171w
Water supply 59w

European Council
Ministerial statements 323w, (05.12.85) 429-39

European Court of Human Rights
Harman, Harriet 346-7w

European Legislation Etc Select Committee (05.12.85) 522

European monetary system
Treaty of Rome 36-7w

European Regional Development Fund (11.12.85) 1027-38
EC grants & loans 559w

European Social Fund
Industrial training 640-1w
Textile industry 626w
UK repayments from EC budget 725-6w

Evennett, Mr David
Debates etc
St Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead (12.12.85) 1183-4
Questions
Civil defence, Rescue services 312w
Local government social services, Social Services Inspectorate 752w
Natural gas, Norway 292w
Social workers 680w
Social workers, Educational qualifications 679-80w
Sports sponsorship, Tobacco industry 467w
Tobacco advertising 683w

Evidence
Customs & Excise 591w
"Faith in the City" 299w
Tachographs 313w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 920
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 159
Questions
Business statement 1070
Falkland Islands, Government contracts 188-9w
Scotland, Prime Minister domestic visits 708w
Social security benefits, Severe weather payments 600w
Teachers, Scotland 688w, 905

Examinations
Driving instruction 430-2w
Industrial disputes 687w

Exceptional needs payments
Edinburgh 492w
Furniture 127w
Manpower 126-7w
Social security benefits rules 127w

Exchange rates
Manufacturing industries 1061
Raw materials imports 1060

Exercise Brave Defender 780w
NATO bases 780w
Western Isles 780w

Exhaust emissions
EC action 259w

Exhibitions
Association of Accounting Technicians 807-8w

Explosions
Abbeystead pumping station 540w

Export controls
USA 168w, 373w

Export credit
Nigeria 15w

Export licensing
Plutonium 347w

Export promotion
Computer industry 625-6w
Embassies 636w
West Midlands County Council 286-7w

Exports
Cement 552w
Crown suppliers 286w
France 607
Horses 660w
Plutonium 347w, 589-90w
Sheep meat 727w
South Africa 14w

External financing limits
British Gas Corporation 291w
Water authorities 58-9w

Extradition
Law reform 314-5w

Eye disorders (04.12.85) 312
Contact lenses 609w
Research finance 627-8w

Eyes
Medical research (04.12.85) 312

Eyre, Sir Reginald
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 988-9

Facsimile transmission
Members facilities 299w

Factories
Demolition 261w

Factory closures
British Rail (10.12.85) 892
Gartcosh 910
Gartcosh Steelworks 690w
Iron & steel industry 690w, (12.12.85) 1077
Ravenscraig Steelworks 906

Factory Inspectorate
North West region 540w

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 166
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 931, 953, 955, 957, 975-8
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 920
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 159
UNESCO (05.12.85) 456
Questions
Business statement 445
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 908
Mergers, Distillers Company 1063

"Fairer & Faster Route to Major Road Construction" 115w

Faith in the City 288, 299w, 424, 614, (11.12.85) 929-1007
Evidence 299w

Falkland Islands
Civil aviation 814w
Defence equipment 350w
Disclosure of information 165w
Drug abuse 298
Fisheries 456w, 587w, 709w
Fishing limits 385w
Foreign policy 165-6w
Government contracts 188-9w, 298
Unfair dismissal 188-9w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 859, 860, 861, 865, 869, 874-6 878, 881, 887, 890
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 184-7, 196
Questions
Costs, Weekly Information Bulletin 619
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 906

Families
Housing benefits 750
Scotland 733-4w

Family benefits
Child support 252-4w

Family courts 275w

Family credit 173w

Family doctors
Drugs 756w
Information 136w
Prosthetics 756w

Family income
Average earnings 173-4w
Personal tax allowances 173-4w
Poverty 604w
Social security benefits uprating 755

Family income supplements
Diets 132w

Family practitioner committees 136w
Cervical cancer 680-1w

Family practitioner services 274w

Farmers
Severe weather payments 100w

Farr, Sir John
Debates etc
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 508-9, 517
Questions
Local government staff, Leicester 152
National Weights & Measures Laboratory, Pattern approval 13-4w
Security, Northern Ireland 1059

Fasih, Mohammed 794w
Political refugees 794w

Fast reactors 359w
France 804w
International cooperation 804w
Manpower 639w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 639w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 476-7
Questions
Criminal damage, Law enforcement 417-8
Family income, Poverty 604w
Housing investment programmes, Housing capital allocations 257w
Housing investment programmes, Yorkshire & Humberside 552w
Infant mortality, Leeds Eastern Health Authority 130w
Infant mortality, Leeds Western Health Authority 620w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 552w
Regional aid, Yorkshire & Humberside 717w
Regional development grants; Yorkshire & Humberside 716-7w
Regional selective assistance, Yorkshire & Humberside 19w
Trade unions, Political levy 186w
Youth training scheme, Leeds 641-2w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Questions
UN Relief & Works Agency, UK contributions 21-2w

Favell, Mr Tony
Questions
Council housing, Housing construction 294
English National Opera, Debts 367w
Manchester Airport, Manchester City Council 10
NHS, Expenditure 598w
Public order policing, Manchester University 420
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 750

Fawcett Library 622

Fees & charges
Civil Aviation Authority 245w
Crown suppliers 286w
Light dues 4-5
Nursing homes 142w
Taxis 773w

Felinheli bypass 41-2w
Road construction 41-2w

Fenner, Mrs Peggy, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 719-22, 731-5
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Government grants 99-100w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Manpower 727w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Wales 192-3w
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Agricultural research 804w
Artificial sweeteners 660-1w
Badgers, Clouts Wood 487w
Badgers, Pest control 488w
Battery hens, EC action 726-7w
Bovine tuberculosis, Cattle 487w
Brucellosis, Cattle 487w
Cheese, Food imports 251w
Common agricultural policy, Marginal land 804w
Food Act 1984, Slaughterhouses 479-80w
Glyphosate, Crop spraying 481w
Grazing land, Norfolk Broads 484-5w
Hinckley Point B, Nuclear power stations 726w
Horses, Exports 660w
Internal drainage boards, Nature conservation 484w
Land drainage, Advisory services 668w
Land drainage, Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 484w
Mink, Licensing 726w
Regional land drainage committees, Public appointments 663-8w
Slaughterhouses, Animal welfare 726w
Soil Survey of England & Wales 478w
Soil Survey of England & Wales, Research finance 479w
Straw burning 268w
Transport of animals, EC law 586w
Wines, Agricultural surpluses 486w
Wines, Austria 268-9w
Wines, Diethylene glycol 483w

Ferries
Scotland (05.12.85) 522

Anniversaries
Parliament 207w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1171, 1172-4, 1178
Questions
Battery hens, EC action 726-7w
Church Commissioners, Investment 617-8
Clergy, Divorce 616
Hospital waiting lists, Consultants 401w
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 20-1
Regional selective assistance, Birkenhead 807w
Uranium, Production 279-80w

Film Industry
Arts finance 622
British Film Institute 620-1
Finance 621
Government grants 767-8w

Financial institutions
European Communities institutions 590-1w
Investment 717w

Financial services 590w
European Communities 151
Gibraltar 590w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Pharmacists, NHS 598w
Special health authorities 407-18w

Fire prevention
Air safety 304w

Fire regulations
Hostels 356w

Fire resistant materials 763-5w
Uniforms 763-5w

Fire services 165w
Greater London Council 811w
Local government reform 811w

Fires
National Freight Company 725w
Private Members bills (04.12.85) 308-12

Fish
Liverpool Bay 352w
Mercury pollution 352w

Fish conservation
Scotland 697w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 475
UNESCO (05.12.85) 452
Questions
Air force, Disaster relief 16-7
Church Commissioners, Expenditure 617
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 282

Fisheries
Falkland Islands 456w, 587w, 709w
Income 587w

Fishery protection
North Sea 587-8w

Fishing catches
Herring 566w

Fishing limits
Falkland Islands 385w
Japan 587w

Fishing quotas
EC action 482-3w
Herring 565-6w

Fishing vessels
Licensing 482-3w, 588w
Shipping safety (04.12.85) 309

Fixed assets 205-6w
Devonport Dockyard 205-6w
Rosyth Dockyard 205-6w

Fixed penalties
Homicide 314w

Flags
Northern Ireland 729w

Flags of convenience
Shipping registration 773-4w

Flags & Emblems (Display) Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 729w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1050
Railway transport, Northern region 5
Social security recipients, Rates & rating 599w
St. Pancras to Sheffield railway line 109w
Teachers, Pay 759
Unemployment 139-40

Flats
Construction 448w
Right to buy 258w

Fletcher, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 311
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 359-64, 372, 377
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 163
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 631
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Manufactured goods 906-7

Flood control
Bridge of Allan 691w

Food
Developing countries 17
Supplementary benefits 132w

Food Act 1984 479-80w
Slaughterhouses 479-80w

Food Additives & Contaminants Committee 660-1w

Food aid from UK
Ethiopia 306w

Food exports
South Africa 768w

Food hygiene
Horses 660w

Food imports
Cheese 251w

Food subsidies
Butter 486w

Food surpluses
Butter 485-6w

Fookes, Miss Janet
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 44-7, 51
Questions
Devonport Dockyard 780-1w

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 28, 68-73, 99
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 999
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 626
Questions
Church of England, Inner city areas 288

Football
Crowd control 777w
Hooliganism 263-4w, 319w
Prime Minister domestic visits 708w

Football Association 263-4w

Football League 708w

Footwear
Prices 85-6w

Foreign investment in UK
Drug industry 274-5w, 286w
Northern Ireland 1055
Systime UK 558w
USA 1055

Foreign languages 539w
Wages Inspectorate 539w

Foreign patients
District health authorities 118-26w
NHS charges 118-26w

Foreign policy
Argentina 423
Falkland Islands 165-6w
Libyan Arab Republic 814w
Reagan, President 166w

Foreign tourists
Air fares 25-6w
Australia 179w
New Zealand 179w
Visas 311w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Advertising 384w
Appropriation accounts 637w
Disaster relief 18
Equal opportunities 23w, 24w, 37w, 348w
Equal opportunities officers 383w
Nairobi Conference 37w

Forensic science
Leicester University 315w

Forestry (02.12.85) 128-36

Forestry Commission
Forests 49-50w
Public appointments 49w
Public meetings 47-9w
Public participation 910-11
Voluntary organisations 47w
Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 459w

Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committees 47w, 563-4w

Forestry grant scheme 563-4w

Forestry grants 50w, 269w
Forests 49w, 50w
Hill livestock allowances 269w

Forestry (Modification of Felling Restrictions) Regulations 1985 (09.12.85) 736

Forests
Conservation 910-11
Forestry Commission 49-50w
Forestry grants 49w, 50w
Public meetings 47-9w
Tree planting 50w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1091, 1146-7
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 544-50, 555, 557, 560, 561

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Scottish Affairs Select Committee (11.12.85) 1008
Questions
Building societies, Legislation 354w
Business statement 1070
Flood control, Bridge of Allan 691w
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 910
Severe weather payments, Tenant farmers 914-5
Teachers, Scotland 905

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 315, 316-7, 320, 331, 336-42
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 859-62, 867, 872, 875, 884, 886-7
European Council (05.12.85) 438
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 929, 936
Questions
Independent prosecution service, Costs 299-300w
Police relations with public, Haringey 425-6
Small businesses, Bureaucracy 183w

Fossil fuelled power stations
Northern Ireland 1054

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 331, 349-51, 353
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 861, 883, 890
European Regional Development Fund (11.12.85) 1027, 1028, 1036, 1037, 1038
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 160
UNESCO (05.12.85) 449
Questions
Argentina, Visas 813w
Care proceedings, Scotland 193-8w
Channel Islands, Official visits 419
Children in care, Scotland 194w, 197-8w, 254-5w
Employment, Statistics 368-71w
Falkland Islands, Civil aviation 814w
Hypothermia, Death 608w
Procurator fiscal service, Prosecutions 918
Teachers, Scotland 688w
UN agencies, UK contributions 813w
UNESCO 786w
UNESCO, Civil servants 785w
UNESCO, Scholarships 785-6w
UNESCO, UK contributions 785w, 786w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Questions
AIDS, Government grants 1-2w
Hospital closures, Inner city areas 748
Housing benefits, Families 750
Management consultants, Dept of Health & Social Security 816w
NHS, Expenditure 212w
NHS, Procurement 402w
NHS finance 746-7
NHS finance, Cost effectiveness 747
NHS finance, District health authorities 748
NHS finance, Public expenditure 747
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 748
NHS finance, Shropshire Health Authority 748
Occupational pensions 745, 746
Occupational pensions, Housing benefits 745
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 749, 750
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper", Temporary staff 749
State earnings related pension scheme 750

Fox, Mr Marcus
Questions
Cotton velvet, Turkey 17w

Fox hunting
Armed forces officers 781-2w

France
Channel crossing 104w, 772w
Exports 607
Fast reactors 804w
Motor vehicles 424
Plutonium 804w
Poultry 486-7w,
Sheep meat 486-7w, 727w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 970-2
Questions
Planning permission, Planning authorities 171w

Fraserburgh Harbour Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86
Rep* (04.12.85) 281
3R* (05.12.85) 409

Fraserburgh Harbour (No 2) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/85
Rep* (04.12.85) 281
3R* (05.12.85) 409

Fraserburgh Harbour (No 3) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/85
Rep* (04.12.85) 281
3R* (05.12.85) 409

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 940
Questions
Brixton Prison, Body searches 162w
Civil disorder, Inner city areas 309w
Employment schemes, Lambeth 640w
Housing investment programmes, Lambeth 374-5w
Housing subsidies, Lambeth 775w
Job creation schemes, Brixton 55w
Judiciary, Freemasonry 554-5w
Local government revenue, Housing finance 294-5
London Residuary Body, Capital assets 285
Magistrates, Greater London 645w
Police raids, Brailsford Road 462w
Robbery, Lambeth 646w
Unemployment, Ethnic monitoring 799w
Unemployment, Gravesham 537w
Unemployment, Lambeth 579w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Questions
Arrests, Scotland 168w
Complaints against police, Scotland 918
Debt collection, Scotland 651-2w
Drinking & driving, Scotland 651w
High Court, Scotland 652w
Lord Advocate 915-6
Lord Advocate, Judgments 915

Poaching, Scotland 917
Procurator fiscal service, Prosecutions 918
Tobacco, Scotland 785w
Transient people, Scotland 916
Travelling people, Scotland 916-7

Fraud
Arrests 5w
City of London 4w, 29w, 358w, 649w, 1059-60, 1061-2
Company investigations 358w
Criminal investigation 5-6w, 15w, 29w
Director of Public Prosecutions 812w
Greater London 426w
Johnson Matthey 5-6w, 15w, 1059-60
Lloyds of London 5w
Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate 427w
Prosecutions 426w

Fraud investigation group 5w, 427w
Finance 12-3
Lloyds of London 5w, 12
Manpower 12-3
Prosecutions 13

Fraud squad 649w
Manpower 649w

Free school meals
State education 703w

Freeman, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1093, 1118
Questions
Derelict land grants, Government grants 287
Occupational pensions, Disclosure of information 608-9w
Water meters 668w

Freemasonry
Judiciary 554-5w

Freeson, Rt Hon Reg
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 943, 946-50, 998

Freud, Mr Clement
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 459, 467-70
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 263-5
Questions
Arts, Mobility of disabled 543w
Assisted places scheme, Parents 788w
Business statement 1071-2
Film industry, Finance 621
Further education, Young people 161w
Mandatory student grants 159w
Polytechnics, Educational finance 159-62w
Pupils, Work experience programme 705w
School administration, Judgments 161w
Special educational needs 454w, 705w
Special educational needs, Children 13w
Special educational needs, Handicapped pupils 365w, 630-4w
Teachers, School meals 11-2w
University finance 160w

Front line states
Economic sanctions 15-6
Overseas aid 15

Frontiers
NATO 249w

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Points of Order (04.12.85) 308
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL) 2R (04.12.85) 347-8

Fuel aid
Disadvantaged 603w
Heating allowances (04.12.85) 400-8

Fuel bills (04.12.85) 400-8

Furniture
Exceptional needs payments 127w

Further education
Capital investment 706w
Vocational training 189w
Young people 161w

"Future Strategy for Higher Education in Scotland" 459-60w

Galley, Mr Roy
Questions
Civil defence, Nuclear shelters 311w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Companies 184w
NHS, Privatisation 599w

Gardiner, Mr George
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 300
Handicapped children, blind 685w

Gardner, Sir Edward
Questions
Chief constables, Police equipment 414

Garscadden
Regional development grants 431-2w
Regional selective assistance 431w

Gartcosh
Employment opportunities 909
Factory closures 910
Iron & steel industry 908-9, 910
Ministers domestic visits 907
Ravenscraig Steelworks 906, 907-8, 909, 910

Gartcosh Steelworks
Factory closures 690w
Standing Order No 10 applications (12.12.85) 1077

Garw Colliery (10.12.85) 894-900

Gas Bill 1985/86
2R (10.12.85) 767-858
426w
Money res (10.12.85) 853-8
Ways & means res (10.12.85) 858

Gas cookers
Gas safety 560w

Gas disconnections
Pensioners 426w

Gas safety
Gas cookers 560w
Privatisation 542w

Gas supply industry (10.12.85) 767-858

Gas-cooled reactors
Advanced nuclear power stations 423w

Gatwick Airport 391-2w
Air travel 391-2w

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Distinction certificates 283w
Merit certificates 283w
Teacher training 570-1w

General Dental Practitioners Association 682-3w

General Dental Service 682-3w

General development orders 266w
Public participation in planning 266w

General Medical Council (06.12.85) 531

Geriatrics
Hampshire 148w

Germany
Buses 772w

Gibraltar
EC law 590w
Financial services 590w
Pensions 38w, 448w

Gibralter Dockyard 38w
Defence expenditure 38w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Questions
Perry Oakes sludge works 300w

Glanford
Derelict land grants 288
Employment opportunities 86-7w
Employment schemes 86w
Regional aid 59w
Unemployment 86w

Glasgow
Arts finance 799w
Assisted places scheme 692w
Council house sales 690w
Employment opportunities 141
Housing associations 798-9w
Scottish Special Housing Association 690w

Glasgow District Council 198-9w, 255-6w
Rate support grants 255-6w

Glasgow University 329-30w
Social work 329-30w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Questions
Business statement 1066
Religious education, Teachers 454w
Taxis, Heathrow 773w

Glyphosate
Crop spraying 383w, 481w

Goat meat (11.12.85) 922-8

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 682-3, 695
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 926
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 335
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 113-5
Questions
Business statement 1073
Community programme 180-1w
Iron & steel industry, Gartcosh 908-9
Rates & rating, Scotland 698w
Social work, National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education 227w
Tape recorded evidence, Scotland 456w

Golding, Mr John
Debates etc
Prime Ministers question time point of order (05.12.85) 427
Questions
Building industry, Employment 468w
Derelict land, Land reclamation 374w
Job release scheme, Early retirement 367w
National Communications Union, Political levy 84w
Skilled workers, Confederation of British Industry 579w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income, Unemployed 615w
Urban development grants, Expenditure 374w

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
EURATOM, EC internal relations 358w
Fast reactors 359w
Fast reactors, France 804w
Hinckley Point B, Nuclear safety 423w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 360w
Nuclear accidents, Hinckley Point B 751-2w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 423w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Defence 423w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Nuclear non proliferation treaty 291-2w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 638-9w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 359w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 359w, 751w
Nuclear safeguards 803w
Nuclear safety, Hinckley Point B 751w
Plutonium, France 804w
Power station closures, Hinkley Point B 751w
Radiation hazards, Advanced gas-cooled reactors 751w
Radiation hazards, Hinckley Point B 750-1w
Sizewell Inquiry 803-4w
Sizewell Inquiry, Public appointments 803w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Fast reactors 639w

Gorst, Mr John
Debates etc
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 253, 255, 260, 261, 265-7, 269

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 433
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 255, 257-62, 270, 272, 273
Questions
Lloyds of London, Disclosure of information 13
Multifibre arrangement 807w
Vocational education, Architects 788-9w

Government assistance
Employment opportunites 613

Government assistance to industry
British National Oil Corporation 425w
British Steel Corporation 910
Copeland 372-3w
De Lorean 1054-5
Electronics industry 625-6w
Employment opportunities 141
Monklands 372w
Paisley 372w
Retail trade 626w
Small businesses 188w
Textile industry 168w
Tin 1062
Tourist industry 179w
Westland Helicopters 150, 438w

Government assistance to nationalised industries
British Rail 244-5w
Dept of Energy 359w
Dept of Trade & Industry 373w
Public dividend capital 294w

Government contracts
Falkland Islands 188-9w, 298
Racial discrimination 164-5w

Government departments
Cost effectiveness 574-5w
Day nurseries 786w
Efficiency scrutinies 574-5w

Government grants 143-4
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 99-100w, 193-4w
AIDS 1-2w
Antismoking campaign 116-7w, 396w
British Atlantic Committee 710w
British Film Institute 620-1
British Tourist Authority 142-3
Cancer 345w
Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas 265w
Countryside Commission 265w
Crime victims 35-6w
Derelict land grants 287
Drug abuse 39w
Employment opportunities 19-20w, 287-91w
Employment schemes 439-42w
English National Opera 367w
English Tourist Board 179w
Film industry 767-8w
Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive 244w
Inner city areas 23, 291, 564-5w
Interest groups 132-3w
International Planned Parenthood Federation 361w, 362w
London docklands railway 244w
Museums & galleries 544w
National Coal Board 424w
Nature Conservancy Council 265w
Passenger transport executives 11-2
Peace 347-8w
Peace through NATO 710w
Polytechnics 11w
Public transport 106-7w
Rape 35w
Rape crisis centres 35w
Rural areas 265w
Science & technology research 225w, 226-7w
Scottish Transport Group 697-8w
Senile dementia 256w
Systime UK 558w
Tourist boards 179w, 230w
Trade union elections 185w
Travel 391w
Tyne & Wear metro 244w
Unemployment 538w
Urban planning 374w
Welsh Office 699w
Youth training scheme 541w

Government grants to local authorities
Cruelty to children 617-8w
Emergency centres 29-30w, 335-6w
Empty property 261w
Homelessness 257w
Housing finance 305w
Inner city areas 264w, 291-2
Local government expenditure 21-2, 286
Local government finance 172w
Local government revenue 286
Public transport 109w
Rate support grants 282, 552w
Scotland 458w
Tax allowances 22
Urban programme 810w
Wolverhampton District Council 669-70w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Action on smoking & health 116w
Ancient monuments 295
Criminal injuries compensation 701w
Drug rehabilitation centres 421, 610w
Local government reform 288-9, 421
Local government social services 617w
Rape 162-3w
Scotland 380w

Government laboratories
Veterinary services 687w

Government loans
Northern Ireland (04.12.85) 388-99

Gow, Mr Ian, *Minister of State at the Treasury*
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1049

Gower, Sir Raymond
Questions
Coal mine closures, Wales 610
Planning authorities, Wales 607

Graduates
Industrial training 639w
Private sector 639w

Grampian
Health services 691w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Questions
House of Lords, Personnel 1w

Gravesham
Unemployment 537w

Grazing land
Norfolk Broads 484-5w

Greater Glasgow Health Board 51w, 52w, 690w, 912
Maternity services 51w, 912-3
NHS finance 690w

Greater London
Area health authorities 396-8w
Bus lanes 107w
Derelict land 262w
District health authorities 396-8w
Fraud 426w
Health services 615w
Local education authorities 158w
Local radio 581-2w
Magistrates 645w
Pupils 8-10w
Rate support grants 284
Remand in custody 650w
Roads 243w
School population 225-6w
Scoliosis 491-2w
Taxicards 303w
Waste disposal 376w

Greater London Council
Ecology 292w
Fire services 811w
Housing improvement 377w
Land pollution 298-9w
Local government expenditure 298w, 671w
Local government property 377w
Local government reform 285, 298w, 470w
Rate precepts 473-4w

Greater London Council (General Powers) Bill 1984/85
3R* (05.12.85) 409

Greater London Enterprise Board 55w, 477-8w
Brixton 55w
Local government reform 477-8w

Greater Manchester
Health services 211w
Plastic bullets 413, 414
Rapid transit systems 244w
Road works 390w
Travel 11-2
Voluntary organisations 288-9

Greater Manchester Council 297-8w, 392-3w

Greater Manchester County Council 671-3

Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive
Government grants 244w

Greece
EC Finance Council 101w
EC grants & loans 101w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Dog Fighting (Penalties) Bill, 1R (09.12.85) 638
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 466, 470, 473-4
Questions
Age of consent 318w
Arts finance, Music 543w
Business statement 1069
Church commissioners, Expenditure 616-7
Council housing, Repairs & maintenance 469w
Derelict land, Greater London 262w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Voluntary schools 627w
Housing benefits, Students 404w
Industrial health & safety, Ault & Wiborg 641w
Mental health community care, Expenditure 602w
Prime Minister official engagements 574w
University teachers, Conditions of employment 455w

Greenwich
Roads 301-2w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc
Consumer Safety (Amendment) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 312
Toys & games, Safety (09.12.85) 737-40
Questions
British Rail, Capital investment 1
Licensing laws 417
Live aid, Video piracy 442w
Overseas aid, Copyright 448w
Railway property, Land acquisition 427-8w
Resale of electricity by landlords 287w

Griffiths Inquiry see NHS Management Inquiry

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 640-1
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 927
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 634
Sugar, EC action (01.12.85) 123
Questions

Drug crimes, Public appointments 701w
National Drugs Unit, Police 792w

Grist, Mr Ian
Questions
Economic policy, Employment opportunities 611-2
Kidney machines, Wales 446w
Quangos, Wales 232w
Severn barrage 8

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 235
Questions
Luxembourg Summit, VAT threshold 573-4w
Small businesses, EC action 420w

Guildhall
Dartmouth 295w

Guilty pleas 320-1w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn,
Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc
Sugar, EC action 107-10, 125-7
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Income 99w
Butter, Food surpluses 485-6w
Common fisheries policy 588w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 587w
Fish, Liverpool Bay 352w
Fishery protection, North Sea 587-8w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 588w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 588w
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 488w
Intervention stocks, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough 479w
Severe weather payments, Farmers 100w
Sheep meat, Exports 727w
Sheep meat, France 486-7w
Waste disposal, Sea pollution 100w

Gummer, John Selwyn 801w
Official engagements 801w

Gwynedd
Drug abuse 39w
Mental health services 446-7w

Gwynedd Health Authority 40w, 446-7w

Gynaecology
Stobhill Hospital 381w

Gypsies
Caravan sites 810w

Habitual offenders
Homicide 646w
Young offenders 307-8w

Hairdressing
Minimum wage 191w

Hamilton, Mr James
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 234
Questions
Business statement 1073
Iron & steel industry, Ravenscraig Steelworks 906
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 691w
Pensioners, Scotland 753

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Questions
Civil service manpower 652w
Education, Privatisation 150
Enterprise allowance scheme, Training 146
Iron & steel industry, British Steel Corporation 910
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 749

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Inner city areas, Standing Order No 10 applications (02.12.85) 25-6
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 630
Questions
Drinking & driving, Scotland 651w
Employment level, Autumn statement 147
Employment opportunities, Tourist industry 143
Housing construction 260w
In Vitro-Fertilisation Departmental Committee 607-8w

Hampshire
Acute beds 148w
Council housing 64w
Electorate 464-5w
Empty housing 64w
Geriatrics 148w
Housing 469-70w
Parliamentary constituencies 464-5w
Police 163-4w
Police civilians 164w
Population 399w
Registered homes 495w
Road accidents 133w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 941–989
Questions
Road construction 391-2w
Road traffic, Leeds 802w

Hancock, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 87–92
Questions
Acute beds, Hampshire 148w
Armed forces dependents, Armed forces education allowances 593w
Assisted places scheme, Expenditure 568-9w
Cancer, Medical research 345w
Cancer, Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 344-5w
Civilian Pay Records Office, Manpower 545w
Cruelty to children, Local government social services 763w
Devonport Dockyard, Management 812w
Devonport Dockyard, Privatisation 812w
Diplomatic service education allowances 590w
Dockyards, Privatisation 206w, 545w
Empty housing, Hampshire 64w
Film industry, Government grants 767-8w
Fire services 165w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 588w
House renovation grants 296w
Housing, Hampshire 469-70w
Hypothermia, Health education 134w
Job centres, Vacancies 178w
Job start scheme 540-1w
Kidneys, Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 134w
Polytechnics, Government grants 11w
Prescription drugs, Smoking 763w
Prison overcrowding 29w
Prison population 29w
Prison staff, Manpower 29w
Queen Alexander Hospital, Portsmouth 211w
Registered homes, Portsmouth 495w
Registered Homes Act 1984, Elderly 495w
Road accidents, Death 404w
Road accidents, Hampshire 133w
Rosyth Dockyard, Fixed assets 205-6w
Rosyth Dockyard, Shipbuilding 206w
Sheltered housing, Portsmouth 266w
Small businesses, Loan guarantee scheme 192w, 642-4w
Speech therapy, Regional health authorities 136w
Transport of animals, EC law 586w
Tuberculosis, Death 134-5w
Tuberculosis, Notifiable diseases 135-6w
University teachers 226w
Urban programme, Planning authorities 778w
Youth employment 326-7w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 182w

Handicapped
Access to buildings 346w
Mentally handicapped (04.12.85) 308-9
Prison sentences 645w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 597w
Theft 645w

Handicapped children
Blind 685w

Handicapped pupils 364-5w
Special educational needs 365w, 630-4w

Handicapped students
Student grants 284w

Handicapped workers
Manpower 81w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Questions
Ecology, Greater London Council 292w
Exhibitions, Association of Accounting Technicians 807-8w
Local enterprise agencies, Training 187w
Unit trusts, Licensing 434w
USSR, Sequestration of assets 718-20w

Hannam, Mr John
Debates etc
Corneal Tissue Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 312
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 785-8, 842
Questions
Cinemas, Access to buildings 421-2
Mental patients, Young people 212-22w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1014
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 777, 810-3, 830
Questions
Mobility allowance 606w
National Coal Board, Subsidiary companies 749w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310

Haringey
Police relations with public 425-6
Public order policing 425-6

Harland & Wolff
Northern Ireland 1055-6

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
British Association of Social Workers, Social Fund 754
Harman, Harriet, European Court of Human Rights 346-7w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 684w

Harman, Harriet 346-7w
European Court of Human Rights 346-7w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc
Tin, Standing Order No 10 applications (10.12.85) 765-6
Questions
Business statement 1068
Nuclear fuel cycle, Cancer hazards 786w

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Questions
Military intelligence, Closed circuit television 302w
Military intelligence, Lighting 302-3w
Military intelligence, Sewers 303w
M1, Road signs 242w
Nuclear weapons tests, Christmas Island 204w, 811w
Nuclear weapons tests, Protective clothing 92w
Palace of Westminster, Telephone systems 805w

Harvey, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1141-3
Questions
NHS Finance, Wales 606
Severe weather payments, Wales 699w
Welsh fourth channel 796-7w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 465-7

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1087-95
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1060-1
Business statement 1065-6

Hatton, Derek
Liverpool City Council 22

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Parental contributions 570w
Dept of Education & Science, Termination of employment 705w

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Questions
New towns, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 268w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 930
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1049-50
Average earnings 187w
Cancer, Patients 751
Council house sales, Local government revenue 285-6
Drugs, Patents 557-8w

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney, Minister of State for Health
Debates etc
Basildon Hospital, Maternity services (03.12.85) 277-80
St Andrews Hospital (13.12.85) 1256-60
Questions
Advertising agencies, Dept of Health & Social Security 125-6w
Agency nurses, Labour costs 338-9w
AIDS 766w
AIDS, Mersey Regional Health Authority 494w
AIDS, Notifiable diseases 494w
Amenity beds 499-506w
Area health authorities, Greater London 396-8w
Asian Mother & Baby Campaign, Health service staff 210w
Blood diseases, AIDS 616w
Cancer, Medical treatments 535w
Cancer hazards, Children 766-7w
Cervical cancer 535w
Cervical cancer, Screening 490-1w, 535w, 680-1w, 681-2w, 766w
Community health services, North West region 598w
Contraceptives, Young people 597w
Dental amalgam, Dentistry 132w
Dental amalgam, Health hazards 132w
Dental charges 755-6w
Dental charges, NHS 617w
Dentistry, Appeals 682-3w
Dentistry, Dental charges 492-3w, 753w
District health authorities, Capital investment 141-2w
District health authorities, Lancashire 489-90w
Drug industry, USA 274-5w
Drugs, Cyanocobalamin 490w
Drugs, Family doctors 756w
Drugs, Licensing 685-6w
Drugs, Parallel imports 601w, 683w, 756w
Eye disorders, Contact lenses 609w
Family doctors, Information 136w
Family practitioner committees 136w
Health for all 492w
Health service staff, Compensation 825w
Health service staff, Crimes of violence 825w
Health services, Disadvantaged 492w
Health services, Greater London 615w
Health services, Greater Manchester 211w
Health services, Privatisation 141w
Health services, Racial discrimination 270-1w
Health services, Speeches 276w
Health Services Board, NHS & private practice 678w
Health services finance, Bloomsbury Health Authority 605w
Health services finance, Private investment 606w
Hospices, Health services finance 601w
Hospital consultants 338w
Hospital consultants, Junior hospital doctors 401w
Hospital doctors 492w
Hospital safety, Environmental health 601w
Hospitals, Crown immunity 346w
HTLV III virus, Legislation 125w
In Vitro Fertilisation Departmental Committee 607-8w
Legionnaires disease 816w
Limited list prescribing 600w
Local government social services, Ministers domestic visits 752w
Local government social services, Social Services Inspectorate 752w
Mid-Downs Health Authority, NHS finance 275w
NHS, Expenditure 601w, 679w
NHS, Industrial relations 127-9w
NHS, Management 756-7
NHS, Merit awards 489w
NHS, Privatisation 599w, 610w
NHS, Spectacles 490w, 610w
NHS charges, Foreign patients 118-26w
NHS & private practice 529-33w
NHS & private practice, Death 521-30w
Nurses 209w
Nurses, Manpower 271w
Nurses, Recruitment 126w
Nurses, Uniforms 763-5w
Optical charges 494w
Oral contraceptives, Young people 339w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 273w
Pharmacists, Contracts of employment 212w, 609w
Pharmacists, Hospitals 147-52w
Pharmacists, NHS 598w
Prescription charges, Unemployed 115-6w
Prescription charges exemptions, Publicity 765w
Prescriptions, Chemists shops 496w
Primary health care 274w, 677-8w
Primary health care, Inner city areas 767w
Private patients, Out-patients 498-500w, 505-6w, 506-14w
Private patients, Pay beds 513-522w
Progress in partnership 210-1w, 685-6w
Regional health authorities, Capital investment 684-6w
Regional health authorities, Cost effectiveness 611w
Regional health authorities, Housing 603-4w
Regional health authorities, NHS finance 209-10w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 673-6w, 676-7w
Research finance, AIDS 126w
Surgery, Infectious diseases 678-9w
Surgery, Manpower 274w
Test tube babies, Clinics 604w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Questions
Crown immunity, Institution of Environmental Health Officers 257w
Cycling, Road safety 106w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 308w

Hayward, Mr Rob
Debates etc
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 627-8
Questions
Antismoking campaign, Opinion surveys 270w
Control of Pollution (Special Wastes) Regulations 1985 549-50w
Higher education, Education & industry 157w

Hazardous wastes
Waste disposal 549-50w, 588w

Hazards
Road traffic control 111-2w

House of Commons debates
Inner city areas 1061, 1062

House of Commons divisions
Members 761

Heads of state
Official receptions 325w, 575w

Headteachers
Teachers appraisal 362w

Health
Local government social services 685-6w

Health education
Drug abuse 420-1
Hypothermia 134w

Health Education Council
Antismoking campaign 116-7w
Cancer 493-4w
Finance 494w

Health for all 492w

Health hazards
Dental amalgam 132w

"Health Inequalities & Manchester" 211w

Health Service Commissioner
Disclosure of information 682w

"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985 142w, 276w, 497-8w
Costs 142w, 497-8w
HMSO 497w
Press releases 498w
Production 497w

Health service staff
Asian Mother & Baby Campaign 210w
Compensation 825w
Crimes of violence 825w
Housing 403w
Manpower 612w
Pay 613w, 679w
Speech therapy 619w
Stobhill Hospital 381w

Health services
Cruelty to children 606-7w
Disadvantaged 492w
Expenditure 745w
Grampian 691w
Greater London 615w
Greater Manchester 211w
Local government social services 210-1w
Powys 446w
Privatisation 141w
Racial discrimination 270-1w
Scotland 745w
Scottish health boards 52w
Speeches 276w
Voluntary organisations 612w
Wales 444w

Health services ancillary staff
Contracts for services 599w

Health Services Board 678w
NHS & private practice 678w

Health services finance
Bloomsbury Health Authority 605w
Community health services 598w
Costs 611w
Hospices 601w
Mid-Glamorgan Health Authority 154
Private investment 606w
Scotland 913
Shropshire Health Authority 154
West Lothian Hospital 912

Health surveys
Women 148w
World Health Organisation 148w

Health warnings
Tobacco advertising 394w

"Health & Personal Social Services Statistics, England 212w

Health & Safety Inspectorate 539w
Manpower 539w

Heart diseases
Prison staff 163w
Surgery 678w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1223
Questions
Buses, Tachographs 104-5w
Financial services, European Communities 151
Tachographs, Speed limits 313w
Unemployment, Job centres 190w

Heathrow
Air travel 391-2w
Public order 773w
Road signs 584w
Taxis 773w

Heating allowances
Fuel aid (04.12.85) 400-8
Low pay 752
Pensioners 753
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 752
Scotland 753
Social security benefits rules 346w
Supplementary benefits 400-1w

Heddle, Mr John
Questions
Council housing, Tenants cooperatives 296
Historic buildings, Demolition 281-2
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 21

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 768-9, 784, 842
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 937, 938, 963-5
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 302
Arts finance, Film industry 622
Housing policy 286
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 19-20

Helicopters
Air safety 660w
North Sea 303-4w

Hemel Hempstead
Drug rehabilitation centres 610w

Henderson, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 901
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 159
Scottish Affairs Select Committee (11.12.85) 1008
Questions
Business statement 1072
Complaints against police, Scotland 918
Housing associations, Scotland 687w
Iron & steel industry, Ravenscraig Steelworks 906
Transient people, Scotland 916

Hereford & Worcester
Sickness benefit 338w

Herring
Fishing catches 566w
Fishing quotas 565-6w
Norway 565-6w
Scotland 565w

Hertfordshire
Cost per pupil 364w
Pupil-teacher ratios 285w
Social security abuse 579w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, *Secretary of State for Defence*
Debates etc
Strategic defence initiative, Ministerial statements (09.12.85) 623-35
Questions
Civil servants, Emergency planning 351w
Devonport Dockyard 780-1w
Strategic defence initiative: Technical assistance 387w

Hewitt, Colin 701w
Metropolitan Police 701w

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Questions
Civil defence, Local authorities 313w
Derelict land grants, Glanford 288
Employment opportunities, Glanford 86-7w
Employment schemes, Glanford 86w
Law enforcement, Labour party 418
Regional aid, Glanford 59w
Trespass, Animal liberation front 416
Unemployment, Glanford 86w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 327w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 53-6
Questions
Astles, Bob, Entry clearances 651w
Insulation grants 264w

Higgins, Mr Terence
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1085, 1095-9
Questions
Driving tests, Waiting lists 7
Metropolitan Police, Police sirens 319w
Motorcycles, Road safety 108w

High Court
Scotland 652w

High rent schemes 339-40w, 343-4w
Local authorities 343-4w

High technology 610
Regional planning & development 610

Higher civil servants
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 98-9w

Higher education 362-3w
Architecture 366w
Education & industry 157w
Educational finance 366w
Mergers 707w
Scotland 459-60w
Student numbers 448-9w
Universities 329-30w

Highland Regional Council 566w

Hijacking 247w
Achille Lauro 39w
Police 582w
Prisoners 32w
Repatriation 39w
Stansted Airport 32-3w

Hill livestock allowances
Forestry grants 269w
Marginal land 488w
Scotland 693w

Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (03.12.85) 165, (12.12.85) 1179

Hillsborough
Anglo-Irish talks 5w, 731w

Hinckley Point B 423w, 726w, 747-9w, 750-1w, 751-2w
Nuclear accidents 750-2w
Nuclear power stations 726w
Nuclear safety 423w, 751w
Power station closures 751w
Radiation hazards 750-1w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 792
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 488, 500-4

Hip replacements 563w, 602w, 610w
Hospital waiting lists 563w, 602w, 610w
Scotland 563w
Surgery 610w

Hirst, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 360, 361-2, 371-80, 382
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 160
Questions
Air transport, Restrictive trade practices 623-4w
Drugs, Scotland 797-8w
Hospital closures, Stobhill Hospital 912-3
NHS finance 746-7
NHS finance, Scotland 690w
Scottish Affairs Select Committee, Iron & steel industry 1061
Teachers, Scotland 904
Unemployment 176w

Historic buildings
Building repairs 295w
Cumbernauld 564w
Demolition 281-2
Kilsyth 564w

Historic Buildings Council
Employment opportunities 137-8
Tourism 137-8

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 281, 295w
Skilled workers 281

HM Inspectorate of Schools
Voluntary schools 627w

HMSO
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985" 497w

Hogg, Mr Douglas
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1011, 1015, 1017, 1021

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
Childbirth, Scottish health boards 51w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 52w
Gynaecology, Stobhill Hospital 381w
Health service staff, Stobhill Hospital 381w
Health services, Scottish health boards 52w
Historic buildings, Cumbernauld 564w
Hospital closures, Stobhill Hospital 912
Inner city areas, Scotland 564-5w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 565w
Land ownership & tenure, Cumbernauld & Kilsyth District Council 564w
Maternity services, Cumbernauld 381-2w
Maternity services, Greater Glasgow Health Board 51w
Maternity services, Scottish health boards 50-1w
Regional aid, Cumbernauld 20w
Regional selective assistance, Cumbernauld 20w
Stobhill Hospital, Maternity services 52w
Teachers, Scotland 565w

Holland, Sir Philip
Questions
Hong Kong, Passports 248w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Questions
Road construction, Vauxhall 243w
Road traffic, Vauxhall 243w
Roads, Greater London 243w
Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference, Overseas aid 15

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 194-7
Oral question time point of order (02.12.85) 18
Questions
Ambulance services, Driving instruction 614w
Driving tests, Motorways 6, 388-9w
Driving tests, Speed limits 301w
Foreign tourists, Australia 179w
Motorways, Death 301w

Planning appeals, Administrative delays 169-70w
Police training, Motorways 462-3w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w
Water meters 258w

Holy Loch 459-60w, 746-7w
Cancer 459-60w, 746-7w

Holy Trinity Church, Paddington 299w

Home Office 464w
Advertising 357w
Broadcasting programmes 463w
Civil defence 312w
Equal opportunities 34w, 316w, 321w
Equal opportunities officers 356w

Home Office Circular 8/1984 310w
Crime prevention 310w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc
Forestry (02.12.85) 129, 132
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 356, 368, 370, 384, 389
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 729, 731
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 162
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 311
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 688w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Government grants 99-100w
Dentistry, Dental charges 492-3w
Dentistry, Scotland 458w
Exceptional needs payments, Edinburgh 492w
Government grants to local authorities, Scotland 458w
Herring, Norway 565-6w
Herring, Scotland 565w
Severe weather payments, Farmers 100w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 915
Smoking, Scotland 797w
Smoking, Young people 824-5w
Tobacco, Children & Young Persons Act 1933 794-5w
Tobacco, Retail trade 807w
Tobacco, Scotland 785w
Tree planting, Killin 563-4w

Homelessness
Government grants to local authorities 257w
Women 25w

Homeowners insurance
Theft 702w

Homicide 316w
Children 647-50w
Convictions 28w
Fixed penalties 314w
Habitual offenders 646w
Offences against children 826w
Prisoners release 646w

Hong Kong
EC external trade 435w
Overseas trade 286-7w
Passports 248w
Textiles 435w

Hooliganism
Football 263-4w, 319w

Hordern, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 960-3

Hormone treatments
Cattle (09.12.85) 719-36

Hormones
Meat (09.12.85) 719-36

Horses
Army 781-2w
Exports 660w
Food hygiene 660w

Horticultural Produce Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 312

Horticulture
Agricultural research 241w
Transport (04.12.85) 312

Hospices
Health services finance 601w

Hospital admissions 686w
Whooping cough 819-20w

Hospital bed occupancy rates 499-506w, 513-522w, 521-30w, 601w
NHS 601w

Hospital beds
District health authorities 133w
Maternity services 50-1w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards 45-6w
Scottish health boards 47-8w
Secure psychiatric units 117-8w
Wales 42w

Hospital catering
Margarine 616w

Hospital closures
Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority (03.12.85) 274-80, (10.12.85) 892-3, (13.12.85) 1253-60
Inner city areas 748
Mental hospitals 128w, 144-5w
Mid Glamorgan 615
Plumstead (12.12.85) 1180-6
Research 144w
St Andrews Hospital (13.12.85) 1253-60
Stobhill Hospital 52w, 381-2w, 912-3

Hospital consultants 338w
Junior hospital doctors 401w
Manpower 274w
Merit awards 489w

Hospital discharges 499-506w, 513-22w, 521-30w
NHS & private practice 521-30w

Hospital doctors 492w

Hospital patients
Research 612w
Wales 605

Hospital safety
Environmental health 601w

Hospital waiting lists 396w
Consultants 401w
Coronary bypass operations 602w
Dentistry 753w
Hip replacements 563w, 602w, 610w
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 606
Out-patients 491w
Regional health authorities 753-4w
Surgery 754w
Wolverhampton Health Authority 754w

Hospitals
Capital investment 404-8w, 684-6w, 695w, 756-8w
Construction 44w, 54w, 306-8w, 404-8w
Crown immunity (04.12.85) 310, 346w
District health authorities 133w
NHS 42w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards 44w, 306-8w
Pharmacists 147-52w
Scotland 695w
Scottish health boards 46-8w, 54w
Wales 42w, 44w

Hostels
Fire regulations 356w

Hotels & catering industry
Employment opportunities 328w
Northern Ireland 306w
Scotland 334-5w
Vacancies 305w, 306w, 329w, 335w
Vocational guidance 327-8w, 329w, 334-5w
Wales 305w
Youth employment 328w
Youth training scheme 305w, 306w, 328w, 335w

Houghton Report 9-12w

House of Commons
Personnel 1w

House of Commons chamber
Newspaper press (10.12.85) 882

House of Commons debates
Speakers' rulings & statements (12.12.85) 1076

House of Commons Liaison Committee (05.12.85) 522

House of Commons select committees
Speakers' rulings & statements (02.12.85) 27, 28, (11.12.85) 901-2, 918-20, 1008

House of Commons (Services) Select Committee (05.12.85) 522

House of Lords
Bishops 421w
Personnel 1w

House of Lords reporting
Speakers' rulings & statements (13.12.85) 1218

House prices 776w
Mortgage relief 60w
Price increases 775-6w

House purchase
Housing associations 798-9w
NHS 399w
Paddington 779w

House renovation grants 296w
Building repairs 171w

Households
Population 758w
Social class 758w

Housing 469-70w
Capital investment 669w
Hampshire 469-70w
Health service staff 403w
Legislation 378w
NHS 403w
Nurses 603-4w
Prison staff 320w
Regional health authorities 603-4w

Housing amenities
Housing benefits 340w
Scotland 742-3w

Housing associations
Codes of practice 692w
Glasgow 798-9w
House purchase 798-9w
Management techniques 259-60w
Scotland 687w, 692w

Housing benefit supplement 341-2w

Housing benefits 270w
Families 750
Housing amenities 340w
Land values 60w
Local authorities 340w
Local government expenditure 750
Local government staff 343w
Non-dependent deductions 341w
Occupational pensions 745
Social security abuse 604w
Social security benefits reductions 339-40w
Social security benefits rules 131-2w, 815-6w
Social security claims 341w
Social security recipients 341-2w
Students 404w
Young people 131-2w

Housing benefits review boards 342-3w

Housing capital allocations 257w, 374-5w, 608-9
Housing investment programmes 257w
Wales 608-9

Housing construction 260w
Building industry 56w
Council housing 294
Inner city areas 778w
Land use 607
VAT 607

Housing Corporation
Wales 155w

Housing Defects Act 1984 (06.12.85) 598-604, 809-10w
Wales 446w

Housing estates
Salford 777-8w
Salford City Council 777w

Housing finance
Administrative delays (06.12.85) 598-604
Council housing 286
Government grants to local authorities 305w
Inner city areas 778w
Local government expenditure 286-7, 293-4
Local government reform 285
Local government revenue 294-5
Urban development grants 778w
Wales 305w

Housing improvement
Greater London Council 377
Local government expenditure 260w
Local government reform 377w
Public participation in planning 777w
Salford City Council 778w
Scotland 734-6w, 735-7w, 737-9w, 739-40w
Urban development grants 777-8w

Housing insulation 264w

Housing investment programmes 260w
Building repairs 293-4
Housing capital allocations 257w
Lambeth 374-5w
Waltham Forest 809w
Yorkshire & Humberside 552w

Housing policy 171w, 286

Housing problems
Local government expenditure 282

Housing standards
Council housing 55w, 260w, 297w
Local authorities in Scotland 742-3w

Housing starts
Leicester 260w

Housing stock
Departmental publications 55w, 260w
Local authorities 62-4w
Private rented housing 57w

Housing subsidies
Lambeth 775w

Housing support grants
Local authorities in Scotland 330-4w

Housing & elderly
Arfon 155w
Portsmouth 266w

Housing & handicapped
Local authorities in Scotland 740-2w

Howard, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Debates etc
Electrical safety, Domestic electrical appliances (06.12.85) 592-7
Toys & games, Safety (09.12.85) 740-4
Questions
Bankruptcy 14w
Bellew Parry Raven, Inquiries 443w
British Airports Authority, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 555-7w
Cereals, Balance of trade 438-9w
Company investigations 168-9w
Company liquidations 250-1w
Company registration 624-5w
Consumer protection, Information 250w
Crown suppliers, Exports 286w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Soft loans 169w
Esal Commodities, Company liquidations 19w
Exhibitions, Association of Accounting Technicians 807-8w
Export controls, USA 168w, 373w
Export promotion, Computer industry 625-6w
Financial institutions, Investment 717w
Insurance companies 557w
Insurance companies, Administrative delays 434w
Johnson Matthey, Fraud 15w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory, Pattern approval 13-4w
Overseas trade, Hong Kong 286-7w
Prices, Trade descriptions 717-8w
Railway transport, Indonesia 169w
Resale of electricity by landlords 287w
Salesmanship, Employment 625w
Textiles, Antidumping duties 438w
Trendhart, Inquiries 435w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 250w
Unit trusts, Licensing 434w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Questions
Crimes of violence, Sentencing 315-6w
Overtime 190w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, *Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 313-9, 323
Questions
European monetary system, Treaty of Rome 36-7w
Mutual & balanced force reductions 348-9w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1093, 1105, 1109-14
European Council (05.12.85) 431
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 626
Questions
Vacant land, Nationalised industries 290

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Availability for work, Social security benefits rules 140
"Careers Bulletin", Civil servants 228w
"Careers Bulletin", Civil service manpower 228-9w
"Careers Bulletin", Costs 229w
"Careers Bulletin", Departmental publications 229w
Cereals, Balance of trade 438-9w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Manpower 126-7w
Family income, Social security benefits uprating 755
Housing benefits 270w
One parent families, Mothers 127w
Supplementary benefits, Income tax 323w
Unemployment 177w, 721w
Unemployment, Statistics 165w
Unemployment, Women 77w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 88-9w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 89w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Questions
Employment opportunities, Cardigan 445w
Housing construction, VAT 607
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w
Straw burning 268w
Youth unemployment, Wales 612

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 213, 217-9, 246, 247
Questions
Army, Horses 781-2w
Industrial accidents, Industrial injuries scheme 801w
Remand in custody, Crime 793w
Takeovers, Allied Lyons 425
Transport, Procurement 430w

HTLV III virus
Legislation 125w

Hughes, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 720

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 640, 648-53, 657
Questions
British Rail, Corporate plans 105w
Channel crossing, Road freight transport 429-30w
Driving instruction, Examinations 430-2w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
Pay, Sunday trading 188w
Road construction, Costs 243w
Road construction, Employment 243w
Road works, Wales 444w
Severn bridge, Private investment 8
State earnings related pension scheme 599w
Wardair, Air routes 243-4w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Social Fund 607w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 941-2, 952-7
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 538-44, 550, 555-6, 559, 579, 582-3
Questions
Abbeystead pumping station, Ministerial statements 540w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 279w
Church Commissioners, Finance 616
Council house rents, Rent arrears 263w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 286
Equal opportunities, Dept of the Environment 60-1w, 61-2w
Government grants to local authorities, Inner city areas 291-2
Gummer, John Selwyn, Official engagements 801w
Housing construction, Inner city areas 778w
Housing estates, Salford 777-8w
Housing estates, Salford City Council 777w
Housing improvement, Salford City Council 778w
Women, International Year of Shelter for the Homeless 25w

Hull
Regional aid 432-3w

Human embryo experiments (04.12.85) 310

Human organs 617w
Transplant surgery 617w

Human rights
Iran 573w
USSR 367w

Hungary
Visas 637w

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Gairn Colliery (10.12.85) 897-900
Questions
Coal firing scheme 425w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 7w
Coal mining, Redundancy 426w
Coal mining, Subsidence 424w
Energy efficiency year, Companies 638w
National Coal Board, Government grants 424w
National Coal Board, Subsidiary companies 749w
Redundant mineworkers payments scheme 6-7w, 750w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Ambulance services, Overtime 604w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1051
Civil defence, Emergency planning 313w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 810w

Local government reform, Greater London Enterprise Board 477-8w
Ministry of Defence, Research 204-5w
Police, Hampshire 163-4w
Police civilians, Hampshire 164w
Population, Hampshire 399w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, *Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Public Order Bill, 1R (05.12.85) 457
Questions
Advertising, Home Office 357w
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, Security 795-6w
BBC, Broadcasting finance 307w
Broadcasting programmes, BBC 307w
Chief constables, Police equipment 413-4
Civil disorder, Inner city areas 309w
Coroners 795w
Crime, Criminal investigation 411, 412
Crime, Stock Exchange 412
Crime prevention 309-10w
Equal opportunities officers, Home Office 356w
Home Office 464w
Licensing laws 416, 417
Licensing laws, Alcoholism 417
Licensing laws, Alcoholism & crime 416-7
Licensing laws, Drinking & driving 417
Licensing laws, Sunday trading 416
Plastic bullets, Greater Manchester 413, 414
Police relations with public, Criminal investigation 411
Prison escapes, Sudbury Prison 413
Prison population 412
Prison population, Alternatives to prison 413
Prison staff, Manpower 412
Prisoners, Libyan Arab Republic 703w
Prisons, Capital investment 650w
Probation & aftercare 795w
Stansted Airport, Hijacking 32w
SWAPO, Immigrant detainees 357w
Welsh fourth channel 796-7w

Hybrid Bills
Norfolk Broads 471w

Hypermarkets
Research 808w

Hypothermia
Death 608w
Elderly 608w, 754
Health education 134w
Publicity 134w

Identity cards 313w
Civil defence 312w

Ilkeston
Police stations 702-3w

Immigrant detainees
Members correspondence 792w
SWAPO 357w

Immigrants fiancees
Temporary immigrants 583w

Immigration
Civil service unions 26w
Members correspondence 26w, 310-1w

Immigration applications
Administrative delays 815w
Bangladesh 814w, 815w
Indian subcontinent 815w

Immigration controls
Bangladesh 460-1w
Interviews 462w
Pakistan 357w
Temporary immigrants 462w, 581w

Immigration officers 815w

Immigration rules 581w

Import controls
Textiles 437-8w

Import duties
EC action 355w

Import penetration
Catering 296w

Imports
Blood 125w
Carpet industry 436-7w
Clothing 435w
South Africa 14w
Textiles 435w, 436-7w

In Vitro-Fertilisation Departmental Committee 607-8w

Income
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 99w, 270w
Arts finance 619-20
British Airports Authority 585-6w
District health authorities 143w
Drug crimes 420-1
Fisheries 587w
Inner London Education Authority 705-6w
Privatisation 102-3w, 251-2w
Public sector assets 102-3w
Rent allowances 340-2w
Rent rebates 340-2w
Surplus land 606w

Income support scheme
Pensioners 753-4

Income tax 651-2w
Partnerships 592w
PAYE 805w
Supplementary benefits 323w
Tax burden 805w

Income tax assessment
Appeals (13.12.85) 1187-9
Public petitions (13.12.85) 1187-9

Income & Corporation Taxes Act 1970 592w

Independent prosecution service
Costs 299-300w
Pay 299-300w

Indian subcontinent
Immigration applications 815w

Indictable offences
Trespass 317w

Indonesia
Overseas investment 169w
Railway transport 169w
Video piracy 442w

Industrial accidents
Industrial injuries scheme 801w

Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate 3w

Industrial development (13.12.85) 1190-304, 1212-52
Canary Wharf 263w
London docklands 263w
Northern region (03.12.85) 166-209
Northumberland Wharf 477w

Industrial Development Act 1982 716-7w

Industrial disputes
Coal mining 7w, 168w, 700-1w
Examinations 687w
Silentnight (03.12.85) 210-52
Teachers 628w, 688w

Industrial health & safety
Ault & Wiborg 641w
North West region 540w
Property Services Agency 779-80w
Women 82-3w

Industrial injuries scheme
Industrial accidents 801w

Industrial investment
Location of industry 709w

Industrial production
Cement 552w
Manpower 178w
Motor industry 557w

Industrial relations
NHS 127-9w

Industrial training
Adult education 176w
Compensation 149
European Social Fund 640-1w
Graduates 639w
Injuries 149

Industrial Training Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 312

Industrial training boards (04.12.85) 312

Industrial training schemes
Normanton 178w

Industrial tribunals
Public appointments 724w
Termination of employment 87w

Industries
Wood (02.12.85) 128-36

Industry
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1058
North West region 177w
Raw materials 1060

Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1190-304, 1212-52
Private Members motions (13.12.85) 1190–304, 1212-52

Infant mortality
Leeds Eastern Health Authority 130w
Lees Western Health Authority 620w
Wales 572w

Infectious diseases
Surgery 678-9w

Information
Consumer protection 250w
Cruelty to children 496w
Family doctors 136w
Nuclear weapons tests 202w
Special educational needs 228w

Infrastructure 1, 1054-5
Capital investment 1
Transport 109-10w

Initial teacher training 450-4w
Student numbers 450-4w

Injuries
Death 211w
Industrial training 149
Nuclear weapons 317w
Police 322w
Pupils 705w
Road accidents 211w

Inland Revenue
Bradford 252w
Data Protection Act 1984 805w
Departmental records 252w
Law enforcement 653-4w

Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee 653-4w

Inner city areas
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1061
Church Commissioners 616
Church of England (02.12.85) 25-6, 151-2, 152-3, 283-4, 286, 287, 288, 299w
Civil disorder 309w, 418
Crime 314w
Derelict land 262w, 290-1
Derelict land grants 287
Government grants 23, 291, 564-5w
Government grants to local authorities 264w, 291-2
House of Commons debates 1061, 1062
Hospital closures 748
Housing construction 778w
Housing finance 778w
Land reclamation 262w
Local enterprise agencies 144
Local government expenditure 293
Nursery schools 550w
Opposition days (11.12.85) 929-1007, 1062
Police relations with public 309w
Primary health care 767w
Rate support grants 283-4
School leaving 141
Scotland 564-5w
Special educational needs 550w

Standing Order No 10 applications (02.12.85) 25-6

Inner London boroughs
Block grant 475w

Inner London Education Authority
Expenditure 791w
Income 705-6w
Public sector borrowing 705w

Inquiries
Bellew Parry Raven 443w
Cancer hazards 766-7w
Lloyds of London 443w
Odestage 435w
Trendhart 435w

"Inquiry into the Condition of the Local Authority Housing Stock in England 1985" 260w

Institute of Health Service Administrators 212w

Institution of Environmental Health Officers 257w, 260w
Crown immunity 257w

Insulation grants 264w, 808-9w

Insurance
Licensing 434w
Prison staff 163w

Insurance companies 557w
Administrative delays 434w

Interest charges
Deep discounted stock 769w

Interest groups
Government grants 132-3w

Interest payments 19
Liverpool City Council 19

Interest rates
Economic situation 148
Loans 378w
Local authorities 378w
Local government borrowing 356w

Intergovernmental Conference 324-6w, 708w

Internal drainage boards 484w
Nature conservation 484w

International conferences
Arms control 323w
Arms control treaties 708-9w

International cooperation
Air transport 803w
Drug crimes 814w
Fast reactor 804w
Satellite communications 544w

International Fund for Agricultural Development
UK contributions 17

International Labour Organisation
Employment level 141-2
Minimum wage 180w

International Ocean Drilling Programme 627w, 711-2w
Departmental coordination 711-2w

International organisations 37-8w
UK contributions 37-8w

International Planned Parenthood Federation 361-2w
Abortion 361w
El Salvador 361-2w
Government grants 361w, 362w
Sterilisation 361-2w

International Scientific Community on Problems of the Environment 311w
Civil defence 311w

International Tin Council (10.12.85) 765-6

International trade
Taxation 252w
USA 168w

International Year of Peace 37w, 38w

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless 25w
Women 25w

Interrogation
Armed forces training 97w

Interrogation methods 95w, 96-7w
Ashford training centre 95w, 96w, 97w

Intervention stocks
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough 479w

Interviews
Immigration controls 462w

Inter-city rail transport 5
Railway transport 5

Intimidation of witnesses
Television programmes 761

Invalid care allowances 693w

Invalidity benefits 755

Investment 354-5w
Church Commissioners 617-8
Financial institutions 717w
Regional aid 717w

Investment income
British Airways 110w

Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 725w

IRA
Terrorism 1052-3

Iran
Human rights 573w

Ireland
Chief constables 1056-7
Severe weather payments 915

Irish Sea 352w

Iron & steel industry
British Steel Corporation 910
Church & state 565w
Factory closures 690w, (12.12.85) 1077
Garcosh 908-9, 910
Local authorities in Scotland 690w
Manufactured goods 906-7
Productivity 716w
Ravenscraig Steelworks 906-7
Scotland 565w, 691w, 906, 907
Scottish Affairs Select Committee 907-8, 909, 910, 1061
Submarines 908-9

Isle of Dogs 470-1w

Isle of Dogs enterprise zone 470-1w

Isle of Wight
Mink 726w

Israel
Espionage 324w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 338
European Council (05.12.85) 432
UNESCO (05.12.85) 452
Questions
Drugs, Patents 434w
Fishing quotas, EC action 482-3w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Business statement 1074-5
Equal opportunities, Ministry of Defence 592-3w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Education & Science 363w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Employment 537w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of the Environment 373-4w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Trade & Industry 433-4w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Transport 388w
Equal opportunities officers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 383w
Equal opportunities officers, Home Office 356w
Equal opportunities officers, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 352w
Hospices, Health services finance 601w
Housing starts, Leicester 280w
Industrial tribunals, Public appointments 724w

Japan
Fishing limits 587w
Unfair trading practices 148-9
Vaccination 817-9w

Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 431
UNESCO (05.12.85) 451

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 455-6
Questions
Business statement 444

Jews
Emigration 590w
USSR 367w, 590w

Job centres
Job start scheme 184w
Unemployment 190w
Vacancies 178w, 180w

Job creation schemes
Brixton 55w
Scunthorpe 86w

Job **release scheme**
Early retirement 367w
Teachers 541w

Job start scheme 184w, 186w, 540-1w
Job centres 184w
Training allowances 540-1w
Unemployment 186w

Johannesburg Airport 385-6w
Armed forces 385-6w

John, Mr Brynmor
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 923, 928
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 734
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 110-2
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Income 99w
Hospital closures, Mid Glamorgan 615
Nitrates, Water supply 59w
Wines, Agricultural surpluses 486w

John W McKay 60w
Repairs & maintenance 60w

Johnson Matthey 5-6w, 15w, 103w, 1059-60
Esal Commodities 103w
Fraud 5-6w, 15w, 1059-60

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 925
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 625
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 533-7, 543, 551
Questions
Tyres, Motor vehicle safety 110w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 157-8
Questions
Proportional representation, Northern Ireland 306w

Joint Centre for Land Development Studies 258w

Joint Committee on Vaccination & Immunisation 817-9w

Joint consultative committees (04.12.85) 312

Joint liaison committees 696-7w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc

Severn bridge, Standing Order No 10 applications (12.12.85) 1078
Questions
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Agricultural research 790w, 804w
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Expenditure 790-1w
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Public appointments 790w
Common agricultural policy, Marginal land 804w
Council housing, Wales 571w
Employment opportunities, South Wales 610-1
Infant mortality, Wales 572w
Motorways, Wales 572w
NHS Finance, Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 606
Overseas students, Welsh Plant Breeding Station 788w
Social security recipients, Wales 617w
Unemployment, Wales 611, 614
Water charges, Wales 572w
Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Agricultural research 789-90w
Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Conditions of employment 791w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Questions
Housing Defects Act 1984, Wales 446w
Nurses training, Wales 605-6
Unemployment, Wales 612

Jones, Keith Lionel 650w
Prison medical services 650w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
British embassies, Business 248w
Cost per pupil, Hertfordshire 364w
Drug rehabilitation centres, Hemel Hempstead 610w
Motorways, Road traffic 388w
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 748
Pupil-teacher ratios, Buckinghamshire 285w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Hertfordshire 285w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 285w
Redundant churches, Durham 618

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council, Ministerial statements (11.12.85) 922-8
Industrial Development, Northern Region (03.12.85) 171
Questions
Advertising Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 480w
Advertising agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 480-1w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Government grants 193-4w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Income 270w
Agricultural research, Expenditure 727w
Agriculture, Expenditure 662-4w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 661-2w
Common agricultural policy, UK repayments 667-8w
EC Agriculture Council 663w
Equal opportunities officers, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 352w
Fishing quotas, EC action 482-3w
Hill livestock allowances, Forestry grants 269w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Higher civil servants 98-9w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Planning 660w
Spirits, Agricultural surpluses 480w
Suckler cow premiums 100-1w

Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith, Secretary of State for Education and Science
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 459
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Education & Science 365w
Architecture, College closures 366w
Assisted places scheme, Parental contributions 570w
Dept of Education & Science, Termination of employment 705w
Education, Expenditure 789w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Education & Science 363w
General certificate of Secondary Education, Teacher training 570-1w
Higher education, Student numbers 448-9w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Voluntary schools 627w
Inner London Education Authority, Expenditure 791w
International Ocean Drilling Programme 627w
Manpower Services Commission, Educational finance 225w
Schools, Capital investment 633-4w
Special educational needs 223-4w
Special educational needs, Pupils 223-4w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 628w
Teachers, Pay 9-12w
Teachers, Pay settlements 628w
Teachers, School meals 11-2w
Teachers appraisal, Headteachers 362-3w
University Grants Committee 362-3w
University teachers, Conditions of employment 455w

Judgments
Lord Advocate 915
Private rented housing 57w
School administration 161w
Special educational needs 628w
Trustee savings banks 915

Judiciary
Freemasonry 554-5w
Northern Ireland Government 1049-50

Junior hospital doctors 338w
Hospital consultants 401w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Questions
Crime, Criminal investigation 412
Crime, Law enforcement 418-9
Crime, Research 321w
Home Office 464w
Police, Death 322w
Police, Expenditure 699-700w
Police, Overtime 700-1w
Public Order Bill 1985/86 701w
Rate support grants, Local authorities 172w
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 202w, 336w
Sportsgrounds, Closed circuit television 777w
Sunday trading, Police 309w

Kaukungua, Shapua 357w
SWAPO 357w

Kaufman, Sara 572-3w

Keep Britain Tidy
National Parks 296-7

Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1014
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 464
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 350
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 859
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 964, 994
UNESCO (05.12.85) 453
Questions
Invalidity benefits 755

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Questions
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Tax allowances 911
NHS finance, Public expenditure 747
Poaching, Scotland 917
Scottish Examination Board, Teachers 698w
Tourist industry, Ross & Cromarty District Council 138

Kent University 145-7w, 534w
Personal social services research unit 145-7w, 534w

Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 449-50

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 454
Questions
Planning permission, Land use 55-6w
Rural areas, Government grants 265w

Kidney disease 678w

Kidney donor cards
Computer applications 749
Waiting lists 749

Kidney failure 533-4w
Death 533-4w

Kidney machines
Costs 446w
Wales 446w

Kidney patients 533-4w, 678w, 748-9
Death 533-4w
Medical treatments 678w, 748-9

Kidneys
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 134w
Transplant surgery 749

Killin
Tree planting 563-4w

Kilroy-Silk, Mr Robert
Questions
Manpower Services Commission, Adult training strategy 176w
Police custody, Police cells 414-5
Prison population, Alternatives to prison 413
Regional health authorities, Secure psychiatric units 117-8w

Kilsyth
Historic buildings 564w
Regional aid 20w
Regional selective assistance 20w

King, Michael 385w, 703w

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 683
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 878-9
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1190-1201
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1207
Questions
Civil defence, Police 312w
Road accidents, Motorways 7

King, Rt Hon Tom, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 589w, 729w, 1047-9, 1049-50, 1050-1, 1057-8
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Border security in Ireland 1052-3
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 299-300, 300-1, 302-3
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial statements 301
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland government 1057, 1059
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1047-9
Anglo-Irish Agreement, USA 728w
Anglo-Irish talks, Departmental publications 1059
Anglo-Irish talks, Hillsborough 731w
Army, Northern Ireland 1053
Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 725w
Northern Ireland Assembly 728w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Chief constables 730w

Security, Northern Ireland 1052-3, 1059
Ulster Defence Regiment 1049

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 430
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 999, 1001
Questions
Business statement 440-2
Cruelty to children, Child care 151
Strategic defence initiative, Science and technology Research 423
Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee, Autumn statement 758

Kinsale gas pipeline 1056
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1056

Kirklees District Council 468-9w
Empty housing 468-9w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc
Forestry (02.12.85) 128-31
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 162
Social Security (Contributions Reraising) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1175-7
Questions
Advertising agencies, Department of Health & Social Security 125-6w
Africa, Aid financed trade 586w
Agency nurses, Labour costs 338-9w
Antismoking campaign, Young people 816-7w
Blood, Imports 125w
Blood products laboratory, Finance 393-4w
Children in care, Cruelty to children 618-20w
Community programme 181w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 728w
Cruelty to children, Parents 826w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Employment 82-3w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Health & Social Security 534-5w
Eye disorders, Contact lenses 609w
Health services, Racial discrimination 270-1w
Housing improvement, Local government expenditure 260w
HTLV III virus, Legislation 125w
Job release scheme, Teachers 541w
Local government social services, Ministers domestic visits 752w
NHS, Spectacles 490w
NHS charges, Foreign patients 118-26w
Occupational pensions, Housing benefits 745
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 574w
"Progress in Partnership" 210-1w
Rate rebates, Scotland 686-7w
Research finance, AIDS 126w
Severe weather payments 602-3w
Tobacco, Advertising controls 817w
World Health Organisation, Health surveys 148w

Knight, Mr Greg
Debates etc
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 491, 494, 501, 513-5
Questions
Coroners 795w
Customs officers, Manpower 770-1w
Drug crimes, Equipment 652w
Police vehicles 164w
Prison escapes, Sudbury Prison 413

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Widows, Supplementary benefits 1064

Knowles, Mr Michael
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 343-5
Questions
Channel crossing, France 104w
Company registration 624-5w
Disaster relief, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 18
Flats, Right to buy 258w
Strikes, Lost working days 191w

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Council house sales, Council tenants 257w
Economic & Social Committee 203w
Economic & Social Committee, Public appointments 203w
Economic & Social Committee, Travelling expenses 203-4w
Fire regulations, Hostels 356w
Privatisation, Income 251-2w
Welsh Development Agency, Expenditure 445w

Labour costs
Agency nurses 338-9w

Labour market 177w

Labour mobility 541-2w

Labour Party
Law enforcement 418

Lambeth
Burglary 646w
Employment schemes 640w
Housing investment programmes 374-5w
Housing subsidies 775w
Robbery 646w
Unemployment 579w, 799w

Lambie, Mr David
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 902
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 161
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 908
Rates & rating, Scotland 688w
Transient people, Scotland 916

Lamond, Mr James
Questions
Industrial training, European Social Fund 640-1w
Sunday trading 410-11
Textile industry, European Social Fund 626w
Youth training scheme 182w

Lamont, Mr Norman, *Minister of State for Defence Procurement*
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 28-30, 58, 59, 97-102
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 386w
Air force, Aircrew 350-1w
Air force, Resignations 350w
Air force, Training 350w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 279w
Cancer, Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 351w
Defence contracts 280-2w
Defence procurement 547w
Defence research, Nuclear test ban 387w
Devonport dockyard, Management 812w
Devonport dockyard, Privatisation 812w
Dockyards, Contracts 386w
Dockyards, Personnel 206-8w
Dockyards, Privatisation 206w
Dockyards, Shareholders 386-7w
Earthquakes, Research finance 205w
Meteorological Office 279w
Meteorological Office, Costs 279w
Military aircraft, Early warning systems 545-6w
NATO, Ammunition 207w
Nuclear weapons tests, Christmas Island 204w, 811w
Nuclear weapons tests, Protective clothing 92w
Plutonium, Nuclear reactors 387w
Rosyth dockyard, Fixed assets 205-6w
Rosyth dockyard, Shipbuilding 206w
Strategic defence initiative, Technical Assistance 98w, 811-2w
Strategic defence initiative, Technology transfer 98w
Trident missiles, Costs 97w
Trident missiles, Design 98w
Trident submarines, Costs 97w
Trident submarines, Design 98w
Trident submarines, Nuclear reactors 97-8w
Uranium, Production 279-80w
Westland helicopters, Defence contracts 545w

Lancashire
District health authorities 489-90w
Employment 177-8w
Road construction 660w

Land acquisition
Derelict land 289-90
London Docklands Development Corporation 375-6w
Property transfer 775w
Public sector assets 103w, 261w
Railway property 427-8w

Land drainage
Advisory services 668w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 484w
Sites of special scientific interest 267w

Land drilling
Petroleum exploration licences 750w

Land ownership & tenure
Cumbernauld Development Corporation 564w
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth District Council 564w

Land pollution
Greater London Council 298-9w
Woolwich prison 294w

Land reclamation
Derelict land 374w
Inner city areas 262w
London Docklands Development Corporation 375-6w
Private sector 374w
West Derbyshire District Council 670w

Land Registry Office
Land use 775w

Land Resources Development Centre 17-8

Land use
Housing construction 607
Land Registry Office 775w
Planning permission 55-6w, 266w
Vacant land 290

Land values
Housing benefits 60w

Languages education
Secondary education 284w
Welsh language 608

Lasswade
Veterinary services 687w, 914

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 437
Questions
Arms control, International conferences 708-9w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Appropriation accounts 637w
Foreign policy, Reagan, President 166w
Human rights, Iran 573w
Industrial training, Adult education 176w
Limited list prescribing 600w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 318w
Prime Minister visits abroad, USSR 323w
Unemployment, Training 138-9
Urban development corporations 291

Law enforcement
City of London 424-5
Crime 417-9
Criminal damage 417-8
Inland Revenue 653-4w
Labour Party 418
Public expenditure 418-9

Law reform
Extradition 314-5w

Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985
566-7w

Law Reform (Parent & Child) (Scotland) Bill 1985/86
1R (11.12.85) 928

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Questions
Civil service, Youth training scheme 542w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1018
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, Duty solicitors 15
Fraud squad, Manpower 649w
Licensing hours 138
Lorries, Spray suppression 390w
Obscenity, Legislation 321w
Pornography 321w
Pornography, Convictions 320-1w
Scottish courts, Convictions 333w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1079-87, 1090
Building Societies Bill, 1R (05.12.85) 457

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Questions
Advertising agencies, Ministry of Defence 593w
Armed forces dependents, Armed forces education allowances 593w
Armed forces dependents, Education 544w
Armed forces discharges, 9 Signal Regiment 593w, 594w
Armed forces discharges, 14 Signal Regiment 593-4w, 594-5w
Armed forces training, South Africa 546w
Army, Horses 781-2w
Civilian pay records office, Manpower 545w
Defence, Capital investment 637w
Defence research, Ministry of Defence 204-5w
Dockyards, Privatisation 545w, 781w
Equal opportunities, Ministry of Defence 592-3w
Meteorological Office 546w, 547w
Passports, 9 Signal Regiment 594w
Passports, 14 Signal Regiment 595w
RAE Oakhanger, Satellite communications 544w
Weather modification, Air pollution 205w

Leeds
Road traffic 802w
Youth training scheme 641-2w

Leeds Eastern Health Authority 130w
Infant mortality 130w

Leeds Western Health Authority 620w
Infant mortality 620w

Legal costs
Moller-Butcher, Brian 769w
Trials 769w

Legal representation 25w
Civil disorder 25w
Police interrogation 25w

Legionnaires disease 256w, 816w
Scotland 256w

Legislation
Building societies 354w
Dept of the Environment 476-7w
Housing 378w
HTLV III virus 125w
Obscenity 321w
Planning 378w
Private rented housing 56w, 57w
Water meters 668-9w

Legitimacy 813w
Scotland (11.12.85) 928

Leicester
Area manpower boards 579-80w
Council housing 260w
Housing starts 260w
Local government expenditure 22-3
Local government staff 152

Leicester University 315w
Forensic science 315w

Leicestershire
Pupil-teacher ratios 7-8w
Pupils 8-10w
School population 225-6w
Student numbers 158w

Leicestershire Health Authority 760
Contract cleaning 760

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 339
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 632
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 117-8
UNESCO (05.12.85) 456
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 573-4
Questions
Cable & Wireless, Privatisation 175w
Liberal Party, Propaganda 759-60
Local Government Practices & Procedures Inquiry 379w
Proportional representation, Electoral reform 1062
Redundant churches, Lincolnshire 618-9

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 842
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 1001
Sugar, EC action (01.12.85) 124-5
Questions
Employment level, National insurance contributions 367-8w
Employment schemes, Manpower 641w
Ethnic minorities, Music 808w
Inner city areas, Nursery schools 550w
Redundancy, Newham 800w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1020-1
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 117, 120
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Licensing 426w
Building societies, Companies 355w
Gas safety, Privatisation 542w
UNESCO 3w

Leukaemia
Death 382w
Rosyth dockyard 382w
Scotland 382w

Lewis, Sir Kenneth
Questions
Air transport, EC Transport Council 105w
Business statement 1072

Lewis, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 681, 682-3
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 176, 183-4

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Employment opportunities, Wages councils 180w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Local government reform 288
Residential care, Elderly 599w

Liberal Party
Propaganda 759-60

Libraries 543w
Civil Defence College 312w
Scotland 198-9w
Wales 353w

Libyan Arab Republic
British residents abroad 385w, (05.12.85) 523-30, 703w
Foreign policy 814w
Prisoners 703w

Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980 791w

Licensing
Aircrew 303w
Alternative medicine 595-6w, 597w
British Gas Corporation 426w
Buses 772w
Drugs 685-6w
Fishing vessels 482-3w, 588w
Insurance 434w
Mink 726w
Tyre industry 392w
Unit trusts 434w

Licensing hours 32w, 138
Public houses 32w

Licensing laws 416, 417
Alcoholism 417
Alcoholism & crime 416-7
Drinking & driving 417
Road accidents 417
Sunday trading 416

Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 457w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 457w

Life imprisonment
Prison sentences 163w

Life insurance
Salesmanship 625w

"Lifting the Burden White Paper" 55-6w, 580w, 810w
Employment opportunities 580-1w
Planning permission 810w

Light dues 4-5
Fees & charges 4-5
Sailing boats 4-5

Lighting
Motorways 8-9, 429w
M1 302-3w, 802w
Public expenditure 8-9
Road Safety 9

Limited list prescribing 199w, 394w, 490w, 600w
Aids for handicapped 394w
Cyanocobalamin 490w

Lincoln
Bishops 618-9

Lincolnshire
Redundant churches 618-9

Lines of Communication Agreement 244w
Airlines 244w

Liquid milk
Consumption 732-3w
Scotland 732-3w

List D schools 458w
Local government expenditure 903
Local government finance 458w
Scotland 902-3

Listed buildings
Architectural conservation 281

Literacy
Departmental coordination 420w
Wales 39w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1118-20
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 978-81
Questions
Community health services, North West region 598w
Factories, Demolition 261w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 189w
Vacant land, Manchester 287

Live Aid 442w
Video piracy 442w

Liverpool
Rape 35w
Rape crisis centres 35-6w
Sexual Offences Act 1985 34w

Liverpool bay 352w
Fish 352w

Liverpool City Council 19, 241-2w, 264w, 378w
Central-local government relations 19-20, 21
Hatton, Derek 22
Interest payments 19
Local government finance 19-20, 20-1, 21-2, 22-3, 241-2w, 264w, 282, 378w
Rate support grants 282

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 924-5
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 727-8
Questions
Pigs, Wales 445w
Rights of way 258w
Skilled workers, Training 184w

Lloyd, Mr Ian
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 454
Questions
Business statement 1068
Scientists, Political parties 758

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1127-30
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 667, 678-80
Questions
Dental amalgam, Dentistry 132w
Dental amalgam, Health hazards 132w
Employment level, North West region 539-40w
Factory Inspectorate, North West region 540w
Fasih, Mohammed, Political refugees 794w
Housing associations, Management techniques 259-60w
Immigration controls, Interviews 462w
Low pay 755-6
Passenger transport executives, Government grants 11-2
Plastic bullets, Greater Manchester 413
Political refugees, Administrative delays 794w
Prime Minister official engagements 709w
Rapid transit systems, Greater Manchester 244w
Regional planning & development, North west region 717w
Supplementary benefits, Food 132w
Supplementary benefits, Nutrition & health 600-1w
Tyne & Wear Metro, Government grants 244w
Unemployment 142
Unemployment, North West region 177w

Lloyds of London
Disciplinary proceedings 12
Disclosure of information 13
Fraud 5w
Fraud Investigation Group 5w, 12
Inquiries 443w
Prosecutions 12

Loan guarantee scheme
Criminal investigation 642-4w
Small businesses 192w, 642-4w

Loans (05.12 85) 457
Interest rates 378w
Water authorities 59w

Local authorities
Airports 10
Alley, Eric 245-6w
Arts sponsorship 621
Civil defence 313w, 415
Council housing 62-4w
Emergency planning 313w
High rent schemes 343-4w
Housing benefits 340w
Housing stock 62-4w
Interest rates 378w
Planning appeals 55w
Public expenditure 712-5w
Rate support grants 172w
Town & country planning 266w

Local authorities in Scotland
Capital investment 748w
Civil defence 335-6w
Council housing 734-6w, 735-7w, 737-9w, 739-40w
Housing & handicapped 740-2w
Housing standards 742-3w
Housing support grants 330-4w
Iron & steel industry 690w
Rate support grants 202w, 330w, 336w

Local authority associations 702w

Local education authorities
Capital investment 706w
Greater London 158w
Technical & vocational education initiative 185w

Local enterprise agencies 90-1w, 142, 143-4, 145-6, 183w, 187w
Employment opportunities 143, 144-5
Inner city areas 144
Training 187w
Venture capital 183w

Local enterprise agency grant scheme 90-1w, 612-3
Wales 612-3

Local government
Council of Europe 422w
Disclosure of information 260-1w, (04.12.85) 312
Open government 260-1w

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 32

Local Government Act 1972 230w

Local Government Bill 1985/86 476-7w

Local government borrowing 267-8w
Interest rates 356w
Public Works Loan Board 356w

Local government expenditure 472-3w
Books 198-9w
Capital investment 153w, 475w, 553w
Government grants to local authorities 21-2, 286
Greater London Council 298w, 671w
Housing benefits 750
Housing finance 286-7, 293-4
Housing improvement 260w
Housing problems 282
Inner city areas 293
Leicester 22-3
List D schools 903
Local government finance 20
Local government reform 297-8w, 475w, 671-3w
Pollution monitoring 298-9w
Privatisation 3-4w
Publicity 257-8w
Rate support grants 282-3
Regional councils 255w
Regional planning & development 776-7w
Road construction 243w
Road works 112-5w
Travel concessions 303w
Wales 230w

Local government finance
Council house sales 467w
Government grants to local authorities 172w
List D schools 458w
Liverpool City Council 19-20, 20-1, 21-2, 22-3, 241-2w, 264w, 282, 378w
Local government expenditure 20
Rate support grants 264-5w
Road construction 243w
Wales 608-9

Local government functions
Civil defence college 313w

Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980 291

Local Government Practices & Procedures Inquiry 379w

Local government property
Greater London Council 377w
Local government reform 377w

Local government reform
Arts finance 620
Consultants 470w
County hall 284-5
Ecology 292w
Fire services 811w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 288-9, 421
Greater London Council 285, 298w, 470w
Greater London Enterprise Board 477-8w
Housing finance 285
Housing improvement 377w
Local government expenditure 297-8w, 475w, 671-3w
Local government property 377w
Local government staff 376w
Property transfer 292-3w
Rate equalisation 284
Sports Council 261-2w
Voluntary organisations 612w
Waste disposal 376-7w, 470-1w, 471-2w
West Yorkshire Enterprise Board 144

Local government revenue
Council house sales 285-6, 286-7, 294
Educational finance 705-6w
Government grants to local authorities 286
Housing finance 294-5

Local government services
Scotland 748w

Local government social services
Community care 746
Cruelty to children 763w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 617w
Health services 210-1w, 685w
Ministers domestic visits 752w
Occupational therapists 138-40w
Social Services Inspectorate 752w

Local government staff
Early retirement 376w
Housing benefits 343w
Leicester 152
Local government reform 376w
Pay settlements 230w
Road works 391w
Wales 230w

Local radio
Greater London 581-2w

Location of industry
Industrial investment 709w
South Wales 610

Locomotives
Procurement 107w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 793, 799, 807, 827-9
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 7w
Crime prevention, Finance 310w
Defective housing 809-10w
Health services, Privatisation 141w
Members interests, Channel tunnel 760

London docklands
Canary Wharf 262w
Employment opportunities 262-3w
Industrial development 263w

London Docklands Development Corporation 292
Expenditure 60w
Land acquisition 375-6w
Land reclamation 375-6w

London docklands railway 106w, 389-90w
Canary Wharf 389-90w
Dept of Transport 389-90w

Government grants 244w
Railway fares 387-8w
Railway network 106w

London Fire Brigade 811w

London Regional Transport 108w, 387-8w, 392w
Bus services 392w
Pay 108w

London Residuary Body 284-5, 470w
Capital assets 285
Training 470w

Long stay patients 212-22w, 758-64w

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
Energy consumption, Petrol 115w
Small businesses 182-3w
Strategic defence initiative, Technical assistance 387w

Lord Advocate 915-6
Judgments 915

Lorries
Spray suppression 111w, 390w

Lost working days
Strikes 191w

Lothian
Roads (04.12.85) 353-87
Youth unemployment 689w

Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86 (04.12.85) 353-87

Low pay 755-6
Heating allowances 752

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc
Surcharge & Disqualification of Councillors (Abolition) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 309
Questions
Redundancy, Merseyside 186-7w
Unemployment, Economic policy 147

Luce, Mr Richard, *Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)*
Questions
Art works, Civil defence 465w
Art works, Emergency planning 465w
Arts, Mobility of disabled 543w
Arts finance 543w
Arts finance, Arts Council grants 620
Arts finance, Film industry 622
Arts finance, Glasgow 799w
Arts finance, Income 619-20
Arts finance, Local goverment reform 620
Arts finance, Music 543w
Arts sponsorship 544w
Arts sponsorship, Private sector 621
British Film Institute, Government grants 620-1
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 621-2
Civil service, Youth training scheme 542w
Education Science & Arts Select Committee, Business sponsorship incentive scheme 622
English National Opera, Debts 367w
Equal opportunities, Civil service 337w
Equal opportunities, Treasury 103-4w
Fawcett Library 622
Film industry, Finance 621
Film industry, Government grants 767-8w
Libraries 543w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 544w
Southern Arts, Arts finance 544w

Luxembourg summit (05.12.85) 429-39, 573-4w, 590-1w, 708w
EC reform 708w
VAT threshold 573-4w

Lyell, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 560, 565-9

McColl Committee see Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review

McCormack, James 149

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Questions
Air safety 304w
Air safety, Fire prevention 304w
Aircrew, Licensing 303w
Airlines, Lines of Communication Agreement 244w
British Rail, Government assistance to nationalised industries 244-5w
Business statement 1069-70
Cervical cancer 535w
Cervical cancer, Screening 681-2w, 766w
Cruelty to children, Child care 150-1
Dept of Trade & Industry, Soft loans 169w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Criminal proceedings 13
Drug abuse, Acupuncture 339w
Family doctors, Information 136w
Family practitioner committees 136w
Manchester airport, Companies 10
North Sea, Helicopters 303-4w
Occupational pensions 745
Railway transport, Indonesia 169w
Rape, Press reporting of criminal proceedings 31w
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 599w
Satellite broadcasting, Broadcasting controls 31w
Severe weather payments, Pensioners 753-4
Shipping registration, Flags of convenience 773-4w
Urban programme, Private sector 58w

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Questions
Community health services 600w
Small businesses, Open Tech 185w
Teachers, Scotland 688w, 904

McCusker, Mr Harold
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement, Border security in Ireland 1062-3
Argentina, Foreign policy 423

McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1159
Questions
Catering, Civil service 768w
Crimes of violence, Social problems 417-9
Fraud, City of London 29w, 358w
National insurance contributions, Employees contributions 495w
Property Services Agency, Industrial health & safety 779-80w
Tax yields 542w
Water charges 56w

Macfarlane, Mr Neil
Questions
Homicide, Children 647-50w
Homicide, Habitual offenders 646w
Homicide, Prisoners release 646w
Motorways, Lighting 429w
M25, Road accidents 428-9w
Prison sentences 646w, 649w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, *Chief Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1090, 1154-61
Questions
Civil service manpower 652w
Family credit 173w
Personal tax allowances, One parent families 173-4w
Public sector assets, Income 102-3w
Public sector assets, Land acquisition 103w
Public sector borrowing requirement 101-2w
Public sector earnings 173w

Machine tools industry
Redundancy (09.12.85) 636

McKay, Mr Allen
Questions
Civil disorder, Public order policing 322w
Handicapped, "Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 597w
Public order policing, Association of Chief Police Officers 247w, 582w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 328-9
UNESCO (05.12.85) 453
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Border security in Ireland 1052-3
Business statement 444
Derelict land, Inner city areas 262w
Licensing laws 416
"Mental Health Community Care Government Response" 598w
Mutual & balanced force reductions 348-9w
Occupational pensions, Disclosure of information 683-4w
Unemployment 176w

MacKay, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Forestry (02.12.85) 131-6
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 688w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Tax allowances 911
Cancer, Holy Loch 459-60w, 746-7w
Care proceedings, Scotland 193-8w
Childbirth, Scottish health boards 51w
Children, Scotland 733-4w
Children in care, Scotland 194w, 197-8w, 254-5w
Citizens band radio, Scotland 563w
Civil defence, Local authorities in Scotland 335-6w
Community care, Scotland 696-7w
Crop spraying, Scotland 383w
Day nurseries, Scotland 731-2w
Dentistry, Scotland 458w
Fish conservation, Scotland 697w
Forestry Commission, Forests 49-50w
Forestry Commission, Public appointments 49w
Forestry Commission, Public meetings 47-9w
Forestry Commission, Public participation 910-11
Forestry Commission, Voluntary organisations 47w
Forestry Commission, Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 459w
Forests, Forestry grants 49w, 50w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 52w
Greater Glasgow Health Board, NHS finance 690w
Gynaecology, Stobhill Hospital 381w
Health service staff, Stobhill Hospital 381w
Health services, Grampian 691w
Health services, Scotland 745w
Health services, Scottish health boards 52w
Health services finance, West Lothian Hospital 912
Herring, Norway 565-6w
Herring, Scotland 565w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 693w
Hip replacements, Scotland 563w
Hospital beds, Scottish health boards 47-8w
Hospitals, Scotland 695w
Hospitals, Scottish health boards 46-8w, 54w
Leukaemia, Rosyth dockyard 382w
Leukaemia, Scotland 382w
Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 457w
Liquid milk, Scotland 732-3w
List D schools, Scotland 902-3
Maternity services, Cumbernauld 381-2w
Maternity services, Greater Glasgow Health Board 51w
Maternity services, Scottish health boards 50-1w
NHS administration, Scotland 336w
NHS finance, Scotland 690w

Prescription charges, Scotland 743w, 744w
Prescription drugs, Scotland 199w
Prison overcrowding, Scotland 691-2w
Prisons, Scotland 694w
Scottish courts, Convictions 333w
Scottish health boards, Expenditure 53-4w
Scottish health boards, NHS finance 696w
Sheep premiums 566w
Slaughterhouses, Scotland 691w
Smoking, Scotland 797w
Stobhill Hospital, Hospital closures 912-3
Stobhill Hospital, Maternity services 52w
Tape recorded evidence, Scotland 456w
Teaching hospitals, West Lothian Hospital 912
Tree planting, Caithness 911
Tree planting, Killin 563-4w
Veterinary services, Lasswade 687w
Viruses, Scotland 693w
West Lothian Hospital, Construction 911-2

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Debt collection, Scotland 651-2w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 690-1w

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1201-4
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 158
Questions
Business statement 1069
Legionnaires disease, Scotland 256w
Regional development grants, Scotland 433w
Regional selective assistance, Rutherglen 380w, 433w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 379-80w
Senile dementia, Scotland 256w
Youth unemployment 689w

Maclean, Mr David
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 927
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 728-9
Questions
Agriculture, Expenditure 662-4w
English Tourist Board, Government grants 179w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Planning 660w
Speed limits, Motorways 8

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 926
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 334-6, 340
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 161
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Political parties 1051-2
Crofting, Scotland 566w
Seasonal workers, Social security benefits rules 207-8w
Sheep premiums 566w
Sites of special scientific interest 267w
Sites of special scientific interest, Land drainage 267w
Teachers, Scotland 692-3w, 904
Ulster Defence Regiment 1049

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 434
Northern Ireland Loans Bill, Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 393-4
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 729w
Cancer, Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 351w
Kidneys, Transplant surgery 749w
Medical research, Cholesterol 128w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Ulster Unionists 1052

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Community programme, Propaganda 181w
Police, Manpower 318w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (12.12.85) 1052
Road Traffic Regulation (Parking) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 311
Questions
Air force, Aircrew 350-1w
Air force, Resignations 350w
Air force, Training 350w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 302-3
Armagh Prison, Body searches 443-4w, 1058
Armed forces deployment, 9 Signal Regiment 277w
Armed forces discharges, 9 Signal Regiment 277-8w, 593w, 594w
Armed forces discharges, 14 Signal Regiment 278w, 593-4w, 594-5w
Armed forces recruitment, School leaving 92w
Armed forces training, South Africa 546w
Ashford training centre 95w
Ashford training centre, Armed forces training 95-6w, 96-7w
Ashford training centre, Interrogation methods 95w, 96w, 97w
Ashford training centre, Police training 96w
Ashford training centre, Special Air Service 95w
Ashford training centre, Ulster Defence Regiment 96w
Brixton Prison Body searches 463w
Category A prisoners, Prison population 27w
Category A prisoners, Solitary confinement 27-8w
Defence contracts 280-2w
14 Signal Regiment, Police interrogation 783-4w
Military police, Armed forces training 97w
9 Signal Regiment, Body searches 278w
9 Signal Regiment, Police interrogation 783w
Passports, 14 Signal Regiment 594w
Passports, 9 Signal Regiment 594w

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 91-2
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL) 2R (04.12.85) 323-6, 343
Oral question time intervention (11.12.85) 902
Parliamentary papers (13.12.85) 1217
Safety at Sea Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 309
Questions
Civil defence, Volunteer Reserve 313w
Hotel & catering industry, Employment opportunities 328w
Hotel & catering industry, Northern Ireland 306w
Hotel & catering industry, Scotland 334-5w
Hotel & catering industry, Vacancies 329w
Hotel & catering industry, Vocational guidance 327-8w, 329w
Hotel & catering industry, Wales 305w
Hotel & catering industry, Youth training scheme 328w
Scottish Tourist Board 333-4w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 913-4

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Glasgow 692w
Average earnings, Manufacturing industries 640w
Children, Scotland 733-4w
Day nurseries, Scotland 731-2w
Libraries, Scotland 198-9w
Liquid milk, Scotland 732-3w
Rate support grants, Scottish councils 255-6w

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 172, 192-4
Questions
Ministers domestic visits, Darlington bypass 111w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 770, 775
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 984-8
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 225, 243
Questions
Business statement 1067
Community programme, Social security recipients 181w
Immigrants fiancees, Temporary immigrants 583w
Immigration, Civil service unions 26w
Immigration, Members correspondence 310-1w
Local government social services, Community care 746
Railway electrification, Bradford 2
Railway transport, Bradford 107w
Rented housing, Bradford 172w
Road signs, Bradford 801-2w

Madel, Mr David
Questions
Cabinet papers, Thirty year rule 323-4w
Veterinary medicine, University Grants Committee 567w

Magistrates
Bolton 2w
Greater London 645w
Sentencing 793-4w

Magnox reactors
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 360w
Plutonium 423w

***Major, Mr John** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health & Social Security*
Debates etc
Fuel bills (04.12.85) 402-8
Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1165-7, 1177-9
Questions
Child benefit, Supplementary benefits 756
Dept of Health & Social Security, Manpower 126-7w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Deeside 597w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Security guards 128w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 271w, 272-4w
Exceptional needs payments, Edinburgh 492w
Family income, Poverty 604w
Family income, Social security benefits uprating 755
High rent schemes, Local authorities 343-4w
Housing benefits 270w
Housing benefits, Housing amenities 340w
Housing benefits, Local authorities 340w
Housing benefits, Local government staff 343w
Housing benefits, Non-dependent deductions 341w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits reductions 339-40w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 341w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 341-2w
Housing benefits, Students 404w
Housing benefits review boards 342-3w
Low pay 755-6
National insurance contributions, Employees contributions 495w
Pensions, Expenditure 755-6w
Pensions, Orders & regulations 136-7w
Pensions, Social security benefits uprating 605w
Poverty 496w
Rent rebates, Income 340-2w
Retirement pensions 401w
Sickness benefits, Hereford & Worcester 338w
Social security abuse, Housing benefits 604w

Social security benefits rules, Housing benefits 131-2w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 595w
Supplementary benefits, Camden 133w
Supplementary benefits, Take-up 756
Supplementary benefits, Waltham Forest 615w
Supplementary benefits, West Midlands 345-6w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 131w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1017

Malone, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 374, 376, 382
Questions
Council of Ministers 248-50w
Enterprise allowance scheme 91-2w
Health services, Grampian 691w
Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985 566-7w
Scottish Office, Expenditure 560-4w
Uganda, Peace negotiations 250w

Management consultants
Dept of Health & Social Security 816w

Management techniques
Housing associations 259-60w

Manchester
Vacant land 287

Manchester Airport 392-3w, 423
Companies 10
Manchester City Council 10-1, 423
Privatisation 21, 392-3w

Manchester City Council 423
Manchester Airport 10-1, 423

Manchester University 420
Ministers domestic visits 420
Public order policing 420

Mandatory student grants 159w
Cost of living 226w
Costs 226w
Parental contributions 226w

Manpower Services Commission
Adult training strategy 176w
Educational finance 225w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 89-90w
Open Tech 185w
Pay 724-5w
Public appointments 724-5w
Training 610

Manufactured exports
Manufacturing industries 169w

Manufactured goods
Iron & steel industry 906-7

Manufacturing industries 15-6w, 142
Average earnings 640w
EC countries 233-42w
Employment 241w
Exchange rates 1061
Manpower 178w, 189w, 722w
Manufactured exports 169w
Public investment 241w
Redundancy 722w

Maples, Mr John
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1089, 1117
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 781, 801-3, 804
Questions
EC Finance Council 806w
Environmental Pollution Royal Commission 294-5w
Local government reform, Property transfer 292-3w
Overseas students, Scholarships 21w
Rate support grants, Greater London 284

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 693-6
Questions
Capital investment, Wales 654-6w
Defence, Capital investment 637w
Hospitals, Scotland 695w
Housing, Capital investment 669w
Inter-city rail transport, Railway transport 5
Local government services, Scotland 748w
NHS finance, District health authorities 748
NHS finance, Wales 614-5
Prisons, Capital investment 650w
Prisons, Scotland 694w
Regional health authorities, Capital investment 684-6w
Road construction, Capital investment 659w
Roads, Scotland 693-6w
Schools, Capital investment 633-4w
Schools, Scotland 747-8w
Test tube babies, Clinics 604w

Margarine
Hospital catering 616w

Marginal land
Common agricultural policy 804w
Hill livestock allowances 488w

Marine nature reserves 258w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 60, 64
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 927
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 461, 464
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Points of order (04.12.85) 305, 307
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 326, 328, 335, 353
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 868-72, 873, 874-5, 876, 880, 882-3, 885, 890
European Council (05.12.85) 437
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 768
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 964
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 630
Questions
Business statement 445-6, 1075
Child support, Family benefits 252-4w
Espionage, Israel 324w
London Residuary Body, Capital assets 285
Police relations with public, Inner city areas 309w
Public expenditure, Local authorities 712-5w
Student grants 453-4w

Marriage
Wales (06.12.85) 531

Marriage (Wales) Bill 1985/86
1R (06.12.85) 531

Married people
Student grants 284w

Married womens half test 276-7w
Retirement pensions 276-7w

Marshall, Mr David
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 646, 673, 688, 695
Questions
Arts finance, Glasgow 799w
Company liquidations 250-1w
Company liquidations, Scotland 381w
Company liquidations, Wales 447w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Scotland 380w
Housing associations, Glasgow 798-9w
Railway transport, Strathclyde 46w
Roads, Scotland 457w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering, Public petitions (10.12.85) 892
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 357, 362, 364-7, 369, 372
Questions
British Rail, Rolling stock 300w
Hospital closures, Stobhill Hospital 913

Maryport harbour 291
Ports 291
Regional aid 291

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial statements 301
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1049
Carpet industry, Imports 436-7w
Carpet industry, Yorkshire & Humberside 437w
Coal firing scheme 420-1w, 425w
Coal mining, Subsidence 424w
Jews, USSR 590w
Multifibre arrangement 437w
Redundant mineworkers payments scheme 7w, 750w
Sequestration of assets, Contempt of court 426w
Textile industry, Barnsley 443w
Textiles, Antidumping duties 438w
Textiles, Import controls 437-8w
Textiles, Imports 435w

Maternity benefits
Widows 1064

Maternity services
Basildon Hospital (03.12.85) 274-80
Cumbernauld 381-2w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 51w, 912-3
Hospital beds 50-1w
Scottish health boards 50-1w
Stobhill Hospital 52w, 381w, 912, 913

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Protection of Military Remains Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 311
Questions
RAE Oakhanger, Satellite communications 544w

Mathematics education
Secondary education 284w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Debates etc
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 312
Questions
Church of England, Church & state 152
Hospital bed occupancy rates, NHS 601w
NHS finance, Cost effectiveness 747

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 369-71
Questions
Council housing, Local authorities in Scotland 734-6w, 735-7w, 737-9w, 739-40w
Council housing, Scotland 739w
Greater Glasgow Heath Board, NHS finance 690w
Hospital closures, Stobhill Hospital 913
Housing & handicapped, Local authorities in Scotland 740-2w
Housing standards, Local authorities in Scotland 742-3w

Maxwell, Robert 385w, 703w

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 644
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 32, 56
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 924
European Council (05.12.85) 434
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 771, 772

Income tax assessment, Public petitions (13.12.85) 1187-9
Members interests (10.12.85) 762-3
Questions
Offices of profit under the Crown 573w
Sheep meat, Exports 727w
Sheep Meat, France 486-7w

Mayhew, Sir Patrick, *Solicitor-General*
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Services (11.12.85) 1012-6, 1023-4
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 14
Building societies, Conveyancing 812-3w
Building societies, Legislation 354w
Consolidation Bills 655-6w
Criminal Proceedings Arising from Fraud Review Committee 165w
Crown Prosecution Service 555w
Crown Prosecution Service, Conditions of service 14-15
Crown Prosecution Service, Duty solicitors 15
Debt collection, Rents 353-4w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Criminal proceedings 13
Director of Public Prosecutions, Fraud 812w
Dunbar, Rony Kevin, Trials 555w
Falkland Islands, Disclosure of information 165w
Fraud, Greater London 426w
Fraud, Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate 427w
Fraud Investigation Group, Finance 12-3
Fraud Investigation Group, Prosecutions 13
Independent Prosecution Service, Costs 299-300w
Johnson Matthey, Fraud 5-6w
Judiciary, Freemasonry 554-5w
Legitimacy 813w
Lloyds of London, Disciplinary proceedings 12
Lloyds of London, Disclosure of information 13
Lloyds of London, Fraud 5w
Lloyds of London, Fraud Investigation Group 5w, 12
Magistrates, Greater London 645w
Pahoomal family, Arrests 5w
Sequestration of assets, Contempt of court 426w
Social Security appeals tribunals, Public appointments 228w
Trials, Drug crimes 554-5w

Maynard, Miss Joan
Questions
Army, Northern Ireland 1053
Council housing, Housing standards 260w
South Africa, Arms embargoes 636w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Questions
Health for all 492w
Health services, Disadvantaged 492w
Hospital doctors 492w
Kidney patients, Death 533-4w
Optical charges 494w
Pensions, Orders & regulations 136-7w
Prescription charges, Northern Ireland 730-2w
Prescription charges, Scotland 743w, 744w
Prescription charges exemptions, Publicity 765w
Prescriptions, Northern Ireland 730w
Prescriptions, Wales 699-700w
Social security benefits rules, Social security recipients 129w
Social security recipients, Children 130w
State earnings related pension scheme 750
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 130w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 220, 222-5, 227
Questions
Equal opportunities 33w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Employment 87w
Equal opportunities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 37w
Fawcett Library 622
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Drug rehabilitation centres 421
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Local government reform 289
Local government social services, Government grants to voluntary organisations 617w
Supplementary benefits, Take-up 756
Systime UK, Foreign investment in UK 558w
Systime UK, Government grants 558w
Systime UK, Millshaw park 558w
West Yorkshire Enterprise Board, Local government reform 144

Meat
Hormones (09.12.85) 719-36

Medical Act 1983 (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (06.12.85) 531

Medical education
University finance 567-8w

Medical examinations
Nuclear weapons tests 204w
Remand in custody 792-3w
Sickness benefits 338w

Medical malpractice
Doctors (06.12.85) 531

Medical research
Cancer 345w
Cholesterol 128w
Eyes (04.12.85) 312
Surgery 766w
Trauma 158w

Medical Research Council 789w

Medical treatments
Cancer 535w, 751-2
Kidney patients 678w, 748-9

Medicines Act 1985 595-6w

Mellor, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 562, 563, 577-87
Questions
Age of consent 318w
Body searches, Brixton Prison 162w, 463w
Cardiff Prison, Prison accommodation 320w
Category A prisoners, Prison population 27w
Category A prisoners, Solitary confinement 27-8w
Crime, Inner city areas 314w
Crime, Law enforcement 417-9
Crime, Research 321w
Crime victims, Criminal injuries compensation 702w
Crime victims, Personal records 308w
Crimes of violence, Prison accommodation 318w
Crimes of violence, Sentencing 315-6w
Crimes of violence, Social problems 417-9
Criminal damage, Law enforcement 417-8
Criminal injuries compensation 36w, 701w
Criminal injuries compensation, Government grants to voluntary organisations 701w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Compensation 701-2w
Criminal statistics, Crime 308-9w
Cruelty to children, Parents 826w
Drug abuse, Health education 420-1
Drug crimes, Convictions 26-7w
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 320w, 795w
Extradition, Law reform 314-5w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Drug rehabilitation centres 421
Homicide 316w
Homicide, Children 647-50w
Homicide, Convictions 28w
Homicide, Fixed penalties 314w
Homicide, Habitual offenders 646w
Homicide, Prisoners release 646w
Jones, Keith Lionel, Prison medical services 650w
Law enforcement, Labour Party 418
Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980 791w
Life imprisonment, Prison sentences 163w
Magistrates, Sentencing 793-4w
Metropolitan Police, Crimes of violence 583w
Metropolitan Police, Criminal damage 582-3w
Metropolitan Police, Police custody 582w
Metropolitan Police, Racial attacks 583w
National Association of Victim Support Schemes, Manpower 701w
Obscenity, Legislation 321w
Police custody, Drunkenness 415
Police custody, Police cells 414-5
Pornography 321w
Pornography, Convictions 320-1w
Pornography, Crime prevention 321w
Prison overcrowding 29w
Prison population 29w
Prison sentences 646w, 649w
Prison sentences, Handicapped 645w
Prison staff, Dimissal 645-6w
Prison staff, Insurance 163w
Prison staff, Manpower 29w
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 163w
Prison staff, Occupational health services 245w
Prison staff, Violence 645w
Prisoners, Body searches 791-2w
Prisoners, Costs 30w
Prisoners on remand, Brixton Prison 162w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 308w
Probation officers, Manpower 315w
Public houses, Licensing hours 32w
Rape 34w
Rape, Government grants 35w
Rape, Liverpool 35w
Rape, Press reporting of criminal proceedings 31w
Rape crisis centres, Government grants to voluntary organisations 35w, 162-3w
Rape crisis centres, Liverpool 35-6w
Remand in custody 793w
Remand in custody, Crime 793w
Remand in custody, Greater London 650w
Remand in custody, Medical examinations 792-3w
Risley Remand Centre, Remand in custody 793w
Robbery, Criminal statistics 308w
Robbery, Lambeth 646w
Sathananthian, Dr, Narcotics 464w
Sexual Offences Act 1985 34w, 35w
Stansted Airport, Hijacking 32w
Theft, Homeowners insurance 702w
Tobacco, Children & Young Persons Act 1933 794-5w
Trespass, Indictable offences 317w
Woolwich Prison, Construction 320w
Woolwich Prison, Prison accommodation 319-20w
Woolwich Prison, Prison staff 320w
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 307-8w
Youth custody 645w
Youth custody, Young offenders 307w

Members
House of Commons divisions 761
Scotland 761
Speakers rulings & statements (03.12.85) 218

Members attendance
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 427, 428, 457

Members conduct
Speakers rulings & statements (03.12.85) 226, 247, (05.12.85) 464, (11.12.85) 999, 1000, 1001, 1003

Members correspondence 36w
Alvey programme 434w
Bank of England 4w
Immigrant detainees 792w
Immigration 26w, 310-1w
Poundswick School 455w

Speakers rulings & statements (04.12.85) 305
West, Harry 4w

Members facilities
Facsimile transmission 299w

Members interests
Channel tunnel 760
Speakers rulings & statements (10.12.85) 761-2, 763

Members interventions
Speakers rulings & statements (02.12.85) 108, (03.12.85) 187, 226, (11.12.85) 1003, 1039, (12.12.85) 1183

Members oath & affirmation (10.12.85) 764

Members speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (02.12.85) 108, (03.12.85) 180, 187, 218, (09.12.85) 639, 662, (10.12.85) 801, (11.12.85) 946, 957, 1021, (12.12.85) 1125, (13.12.85) 1237, 1241

Men
Pay 188w

Mental health community care
Bradford 746
Day centres 143-4w
Expenditure 602w
Research 144w

"Mental Health Community Care Government Response" 598w

Mental health services 598w
Gwynedd 446-7w

Mental hospitals
Child patients 758-64w
Hospital closures 128w, 144-5w

Mental illness
NHS Health Advisory Service 144w

Mental patients
Children 212-22w
Young people 212-22w

Mentally handicapped
Blind 685w
Handicapped (04.12.85) 308-9

Mentally ill
Expenditure 143w

Menwith with Darley
Public footpaths 277w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 190-2
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 633
Questions
Coronary bypass operations 602w

Mercury pollution
Fish 352w

Mergers
Distillers Company 1063
Educational finance 707w
Higher education 707w
Universities 731w

Merit awards 489w
Hospital consultants 489w
NHS 489w

Merit certificates 283w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 283w

Mersey Regional Health Authority
AIDS 494w

Merseyside
Crime 311w
Rape 34w, 35w
Redundancy 186-7w
Regional aid 20-1
Sexual Offences Act 1985 35w

Merseyside County Council 671-3w

Merthyr Tydfil
Economic growth 613

Meteorological Office 279w, 546w, 547w
Costs 279w

Meteorology
Civil Aviation Authority 430w

Methadone 339w
Drug abuse 339w

Metropolitan counties
Public transport 105w, 106w
Rate precepts 473-4w
Sports 261-2w

Metropolitan districts
Rate support grants 777-9w

Metropolitan Police
Bullets 792w
Crime prevention 310w
Crime victims 317-8w
Crimes of violence 583w
Criminal damage 582-3w
Detection rates 307w
Hewitt, Colin 701w
Pay 651w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 25w
Police custody 582w
Police powers 25w
Police sirens 319w
Powers of entry 581w
Racial attacks 583w
Rape 34w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 433
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1206
UNESCO (05.12.85) 455
Questions
Planning authorities, Welsh Office 607-8
Railway catering, Privatisation 4
Rhuddlan Borough Council, Ministers correspondence 445w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Armed forces, Publicity 710-1w
British Atlantic Committee, Government grants 710w
Central Office of Information, Publicity 711w
Peace Through NATO, Government grants 710w
Peace Through NATO, Publicity 710w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 607w
Social security benefits rules, Exceptional needs payments 127w

Microelectronics industry
South Yorkshire 190w

Mid Downs Health Authority 275w
NHS finance 275w

Mid Glamorgan
Hospital closures 615

Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 154
Health services finance 154
Hospital waiting lists 606
NHS finance 606

Middlesex Hospital
Cancer 751

Midland link motorways
Road construction 107w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 27-8
Questions
Canary Wharf, Employment opportunities 262-3w
Canary Wharf, Industrial development 263w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Expenditure 60w

Military aircraft (04.12.85) 311
Early warning systems 545-6w

Military exercises
RAF Stornoway 780w

Military police 97w, 783w
Armed forces training 97w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 671-5
Questions
Cemeteries, Scotland 50w
Housing support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 330-4w
Industrial tribunals, Termination of employment 87w
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 330w
Scottish health boards, Expenditure 745-6w
Sex discrimination, EC law 87w
Unemployment, Scotland 689w

Mills, Mr Iain
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1243-6

Millshaw park
Systime UK 558w

Milton Keynes 658w

Minimum wage
Hairdressing 191w
International Labour Organisation 180w
Treaties 180w
Vacancies 180w

Mining
Tin 1062

Ministerial advisory bodies
Alternative medicine 596w

Ministerial responsibility
Buses 712w
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 423, 426-7

Ministerial speeches
Anglo-Irish Agreement 299-300, 300-1, 302-3
Speakers rulings & statements (02.12.85) 110, (03.12.85) 247

Ministerial statements
Abbeystead pumping station 540w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 301
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 922-8
European Council 323w, (05.12.85) 429-39
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1205-10
Speakers rulings & statements (03.12.85) 157, 163, (05.12.85) 437, (09.12.85) 632, (11.12.85) 922, (13.12.85) 1207, 1209
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 623-35
UNESCO (05.12.85) 448-57

Ministers correspondence 431-2w, 434w, 445w, 637-8w
British War Widows & Associates 637-8w
Rhuddlan Borough Council 445w

Ministers domestic visits
Costs 111w
Darlington bypass 111w
Gartcosh 907
Local government social services 752w
Manchester University 420
Regional health authorities 752w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Advertising 480w
Advertising agencies 480-1w
Equal opportunities officers 352w
Higher civil servants 98-9w
Planning 660w

Ministry of Defence
Advertising 386w
Advertising agencies 593w
Equal opportunities 592-3w
Research 204-5w

Mink
Isle of Wight 726w
Licensing 726w

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 795w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1082, 1089, 1134-41

National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 267-9
Questions
EC reform, European Assembly 419w

***Mitchell, Mr David,** Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 710-4
Questions
British Rail, Government assistance to nationalised industries 244-5w
British Rail, Manpower 107w
British Rail, Procurement 107w
British Rail, Rolling stock 300w
Bus services, London Regional Transport 392w
Buses, Germany 772w
Channel crossing, Cement 584w
Channel crossing, Channel ferries 584w
Channel crossing, Construction 104w
Channel crossing, Employment opportunities 104w
Channel crossing, Environmental impact assessment 430w
Channel crossing, Railway timetables 429w
Channel crossing, Road haulage permits 429w
Dartford tunnel, construction 105w
Dept of Transport, Small businesses 9
Inter-city rail transport, Railway transport 5
London docklands railway, Dept of Transport 389-90w
London docklands railway, Railway fares 387-8w
London docklands railway, Railway network 106w
London Regional Transport, Pay 108w
National Bus Company, Privatisation 657w
Passenger transport executives, Government grants 11-2
Public transport, Government grants 106-7w, 109w
Public transport, Metropolitan counties 105w, 106w
Public transport, South Yorkshire 391w
Railway catering 3-4
Railway catering, Privatisation 4, 5
Railway electrification 105w
Railway property, Land acquisition 427-8w
Railway transport, Bradford 107w
Railway transport, Northern region 5
Rapid transit sytems, Greater Manchester 244w
Ribblehead viaduct 429w
Settle to Carlisle railway line 108w
Severn barrage 8
Severn bridge, Private investment 8
Severn bridge, Toll bridges 8
Severn Crossing Feasibility Study 8
St Pancras to Sheffield railway line 109w
Taxicards, Greater London 303w
Taxis, Heathrow 773w
Tyne & Wear Metro, Government grants 244w

Moate, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 694

Mobility allowance 606w

Mobility of disabled
Arts 543w
Cinemas 421-2

Mogden Works 300w

Moller-Butcher, Brian 769w
Legal costs 769w

Monklands
Government assistance to industry 372w
Regional selective assistance 372w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
British Airports Authority 555-7w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 157
Scottish Affairs Select Committee (11.12.85) 1008
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 909
Poaching, Scotland 917
Rural planning, Scotland 687w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 743-4w

***Moore, Mr John,** Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Cable & Wireless, Privatisation 175w, 769-70w
Child benefit 173-4w
Child support, Family benefits 252-4w
Family income, Average earnings 173-4w
Income tax 651-2w
Income tax, Partnerships 592w
Inland Revenue, Bradford 252w
Inland Revenue, Data Protection Act 1984 805w
International trade, Taxation 252w
National insurance, Departmental coordination 770w
PAYE, Income tax 805w
Privatisation, Income 251-2w
Tax yields 542w

Moorfield Eye Hospital 627-8w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 316
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 110-1
Questions
Average earnings 723w
British War Widows & Associates, Ministers correspondence 637-8w
Business statement 443
Channel crossing, Cost benefit analysis 771w
Channel crossing, France 772w
Employment level, Economic regions 721-2w
Financial institutions, Investment 717w
Health services, Greater Manchester 211w
House prices 776w
House prices, Price increases 775-6w
Households, Population 758w
Industrial investment, Location of industry 709w
Local government expenditure, Regional planning & development 776-7w
Motor vehicles 771w
National income 717w
NHS, Expenditure 212w
NHS, Industrial relations 127-9w
Overseas aid, Deaf 586w
Population, South East region 758w
Poundswick School, Members correspondence 455w
Public expenditure 709w
Railway network, Stansted Airport 772w
Redundancy, Manufacturing industries 722w
Redundancy, Northern region 721w
Regional aid 808w
Regional government 709w
Regional planning & development, Environment protection 709-10w
Regional planning & development, Northern region 716w
School buildings, Aids for handicapped 628w
School leaving 704w
School leaving, Educational qualifications 704-5w
Scoliosis, Greater London 491-2w
Special educational needs, Information 228w
Special educational needs, Judgments 628w
Special educational needs, Pupils 629-32w
Tourism, Economic regions 723-4w
Unemployment 722-3w
Vacancies, Unemployment 723w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Crown Prosecution Service (11.12.85) 1009-12

Morris, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1102-4
Questions
Drugs, Parallel imports 601w
Prime Minister visit abroad, South East Asia 571-2w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 750

Morrison, Mr Charles
Questions
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 282

***Morrison, Mr Peter,** Minister of State for Trade & Industry*
Debates etc
European Regional Development Fund (11.12.85) 1027-30, 1036-8
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 171-6, 177, 184
Questions
Carpet industry, Imports 436-7w
Carpet industry, Yorkshire & Humberside 437w
Channel crossing 14w
CR6 taxis 438w
Drug industry, USA 286w
European Regional Development Fund, EC grants & loans 559w
Government assistance to industry, Copeland 372-3w
Government assistance to industry, Paisley 372w
Government assistance to industry, Textile industry 168w
Multifibre arrangement 437w
Regional aid 808w
Regional aid, Yorkshire & Humberside 717w
Regional development grants, Durham 432w
Regional development grants, Northern region 435w
Regional development grants, Paisley 557w
Regional development grants, Scotland 433w
Regional development grants, Yorkshire & Humberside 716-7w
Regional planning & development, North West region 717w
Regional planning & development, Northern region 716w
Regional selective assistance, Birkenhead 807w
Regional selective assistance, Rutherglen 433w
Retail trade, Governmen assistance to industry 626w
Textile industry, Barnsley 443w
Textiles, Import controls 437-8w
Textiles, Imports 435w

Morriston Hospital 447w
Accident & emergency departments 447w

Mortgage relief
House prices 60w

Mortgages (05.12.85) 457

Mothers
Dependents 127w
One parent families 127w

Motor industry
Industrial production 557w
Manpower 191w
Pay settlements 286w

Motor vehicle registration 771w

Motor vehicle safety
Buses 659w
Tyres 110w

Motor vehicle testing
Departmental forms 428w

Motor vehicles 771w
Balance of trade 438-9w
Dial-a-Ride 424
France 424

Motorcyles
Noise control 107-8w
Road safety 108w
Training 108w

Motorways
Ambulance services 614w

Buses 388-9w
Calder valley 660w
Death 301w, 572w
Driving tests 6, 388-9w
Lighting 8-9, 429w
Police patrolling 164w
Police training 462-3w
Repairs & maintenance 391w
Road accidents 6-7, 111w
Road safety barriers 256w
Road traffic 388w, 803w
Road works 111w
Safety barriers 693-4w
Scotland 256w, 693-4w
Speed limits 7, 8
Wales 572w
Warning signs 111-2w

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 119-122
UNESCO (05.12.85) 455

Miltifibre arrangement 437w, 807w
Carpet industry 437w
EC action 434-5w

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Animal Welfare (Royal Commission) Bill, 1R (11.12.85) 928
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 877-8
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 589w
Archaeological sites, Armagh 730w
Archaeological sites, Cresswell crags 294w
Art works, Civil defence 465w
Art works, Emergency planning 465w
Arts finance, Income 619-20
Disabled Persons Act 1981 779w
Gibraltar, Financial services 590w
Prices, Trade descriptions 717-8w
Social security abuse, Hertfordshire 579w
Television 421-2w
UNESCO, UK contributions 707w

Museums & galleries
Government grants 544w
Repairs & maintenance 544w

Music
Arts finance 543w
Ethnic minorities 808w
Urban programme 808w

Mutual & balanced force reductions 348-9w

MV Bridgeness 304-5w
Oil pollution 304-5w

M1 242w, 302-3w, 388w, 391-2w, 584w, 657w, 658w, 801-2w
Closed circuit television 302w
Lighting 302-3w, 802w
Road construction 657w, 658w
Road signs 242w
Road traffic 658w
Sewers 303w

M4 584w

M6 660w

M20 302w
Road construction 302w

M25 428-9w, 584w, 658w, 774w
Road accidents 428-9w
Road works 428w, 774w

M45 658w

M61 660w

M62 801-2w

M69 296-7w

Nairobi Conference 17-8w, 18-9w, 23w, 24w, 33-4w, 37w, 42-3w, 43-4w, 61-2w, 81-2w, 82-3w, 87w, 103-4w, 115w, 148w, 166w, 167-8w, 251w, 316w, 337w, 534-5w
Civil service recruitment 337w
Dept of Employment 81-2w
Dept of Health & Social Security 534-5w
Dept of the Environment 61-2w
Dept of Trade & Industry 17-8w, 19w, 251w
Dept of Transport 115w
Equal Opportunities Commission 33w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 37w
Parental leave 83w
Treasury 103-4w
Welsh Office 42-3w, 43-4w

Namibia
United Nations 384w

Narcotics
Sathananthian, Dr 464w

National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education
Social work 227w

National Association of Victim Support Schemes 701w
Manpower 701w

National Bus Company
Privatisation 657w

National Coal Board
Government grants 424w
Publicity 7w
Subsidiary companies 749w
Wales 447w

National Communications Union 84w
Political levy 84w

National Drugs Unit
Police 792w

National Federation of Small Businesses & the Self-Employed
688-9w

National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985
(03.12.85) 253-73

National Film Finance Corporation (Transfer of Assets & Liabilities) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 253-73

National Freight Company
Fires 725w
Sheffield 725w

"National Health Service in England" 679w

National income 101-2w, 717w

National insurance
Departmental coordination 770w

National insurance contributions (12.12.85) 1165-79
Employees contributions 495w
Employment level 367-8w
Self-employed contributions 495w

National No-smoking Day 270w

National parks 296-7
Keep Britain Tidy 296-7

National Pensioners Convention 578w
Costs 578w

National Weights & Measures Laboratory 13-4w
Administrative delays 13-4w
Pattern approval 13-4w

Nationalised industries
Vacant land 290

NATO
Ammunition 207w
Defence expenditure 782w
Frontiers 349w

NATO bases
Exercise Brave Defender 780w

Natural gas
Northern Ireland 1056
Norway 292w

Nature Conservancy Council
Government grants 265w

Nature conservation 259w
Birds 57-8w
Internal drainage boards 484w

Nature reserves
Pest control 487w

Navy (02.12.85) 27-106

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 89-90w, 609-10
Employment opportunities 612
Manpower Services Commission 89-90w
Wales 609-10

Neasden Hospital 708w
Prime Minister domestic visits 708w

Needham, Mr Richard, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Archaeological sites, Armagh 730w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 589w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards 45-6w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards 44w, 306-8w
NHS finance, Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards 45-6w
Planning permission, Northern Ireland 45w
Prescription charges, Northern Ireland 730-2w
Prescriptions, Northern Ireland 730w

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc
Members interests (10.12.85) 762
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 211, 216, 222, 225, 231-6, 240, 245-6
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Terrorism 1052
British Rail, Manpower 107w
Business statement 1075
Defective housing, Coventry 295
Liverpool City Council, Local government finance 264w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper", Temporary staff 749
Teachers, Pay 9-12w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 1054-5

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 316
European Council (05.12.85) 433
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 632-3

New blood lectureships 633-5w

New businesses 368w

New towns
Disclosure of information (04.12.85) 310
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 268w
Scotland (04.12.85) 310

New Towns (Access to Information) (Scotland) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 310

New University of Ulster 731w

New Zealand
Foreign tourists 179w

Newham
Redundancy 800w
Roads 301-2w
Waste disposal 470-1w

Newspaper press
House of Commons chamber (10.12.85) 882

Newton, Mr Tony, *Minister of State for Social Security*
Questions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 490w
British Association of Social Workers, Social fund 754
Child benefit 605w
Child benefit, Social security benefits disqualification 131w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 208w
Child benefit, Wolverhampton 273w

Earnings rules, Unemployment benefits 616w
Fuel aid, Disadvantaged 603w
Handicapped, "Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 597w
Heating allowances, Low pay 752
Heating allowances, Pensioners 753
Heating allowances, Social security benefits rules 346w
Heating allowances, Supplementary benefits 400-1w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 815-6w
Hypothermia, Death 608w
Hypothermia, Elderly 754
Invalid care allowances 604w
Invalidity benefits 755
Married womens half test, Retirement pensions 276-7w
Mobility allowance 606w
Occupational pensions, Disclosure of information 608-9w, 683-4w
Pensioners, Scotland 753
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 607w
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 599w
Residential care, Elderly 599w, 608w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits uprating 207-9w
Seasonal workers, Social security benefits rules 207-8w
Severe disablement allowance 605w
Severe weather payments 134w, 394w, 602-3w
Severe weather payments, Departmental publications 603w
Severe weather payments, Energy prices 754
Severe weather payments, Pensioners 753-4
Social fund 607w
Social fund, Scotland 753
Social security benefits, Severe weather payments 600w
Social security benefits overpayment 272w
Social security benefits rules, Aliens 141w
Social security benefits rules, Exceptional needs payments 127w
Social security benefits rules, School leaving 130-1w
Social security benefits rules, Social security recipients 129w
Social security benefits rules, Training allowances 131w
Social security benefits rules, Young people 130w
Social security benefits uprating 821-2w
Social security recipients, Children 130w
Social security recipients, Nursing homes 142w
Social security recipients, Rates & rating 599w
Social security recipients, Wales 617w
State earnings related pension scheme 599w, 607w
Students, Social security benefits 210w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 130w
Supplementary benefits, Food 132w
Supplementary benefits, Nutrition & health 600-1w
Supplementary benefits, Religious orders 274w
Supplementary benefits, Repatriation 622w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 684w
Supplementary benefits, Students 273w, 607w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income, Unemployed 615w

NHS
Capital investment 43w, 598w, 613w, 614w
Contracts for services 756-7
Cost effectiveness 746-7
Dental charges 617w
Efficiency scrutinies 825-6w
Energy conservation 603w
Expenditure 40w, 212w, 598w, 601w, 679w
Hospital bed occupancy rates 601w
Hospitals 42w
House purchase 399w
Housing 403w
Industrial relations 127-9w
Management 756-7
Merit awards 489w
Pharmacists 598w
Privatisation 599w, 610w
Procurement 402w
Property transfer 143w, 399-400w, 606w
Rented housing 399w
Spectacles 490w, 610w
Tenants 399-400w
Vacancies 132w
Wales 40w

NHS administration
Scotland 336w

NHS & private practice 529-33w
Death 521-30w
Health Services Board 678w
Hospital discharges 521-30w

NHS charges
Foreign patients 118-26w

NHS finance 212w, 746-7
Capital investment 754-5w
Cost effectiveness 747, 748-9
District health authorities 615, 748
Expenditure 606
Greater Glasgow Health Board 690w
Mid Downs Health Authority 275w
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 606
Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards 45-6w
Pembrokeshire Health Authority 614-5
Public expenditure 747
Regional health authorities 209-10w, 748
Scotland 690w
Scottish health boards 696w
Shropshire Health Authority 748
Wales 43w, 444w, 606, 614-5

NHS Health Advisory Service 144w

NHS Management Inquiry 336w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Questions
Labour market 177w
Pharmacists, Contracts of employment 609w

Nigeria
Export credit 15w

Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 (04.12.85) 399

Nimrod aircraft 545-6w

9 Signal Regiment 277-8w, 593-4w, 783w
Armed forces deployment 277w
Armed forces discharges 277-8w, 593-4w
Body searches 278w
Passports 594w
Police interrogation 783w

Nitrates
Water supply 59w, 263w

Noise control
Motorcycles 107-8w

Non-dependent deductions 341w
Housing benefits 341w

Non-domestic rates
Rates & rating 551w

Non-metropolitan counties
Rate support grants 282

Norfolk broads 297, 471w, 484-5w
Grazing land 484-5w
Hybrid Bills 471w

Normanton
Industrial training schemes 178w
Temporary employment 178w

Norris, Mr Steve
Questions
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 626w
Small businesses, Venture capital 183w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 751
Cancer 751-2

North Middlesex Hospital 751
Cancer 751

North Oxford canal 296-7w
Repairs & maintenance 296-7w

North Sea
Fishery protection 587-8w
Helicopters 303-4w
Offshore supply vessels 300-1w

North Sea oil
Oil prices 760

North West region
Community health services 598w
Employment level 539-40w
Factory Inspectorate 540w
Industrial health & safety 540w
Industry 177w
Regional planning & development 717w
Unemployment 177w

North West Water Authority 352w

North Western Regional Health Authority
AIDS 494w

Northern Ireland
Armed forces training 546w
Army 1053
Building industry 443w, 589w
Coal reserves 1054
Disadvantaged 1054-5
Dog licences 787w, 788w
Economic situation 1055-6
Flags 729w
Foreign investment in UK 1055
Fossil fuelled power stations 1054
Government loans (04.12.85) 388-99
Harland & Wolff 1055-6
Hotel & catering industry 306w
Natural gas 1056
Planning permission 45w
Prescription charges 730-2w
Presciption charges exemptions 730-2w
Prescriptions 730w
Prison staff 163w
Proportional representation 306w
Public expenditure 728w
Redundancy pay (04.12.85) 311
Security 1047-9, 1052-3, 1056-7, 1059
Stray dogs 787-8w
Unemployment 1054-5
Universities 731w

Northern Ireland Assembly 728w
Ulster Unionists 1052

Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund (04.12.85) 388-99

Northern Ireland Government
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1057, 1059
Judiciary 1049-50
Ulster Unionists 1063-4

Northern Ireland health & social services boards 44w, 45-6w, 306-8w
Capital investment 45-6w
Hospital beds 45-6w
Hospitals 44w, 306-8w
NHS finance 45-6w

Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill 1985/86
Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 388-99

Northern Ireland Office
Advertising 353w

Northern region
Industrial development (03.12.85) 166-209
Opposition days (03.12.85) 166-209
Railway transport 5
Redundancy 721w
Regional aid 20-1w, 808w
Regional development grants 435w
Regional planning & development 716w
Unemployment 77-8w

Northumberland Wharf 477w
Industrial development 477w

Norway
Herring 565-6w
Natural gas 292w

Norwich
Council house sales 257w

Notice of distress 353–4w

Notifiable diseases
AIDS 494w
Tuberculosis 135-6w, 140w, 141w, 394-5w

Nottingham City Council 552-3w
Council housing 552-3w

Nuclear accidents
Hinkley Point B 750-2w
Radiation hazards 726w

Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 316-7w

Nuclear fuel cycle
Cancer hazards 786w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing 423w
Defence 423w
Magnox reactors 360w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 291-2w
Sellafield 291-2w, 638-9w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 291-2w

Nuclear power stations
Hinkley Point B 726w
Nuclear safety 359w
Scotland 747-9w

Nuclear reactors
Nuclear safety 359w, 747-9w, 751w
Plutonium 387w
Trident submarines 97-8w

Nuclear safeguards 803w

Nuclear safety
EC internal relations 358w
Hinkley Point B 423w, 751w
Nuclear power stations 359w
Nuclear reactors 359w, 747-9w, 751w

Nuclear shelters
Civil defence 311w

Nuclear test ban 38w, 202w, 385w
Defence research 387w
Trident 385w
USSR 202w

Nuclear war
Electromagnetic interference 316-7w

Nuclear weapons
Injuries 317w
Plutonium 387w

Nuclear weapons tests
Australia 422, 424
Christmas Island 204w, 811w
Compensation 424
Information 202w
Medical examinations 204w
Protective clothing 92w
Radiation hazards 811w
Royal Commissions 422
Seismic monitoring 636w

Nujoma, Sam 384w
SWAPO 384w

Nursery schools
Inner city areas 550w

Nurses 209w
Accountability 757
Housing 603-4w
Manpower 271w
Recruitment 126w
Uniforms 763-5w

Nurses homes 603-4w

Nurses training
Wales 605-6

Nursing homes
Fees & charges 142w
Social security recipients 142w
West Yorkshire 403w

Nutrition & health
Children 610-1w
Oils & fats 616w
Supplementary benefits 600-1w

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Debates etc
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 116-7
Questions
Butter, Food surpluses 485-6w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Pharmacists, Contracts of employment 212w
Temporary employment, Normanton 178w
Waste disposal, Sea pollution 100w
Waste disposal, West Yorkshire 471-2w
Water authorities, External financing limits 58-9w
Water authorities, Loans 59w
West Yorkshire, Nursing homes 403w
West Yorkshire, Old peoples homes 403w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Capital investment 58w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Debts 58w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Water charges 58w

Obscene Publications Act 1959 321w

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 309

Obscenity
Legislation 321w

Occupational health services 245w
Prison staff 245w

Occupational pensions 745, 746, 750
Disclosure of information 608-9w, 683-4w
Housing benefits 745

Occupational therapists
Local government social services 138-40w
Manpower 137-8w
Regional health authorities 137-8w

Occupational therapy
Student numbers 11-3w
Waiting lists 137w

Odestage
Inquiries 435w

O'Dwyer, Ella, 162w

Offences against children
Homicide 826w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 457w

Offices of profit under the Crown 573w

Official engagements 166w
Gummer, John Selwyn 801w

Official receptions 575w
Costs 575w
Heads of state 325w, 575w

Official Report
Speakers rulings & statements (11.12.85) 921

Official secrets
Trials 277w, 278w, 783-4w
War Cabinet 572-3w

Official stationery 812w

Official visits
Channel Islands 419

Offshore drilling
Seabed mining 627w

Offshore supply vessels
North Sea 300-1w

Ogmore
Unemployment 613-4

Oil consumption 420-1w

Oil pollution
MV Bridgeness 304-5w
Pollution control 304-5w

Oil prices
Balance of payments 757-8
North Sea oil 760

Oils & fats
Nutrition & health 616w

Old battery 295-6w
Dartmouth castle 295-6w

Old peoples homes
Board & lodging charges 608w
West Yorkshire 403w

One parent families
Mothers 127w
Personal tax allowances 173-4w

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 33, 62, 93-7
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 633-4
Questions
Gartcosh Steelworks, Factory closures 690w
Iron & steel industry, Gartcosh 910

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Questions
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Inner city areas 1061
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 306w

Open government
Local government 260-1w

Open Tech 185w
Manpower Services Commission 185w
Small businesses 185w

Open university
Student numbers 13w
Summer schools 13w
Tuition fees 13w, 453w
University finance 453w

Operating theatres 756-8w

Opinion surveys
Antismoking campaign 270w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1125-7
English Sewing, Regional development grants (11.12.85) 1041-2
Questions
Civil Defence College, Civil defence 313w
Dial-a-Ride, Motor vehicles 424

Opposition days
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 929-1007, 1062
Northern region (03.12.85) 166-209
Silentnight (03.12.85) 210-52
Speakers rulings & statements (03.12.85) 166

Optical charges 494w

Oral contraceptives
Young people 339w

Oral questions
Speakers rulings & statements (02.12.85) 18, (03.12.85) 149, 152, (05.12.85) 422, (11.12.85) 901-2

Orders & regulations
Pensions 136-7w
Waste disposal 376w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 779-85

Orovite
Drugs 199w

Orsett Hospital (10.12.85) 892-3, (13.12.85) 1253-60

Osborn, Sir John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 683-6
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 630

Ottoway, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 981-4
Questions
Coastal shipping, EC Transport Council 108w
Council housing, Nottingham City Council 552-3w
Tourist boards, Government grants 179w

Out-patients
Hospital waiting lists 491w
Private patients 498-500w, 505-6w, 506-14w

Outer London boroughs
Block grant 475w

Overseas aid 360w
Agriculture 17
Central America 360-2w
Copyright 448w
Deaf 586w
Front line states 15
Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference 15
Women 23w

Overseas investment
Indonesia 169w
South Africa 174-5w

Overseas students
Scholarships 21w
Welsh plant breeding station 788w

Overseas trade
Hong Kong 286-7w

Overtime 190w
Ambulance services 604w
Police 700-1w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 31, 48-53, 92, 100
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Exchange rates 1061
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 424

Paddington
Holy Trinity church 299w
House purchase 779w

Paediatrics
West Lothian Hospital 911-2

Page, Sir John
Questions
Salesmanship, Employment 625w

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
Air fares, Europe 109w

Pahoomal family 5-6w
Arrests 5w

Paisley
Government assistance to industry 372w
Regional development grants 557w
Regional selective assistance 372w, 557w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1057

Pakistan
Immigration controls 357w
Temporary immigrants 357w

Palace of Westminster
Telephone systems 805w

Parachute Regiment 546w

Parallel imports
Drugs 601w, 683w, 756w

Parent & child
Scotland (11.12.85) 928

Parental contributions
Assisted places scheme 570w
Mandatory student grants 226w

Parental leave 83w
Nairobi Conference 83w

Parents
Assisted places scheme 788w
Cruelty to children 826w

Parents rights
Children in care 254-5w

Park, Mr George
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 958-60
Questions
British Rail, Procurement 107w
Broadcasting programmes, BBC 307w
Local government reform, Sports Council 261-2w

Parking (04.12.85) 311
Caravans 445w

Parking offences (04.12.85) 311

Parkinson, Cecil 572-3w

Parliament
Anniversaries 207w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
New towns 266w

Parliamentary constituencies
Hampshire 464-5w
Unemployment 327w

Parliamentary papers
Speakers rulings & statements (04.12.85) 305, 307, 308, 324, 326, (13.12.85) 1211

Parliamentary privilege
Speakers rulings & statements (04.12.85) 306

Parris, Mr Matthew
Debates etc
English Sewing, Regional development grants (11.12.85) 1039-41
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 327, 328, 332-3, 341
Questions
Derelict land, West Derbyshire District Council 670w
Employment opportunities, Glasgow 141
Iron & steel industry, Gartcosh 909
Public transport, Buses 712w

Parry, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 961, 990
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1057-8
Building industry, Employment 468w
Building industry, Manpower 538w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 443w, 589w
Building industry, Scotland 458w
Business statement 1073
Columbia, Disaster relief 24w
Crime, Inner city areas 314w
Criminal injuries compensation 36w
Prime Minister 166w
Rape 34w
Rape, Liverpool 35w
Rape, Merseyside 34w
Rape, Metropolitan Police 34w
Rape crisis centres, Government grants to voluntary organisations 35w
Rape crisis centres, Liverpool 35-6w
Sexual Offences Act 1985 34w, 35w
Sexual Offences Act 1985, Merseyside 35w

Part-time education
Unemployed 227w

Part-time employment 191w
Wages councils 228w

Partnerships
Income tax 592w

Passenger transport executives
Government grants 11-2

Passports
British national (overseas) 248w
Hong Kong 248w
9 Signal Regiment 594w
14 Signal Regiment 595w

Patents
Drugs 434w, 557-8w

Patients
Cancer 751

Patten, Mr Chris, Minister of State for Education & Science
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill 2R (05.12.85) 478-80
Questions
"Better Schools White Paper" 568w
Curriculum 283w
Educational finance, Engineering education 366w
Eye disorders, Research finance 627-8w
Further education, Capital investment 706w
Further education, Young people 161w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Distinction certificates 283w
Higher education, Educational finance 366w
Higher education, Mergers 707w
Inner London Education Authority, Income 705-6w
Inner London Education Authority, Public sector borrowing 705w
Pupils, Work experience programme 705w
Religious education, Teachers 454w
Secondary education, Mathematics education 284w
Staff-student ratios, Universities 706-7w
Teachers, School meals 284w
Unemployed, Student grants 227w
University finance 567w
University finance, Medical education 567-8w
University finance, University Grants Committee 633-5w
University teachers, Pay settlements 704w
Veterinary medicine, University Grants Committee 567w
Vocational education, Educational qualifications 450w
Vocational education, Professional organisations 363w

Patten, Mr John, Minister of State for the Environment (Housing, Urban Affairs & Construction)
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 930, 972, 978
Questions
Bridges, Weedon 296w
Building industry, Capital investment 467-8w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 285-6, 286-7, 294
Council housing, Building repairs 293-4
Council housing, Debts 379w
Council housing, Difficult to let properties 64-78w
Council housing, Housing construction 294
Council housing, Housing standards 297w
Council housing, Local authorities 62-4w
Council housing, Management 377-9w
Defective housing 809-10w
Derelict land, Inner city areas 290-1
Derelict land, Land acquisition 289-90
Empty housing 60w
Factories, Demolition 261w
Flats, Right to buy 258w
Housing, Legislation 378w
Housing construction 260w
Housing construction, Building industry 56w
Housing investment programmes, Housing capital allocations 257w
Housing policy 286
Land values, Housing benefits 60w
Local government revenue, Housing finance 294-5
Nitrates, Water supply 59w, 263w
North Oxford canal, Repairs & maintenance 296-7w
Sewers 466w
Sewers, Capital investment 467w
Smith houses 470w
Vacant land, Nationalised industries 290
Vacant land, Public sector 261w
Vacant land, Water authorities 290
Water authorities, Civil defence 299w
Water authorities, External financing limits 58-9w
Water authorities, Loans 59w
Water authorities, Privatisation 551w
Water authorities, Public inquiries 551w
Water authorities, Water supply 171w
Water charges 56w
Water meters 258w, 668w

Water meters, Legislation 668-9w
Water pollution 466w
Water pollution, Water authorities 466w
Water supply, Bye laws 466w
Water supply, Sanitation 466w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Capital investment 58w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Debts 58w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Water charges 58w

Pattern approval 13-4w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory 13-4w

Pattie, Mr Geoffrey, Minister of State for Information Technology
Debates etc
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 253-7, 271-3
Questions
Book piracy 558w
British Technology Group 623w
British Telecom, Shareholders 718w
Drugs, Patents 434w, 557-8w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, Dept of Trade & Industry 373w
Live Aid, Video piracy 442w
Post Office, Welsh language 285-6w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 626w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
Tobacco Products (Advertising) Bill, 1R (06.12.85) 531-2
Questions
Drugs, Family doctors 756w
Drugs, Parallel imports 683w, 756w
Employment opportunities, School leaving 141
Homelessness, Government grants to local authorities 257w
Hospital waiting lists 396w
Neasden Hospital, Prime Minister domestic visits 708w
NHS, Management 757
NHS finance, Cost effectiveness 747
Nurses 209w
Nurses, Manpower 271w
Tobacco advertising, Health warnings 394w

Pawsey, Mr J F
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1129
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 470-1, 473, 477
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 318
UNESCO (05.12.85) 455
Questions
A5, Road traffic 658w
Bridges, Weedon 296w
British Rail, Capital investment 3
Coal reserves, Northern Ireland 1054
Council house sales, Local government revenue 286
Energy efficiency year, Companies 638w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 1055
Health Education Council, Antismoking campaign 116w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 815-6w
M1, Road construction 657w, 658w
M1, Road traffic 658w
North Oxford canal, Repairs & maintenance 296-7w
Soil Survey of England & Wales 478w
Soil Survey of England & Wales, Research finance 479w

Pay 187w
Civil servants 351w, (11.12.85) 1009-26
Clergy 447-8w
Health service staff 613w, 679w
Independent Prosecution Service 299-300w
London Regional Transport 108w
Manpower Services Commission 724-5w
Men 188w
Metropolitan Police 651w
Speech therapy 619w
Sunday trading 188w
Teachers 9-12w, 362w, 363-4w, 628w, 692-3w, 759, 903-4, 905
Textile industry 187-8w

Pay beds
Private patients 513-522w

Pay review bodies 903-4

Pay settlements
Ambulance services 40w
Local government staff 230w
Motor industry 286w
Teachers 628w
University teachers 704w

PAYE
Departmental coordination 770w
Income tax 805w

Peace
Government grants 347-8w

Peace convoy 415

Peace negotiations
SWAPO 384w
Uganda 250w

Peace Through NATO 710w
Government grants 710w
Publicity 710w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 225-7, 233, 248
Questions
Company investigations 168-9w
Consumer protection, Information 250w
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 795w
Empty housing, Kirkless District council 468-9w
Health service staff, Crimes of violence 825w
Heating allowances, Supplementary benefits 400-1w
Legitimacy 813w
Planning permission, "Lifting the Burden White Paper" 810w
Unemployment, Bailey 538w

Peat Marwick Mitchell 307w
"BBC Value for Money Review" 307w

Pembrokeshire Health Authority 614-5
NHS finance 614-5

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Free school meals, State education 703w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Tameside 704w
School meals, State education 703w

Penhaligon, Mr David
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1143-5, 1160
Questions
Earnings rules, Unemployment benefits 616w
Government assistance to industry, Tin 1062
Nature conservation 259w
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w

Pensioners
Electricity disconnections 426w
Gas disconnections 426w
Heating allowances 753
Income support scheme 753-4
Scotland 753
Severe weather payments 753-4

Pensions
Dockyards 206w
Expenditure 755-6w
Gibraltar 38w, 448w
Orders & regulations 136-7w
Social security benefits uprating 605w
Vaccine damaged children 819w

Pentonville Prison 650w

Performing arts
Employment opportunities 192w

Perry Oakes sludge works 300w

Personal records
Crime victims 308w
Cruelty to children 275w

Personal social services research unit 145-7w, 534w
Kent University 145-7w, 534w

Personal tax allowances 173-4w
Family income 173-4w
One parent families 173-4w

Pertussis vaccine 817-8w, 823-4w

Pest control
Badgers 488w
Nature reserves 487w

Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate 427w
Fraud 427w

Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill 1985-86
2R order read (12.12.85) 1047
3R* (05.12.85) 409

Petrol
Energy consumption 115w

Petroleum exploration licences
Land drilling 750w

Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 273w

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 212w, 609w

Pharmacists
Contracts of employment 212w, 598w, 609w
Hospitals 147-52w
Manpower 147-52w
NHS 598w
Retail trade 598w

Phillips & Drew 378w

Pigs
Wales 445w

Pike, Malcolm (05.12.85) 523-30

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 832-4
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 236-43, 248
Questions
Council housing, Housing standards 55w
District health authorities, Lancashire 489-90w
Employment, Lancashire 177-8w
Housing benefits, Families 750
National Bus Company, Privatisation 657w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 607w

Planning
Legislation 378w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 660w

Planning appeals 170w
Administrative delays 169-70w
Birtenshaw farm 170w
Local authorities 55w
Wales 155-7w

Planning authorities
Planning permission 171w
Urban programme 778w
Wales 155-7w, 607
Welsh Office 607-8

Planning inquiries
Road works 774w

Planning inspectorate 171w

Planning permission 266w
Land use 55-6w, 266w
"Lifing the Burden White Paper" 810w
Northern Ireland 45w
Planning authorities 171w
Take-away food shops 266w

Plastic bullets
Greater Manchester 413, 414
Public order policing 292w

"Pleasure Leisure & Jobs" 179w

"Ploughing Footpaths & Bridleways" 258w

Plumstead
Hospital closures (12.12.85) 1180-6
St Nicholas Hospital (12.12.85) 1180-6

Plutonium
Defence 423w
EC countries 589-90w
Export licensing 347w
Exports 347w, 589-90w
France 804w
Magnox reactors 423w
Nuclear reactors 387w
Nuclear weapons 387w

Pneumoconiosis Etc (Workers Compensation) (Payment of Claims) Regulations 1985 (09.12.85) 736

Pneumoconiosis Etc (Workers Compensation) (Specified Diseases) Order 1985 (09.12.85) 736

Poaching
Prosecutions 917
Salmon 917
Scotland 917

Points of order
Speakers rulings & statements (02.12.85) 110, (12.12.85) 1052

Poisoning
Wines 268-9w

Police
Civil defence 312w
Death 322w
Expenditure 412, 699-700w
Hampshire 163-4w
Hijacking 582w
Injuries 322w
Manpower 163-4w, 318w
National Drugs Unit 792w
Overtime 700-1w
Sunday trading 309w
Tottenham 247w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 25w, 318w
Metropolitan Police 25w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 484-521

Police cells 414-5, 582w
Police custody 414-5

Police civilians 164w, 795w
Hampshire 164w
Manpower 164w

Police custody
Drunkenness 415
Metropolitan Police 582w
Police cells 414-5

Police detention 414-5, 582w

Police discipline
Racial discrimination 581w

Police equipment
Chief constables 413-4

Police informers 582w
Drug seizures 554-5w

Police interrogation
14 Signal Regiment 783-4w
Legal representation 25w
9 Signal Regiment 783w
Prisoners rights 314w
Rape 34w
Tape recorded evidence 456w

Police patrolling
Motorways 164w

Police powers
Codes of practice (05.12.85) 484-521
Metropolitan Police 25w
Speed limits 8

Police raids
Brailsford Road 462w

Police relations with public
Criminal investigation 411
Haringey 425-6
Inner city areas 309w

Police sirens 319w
Metropolitan Police 319w

Police stations
Capital investment 650w, 694w
Ilkeston 702-3w

Police training
Ashford training centre 96w
Motorways 462-3w

Police vehicles 164w
RAF Greenham Common 464w

Political affiliations 645w

Political levy
National Communications Union 84w
Trade unions 186w

Political parties
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1051-2
Scientists 758

Political refugees
Administrative delays 794w
Fasih, Mohammed 794w
Tanzania 32-3w

Poll tax 689w
Scotland 689w

Pollution control
Oil pollution 304-5w

Pollution monitoring
Local government expenditure 298-9w

Polytechnics
Educational finance 159-62w
Government grants 11w

Population
Hampshire 399w
Households 758w
Salop 748
South East region 758w

Pornography 321w
Children (04.12.85) 309
Convictions 320-1w
Crime prevention 321w

Port Stanley Hospital 22w

Portillo, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 789, 806-10, 811
Questions
British National Oil Corporation, Government assistance to industry 425w
National Coal Board, Government grants 424w
Westland Helicopters, Defence contracts 545w
Westland Helicopters, Government assistance to industry 438w

Ports
Maryport Harbour 291

Portsmouth
Employment 545w
Housing & elderly 266w
Queen Alexandra Hospital 211w
Registered homes 495w
Sheltered housing 266w
Tuberculosis 134-5w, 135-6w

Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 133w, 134-5w, 135-6w, 344-5w, 404w
Cancer 344-5w
Kidneys 134w
Road accidents 404w
Transplant surgery 134w

Portugal
EC budget 357-8w
EC accession (04.12.85) 313-53, (10.12.85) 859-91

Positive discrimination 88w

Post Office
Welsh language 285-6w

Poultry
France 486-7w

Poundswick School 455w
Members correspondence 455w

Poverty 496w
Family income 604w

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 329-32
Northern Ireland Loans Bill, Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 388-91
Redundancy Payments (Reciprocity with Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 311
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 14
Business statement 444
West, Harry, Members correspondence 4w

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc
Gairn Colliery (10.12.85) 894-7
Questions
Coking coal, Wales 606-7
Sunday trading 410
Unemployment, Ogmore 613-4

Power station closures 751w
Hinkley Point B 751w

Powers of entry
Metropolitan Police 581w

Powley, Mr John
Questions
Dept of Transport, Small businesses 9

Powys
Health services 446w

Powys Health Authority 446w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 652, 654, 655
Questions
Minimum wage, Vacancies 180w
Regional aid, Hull 432-3w
Unemployment 141-2

Prescription charges
Northern Ireland 730-2w
Scotland 743w, 744w
Unemployed 115-6w

Prescription charges exemptions
Northern Ireland 730-2w
Publicity 765w
Scotland 744w

Prescription drugs
Scotland 199w
Smoking 763w

Prescriptions
Chemist shops 496w
Contraceptives 339w
Costs 700w
Northern Ireland 730w
Publicity 699-700w
Wales 699-700w

Press releases
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1059
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985" 498w

Press reporting of criminal proceedings
Rape 31w

Prevention of Terrorism Acts 357w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 647, 663-5
Questions

Employment opportunities, Performing arts 192w
Flats, Construction 448w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 544w
Parliamentary constituencies, Hampshire 464-5w
University teachers, Pay settlements 704w

Price increases
House prices 775-6w

Prices
Clothing 85-6w
Footwear 85-6w
Trade descriptions 717-8w

Pricing
Drugs 273w

Primary education
Pupil-teacher ratios 285w

Primary health care 274w, 677-8w
Inner city areas 767w

Primary Health Care in Inner London Study Group 767w

Prime Minister 166w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Central Scotland 323w
Football 708w
Neasden Hospital 708w
Scotland 708w

Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w, 709w

Prime Minister visits abroad
Air transport 575-7w
South East Asia 571-2w
USSR 323w

Prime Ministers questions (05.12.85) 423
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 426-7

Prison accommodation
Cardiff Prison 320w
Crimes of violence 318w
Swansea Prison 320w
Woolwich Prison 319-20w

Prison escapes
Sudbury Prison 413

Prison medical services
Jones, Keith Lionel 650w

Prison overcrowding 29w
Scotland 691-2w

Prison population 29w, 412
Alternatives to prison 413
Category A prisoners 27w
Prisoners on remand 308w

Prison sentences 646w, 649w
Drug crimes 26-7w
Handicapped 645w
Life imprisonment 163w

Prison staff
Detention centres 645-6w
Dismissal 645-6w
Ethnic minorities 317w
Heart diseases 163w
Housing 320w
Insurance 163w
Manpower 29w, 412, 413, 650w
Northern Ireland 163w
Occupational health services 245w
Recruitment 317w
Violence 645w
Woolwich Prison 320w

Prisoners
Body searches 791-2w
Costs 30w
Hijacking 32w
Libyan Arab Republic 703w

Prisoners on remand
Brixton Prison 162w
Prison population 308w

Prisoners release
Homicide 646w

Prisoners rights
Police interrogation 314w

Prisons
Capital investment 650w
Scotland 694w

Private Bills
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 427, 428, 457

Private health services
Contracts for services 529-33w
Residential care 599w

Private investment
Health services finance 606w
Severn bridge 8
Transport 109-10w

Private Members Bills
First reading (04.12.85) 308-12

Private Members motions
Electrical safety (06.12.85) 588-97
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1190-304, 1212-52
Young people (06.12.85) 533-87

Private patients
Death 513-522w
Out-patients 498-500w, 505-6w, 506-14w
Pay beds 513-522w

Private property 581w

Private rented housing 171w
Housing stock 57w
Judgments 57w
Legislation 56w, 57w
Rent control 56-7w
Resident landlords 56w
Waltham Forest 809w

Private sector
Arts finance 619-20
Arts sponsorship 621
Dartford tunnel 110w
Graduates 639w
Land reclamation 374w
Urban programme 58w

Privatisation
Airports 10
Armed forces storage depots 545w
British Gas Corporation (10.12.85) 767-858, 1060-1
Cable & Wireless 175w, 769-70w
Devonport dockyard 812w
Dockyards (02.12.85) 27-106, 206w, 545w, 781w
Education 150
Gas safety 542w
Health services 141w
Income 102-3w, 251-2w
Local government expenditure 3-4w
Manchester Airport 21, 392-3w
National Bus Company 657w
NHS 599w, 610w
Public expenditure 3w
Public sector assets 3-4w
Railway catering 4, 5
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 626w
Spectacles 610w
Water authorities 466w, 551w

Probation & aftercare 795w

Probation officers
Manpower 315w

Proceeds of crime 795w
Drug crimes 320w, 795w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey
Debates etc
St Andrews Hospital (13.12.85) 1253-5
Questions
Dartford tunnel, Tenders 110w

Procurator Fiscal Service 651w, 916, 918
Complaints against police 918
Prosecutions 918
Transient people 916

Procurement
British Rail 107w
Locomotives 107w
NHS 402w
Transport 430w

Production refunds (02.12.85) 107-27

Productivity
Iron & steel industry 716w

Professional organisations
Vocational education 363w

Professional qualifications
Speech therapy 765-6w

Progress in Partnership 210-1w, 685-6w

Propaganda
Community programme 181w
Liberal Party 759-60

Property development
Crown Agents 24w

Property rights
Common land 551w

Property Services Agency
Industrial health & safety 779-80w

Property transfer
Educational buildings 449w
Land acquisition 775w
Local government reform 292-3w
NHS 143w, 399-400w, 606w

Proportional representation
Electoral reform 1062
Northern Ireland 306w

Prosecutions
Fraud 426w
Fraud investigation group 13
Lloyds of London 12
Poaching 917
Procurator Fiscal Service 918
Road tax 583-4w
Stock Exchange 412
Wages Inspectorate 188w

Prosthetics 490w
Family doctors 756w

"Protect & Survive" 322w

Protection of Military Remains Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 311

Protective clothing
Nuclear weapons tests 92w

Public Accounts Committee (05.12.85) 522

Public appointments 407-18w, 422-4w
Agricultural & Food Research Council 790w
Bishops 152
Dept of Employment 83-4w
Dept of Energy 166-7w
Dept of the Environment 60-1w
Drug crimes 701w
Economic & Social Committee 203w
Equal opportunities 724w
Forestry Commission 49w
Industrial tribunals 724w
Manpower Services Commission 724-5w
Regional health authorities 673-6w, 676-7w
Regional Land Drainage Committees 663-8w
Scottish Examination Board 201w
Sizewell Inquiry 803w
Social security appeals tribunals 228w
Welsh Office 41w
Women 17w, 41w

Public Bills
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 459

Public dividend capital 294w, 359w, 584w
British Airways 584w
Dept of Energy 359w
Dept of Trade & Industry 373w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 294w

Public expenditure 709w
Channel crossing 104w
Law enforcement 418-9
Lighting 8-9

Local authorities 712-5w
NHS finance 747
Northern Ireland 728w
Privatisation 3w
Scotland 743-4w
Wales 605

Public footpaths
Menwith with Darley 277w

Public houses
Licensing hours 32w

Public inquiries
Canary Wharf 292
Water authorities 551w

Public investment
Manufacturing industries 241w

Public meetings
Forestry Commission 47-9w
Forests 47-9w

Public order
Heathrow 773w

Public Order Bill 1985/86
701w
1R (05.12.85) 457

Public order offences
RAF Greenham Common 319w

Public order policing (05.12.85) 457
Association of Chief Police Officers 247w, 582w
Civil disorder 322w
Haringey 425-6
Manchester University 420
Plastic bullets 292w
Tottenham 247w

Public participation
Forestry Commission 910-11

Public participation in planning
Canary Wharf 470-1w
General development orders 266w
Housing improvement 777w

Public petitions
Basildon Hospital (10.12.85) 892-3
British Rail Engineering (10.12.85) 892
Income tax assessment (13.12.85) 1187-9
Speakers rulings & statements (13.12.85) 1188

Public sector
Vacant land 261w

Public sector assets
Income 102-3w
Land acquisition 103w, 261w
Privatisation 3-4w

Public sector borrowing
Inner London Education Authority 705w

Public sector borrowing requirement 101-2w
Arts finance 192w

Public sector earnings 173w

Public transport
Buses 712w
Government grants 106-7w, 109w
Metropolitan counties 105w, 106w
South Yorkshire 391w

Public Works Loan Board
Local government borrowing 356w

Publicity
Armed forces 710-1w
Central Office of Information 711w
Civil defence 312w
Defence 711w
Donors 617w
Drinking & driving 112w
Hypothermia 134w
Local government expenditure 257-8w
National Coal Board 7w
Peace Through NATO 710w
Prescription charges exemptions 765w
Prescriptions 699-700w
Regional councils 255w
Smoking 270w
Speed limits 104w
Whooping cough 820w

Publishers Association 558w

Pupil-teacher ratios 7-8w
Buckinghamshire 285w
Hertfordshire 285w
Leicestershire 7-8w
Primary education 285w
Secondary education 285w
Tameside 704w

Pupils
Greater London 8-10w
Injuries 705w
Leicestershire 8-10w
Special educational needs 223-4w, 629-32w
Special schools 630-4w
Vaccination 609w
Work experience programme 705w

Quangos
Wales 232w

Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth 211w

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 477w

Racial attacks 583w
Metropolitan Police 583w

Racial discrimination
Employment discrimination 88w
Government contracts 164-5w
Health services 270-1w
Police discipline 581w
Training 152
Young people 164w

Radiation hazards
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 751w
Hinkley Point B 750-1w
Nuclear accidents 726w
Nuclear weapons tests 811w
Rosyth 746-7w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc
Education (Amendment) Bill, 2R (05.12.85) 462-5
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 172, 175
Questions
Manpower Services Commission, Educational finance 225w
Regional development grants, Durham 432w
Special educational needs 223-4w
Special educational needs, Pupils 223-4w

Radioactive materials 359w

Radioactive waste disposal
Research 589w, 779w

RAE Oakhanger 544w
Satellite communications 544w

RAF Greenham Common 319w, 464w
Demonstrations 319w
Police vehicles 464w
Public order offences 319w

RAF Stornoway 780w
Military exercises 780w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Questions
Capital investment, Wales 609
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Deeside 597w
Economic growth, Wales 612-3
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 153w

Railway catering 3-4
Privatisation 4, 5

Railway electrification 105w
Bradford 2
Capital investment 2

Railway engineering (10.12.85) 892

Railway fares
London docklands railway 387-8w
Railway travel 3

Railway network
London docklands railway 106w
Stansted Airport 772w

Railway property
Land acquisition 427-8w

Railway timetables
Channel crossing 429w

Railway transport
Bradford 107w
Indonesia 169w
Inter-city rail transport 5
Northern region 5
Strathclyde 46w

Railway travel
Railway fares 3

Rain forests 22w
World Bank 22w

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy, *Minister of State for Overseas Development*
Debates etc
UNESCO, Ministerial statements (05.12.85) 448-57
Questions
Africa, Aid financed trade 586w
Air force, Disaster relief 16-7
Bilateral aid, Aid financed trade 22-3w
Central America, Overseas aid 360-2w
Columbia, Disaster relief 24w
Crown Agents, Property development 24w
Disaster relief, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 18
Disaster relief, Research finance 17-8
El Salvador, International Planned Parenthood Federation 361-2w
Equal opportunities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 306w
Gibraltar, Pensions 448w
Gibraltar, Dockyards, 38w
International Fund for Agricultural Development, UK contributions 17
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Abortion 361w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Government grants 361w, 362w
Overseas aid 360w
Overseas aid, Copyright 448w
Overseas aid, Deaf 586w
Overseas students, Scholarships 21w
Port Stanley Hospital 22w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 15-6
Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference, Overseas aid 15
UN Relief & Works Agency, UK contributions 21-2w
UNESCO 786w
UNESCO, Civil servants 785w
UNESCO, Scholarships 785-6w
UNESCO, UK contributions 707-8w, 785w, 786w
Women, Agricultural production 23w
Women, International Year of Shelter for the Homeless 25w
Women, Refugees 24w
World Bank, Rain forests 22w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1086
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 56, 67, 76-8
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 722-6
Questions
Business statement 444-5
Common fisheries policy 588w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 587w
Falkland Islands, Fishing limits 385w, 587w
Fishery protection, North Sea 587-8w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 588w

Rape 34w
Crime victims 317-8w
Liverpool 35w
Merseyside 34w, 35w
Metropolitan Police 34w
Police interrogation 34w

Press reporting of criminal proceedings 31w

Rape crisis centres 35-6w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 35-6w, 162-3w
Liverpool 35-6w

Rapid transit systems
Greater Manchester 244w

Rate equalisation 473-4w
Local government reform 284

Rate limitation
Block grant 473-4w
Computers 809w

Rate precepts 473-4w, 706w
Greater London Council 473-4w
Metropolitan counties 473-4w

Rate rebates
Scotland (03.12.85) 155-63, 686-7w

Rate support grants 284, 475-6w, 672-3w
Computers 809w
Glasgow District Council 255-6w
Government grants to local authorities 282, 552w
Greater London 284
Inner city areas 283-4
Liverpool City Council 282
Local authorities 172w
Local authorities in Scotland 202w, 330w, 336w
Local government expenditure 282-3
Local government finance 264-5w
Metropolitan districts 777-9w
Non-metropolitan counties 282
Scotland (03.12.85) 155-63
Scottish councils 255-6w

Rates & rating (04.12.85) 311
Departmental coordination 4w
Non-domestic rates 551w
Scotland 688-9w
Social security recipients 599w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1204, 1212-6, 1228-9
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1209
Questions
Regional health authorities, Cost effectiveness 597-8w
Regional health authorities, NHS finance 209-10w

Ravenscraig Steelworks 906, 907, 1061
Factory closures 906
Gartcosh 906, 907-8, 909, 910
Iron & steel industry 906-7

Raw materials
Industry 1060

Raw materials imports
Exchange rates 1060

Reagan, President 166w
Foreign policy 166w

Recruitment
Nurses 126w
Prison staff 317w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Intervention stocks, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough 479w

Redundancy
Coal mining 426w
Cornwall (10.12.85) 765-6
Defence industries 150
Dept of Education & Science 705w
Machine tools industry (09.12.85) 636
Manufacturing industries 722w
Merseyside 186-7w
Newham 800w
Northern region 721w
Shipbuilding 183w

Redundancy pay
Coal mining 6-7w, 750w
Northern Ireland (04.12.85) 311

Redundancy Payments (Reciprocity with Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 311

Redundant churches
Durham 618
Lincolnshire 618-9

Redundant mineworkers payments scheme 6-7w, 426w, 750w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 31
Members interests (10.12.85) 763
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 630
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 302
Bishops, Public appointments 152
Lloyds of London, Fraud Investigation Group 12

Rees, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 654-8, 706
Questions
Channel ferries, Belgium 585w

"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 597w, 607w, 749, 750, 752
Handicapped 597w
Heating allowance 752
Temporary staff 749

"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 599w, 604w

Refugees
Women 24w

Refuse disposal
Wales 39-40w
Water pollution 39-40w

Regional aid 808w
Cumbernauld 20w
Glanford 59w
Hull 432-3w
Investment 717w
Kilsyth 20w
Maryport harbour 291
Merseyside 20-1
Northern region 20-1w, 808w
Tourist industry 142-3
Yorkshire & Humberside 717w

Regional councils
Local government expenditure 255w
Publicity 255w

Regional development grants
Durham 432w
English Sewing (11.12.85) 1039-46
Garscadden 431-2w
Northern region 435w
Paisley 557w
Scotland 433w
Yorkshire & Humberside 19w, 716-7w

Regional government 709w

Regional grants and loans
EC (11.12.85) 1027-38

Regional health authorities
Capital investment 684-6w
Cost effectiveness 597-8w, 611w
Hospital waiting lists 753-4w
Housing 603-4w
Ministers domestic visits 752w
NHS finance 209-10w, 748
Occupational therapists 137-8w
Public appointments 673-6w, 676-7w
Secure psychiatric units 117-8w
Speech therapy 136w
Surplus land 606w

Regional land drainage committees 663-8w
Public appointments 663-8w

Regional medical service 338w

Regional planning & development
Environment protection 709-10w
High technology 610
Local government expenditure 776-7w
North West region 717w
Northern region 716w

Regional selective assistance 19w, 20w, 379-80w, 431-3w, 807w
Birkenhead 807w
Cumbernauld 20w
Durham 432w
Garscadden 431w
Kilsyth 20w
Monklands 372w
Paisley 372w, 557w
Rutherglen 380w, 433w
Scotland 379-80w, 433w
Yorkshire & Humberside 19w

Regionfields Ltd (05.12.85) 522

Registered homes 495w
Hampshire 495w
Portsmouth 495w

Registered Homes Act 1984 495w
Elderly 495w

Reinstatement grants (06.12.85) 598-604
Defective housing (06.12.85) 598-604

Religious buildings
Repairs & maintenance 616-7

Religious education
Teachers 454w

Religious freedom
USSR 636-7w

Religious orders
Social security benefits rules 274w
Supplementary benefits 274w

Remand in custody 793w
Brockhill Remand Centre 793w
Crime 793w
Greater London 650w
Medical examinations 792-3w
Risley Remand Centre 793w

Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 363-4w

Rent Acts 57w

Rent addition 131w

Rent allowances
Income 340-2w
Young people 131w

Rent arrears
Council house rents 59-60w, 263w, 468w
Wales 59-60w

Rent control
Private rented housing 56-7w

Rent rebates
Income 340-2w

Rented housing
Bradford 172w
NHS 399w

Renton, Mr Tim, Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
British embassies, Business 248w
British residents abroad, Libyan Arab Republic 385w
Hong Kong, Passports 248w
Nuclear test ban 38w, 202w, 385w
Nuclear test ban, Trident 385w
Nuclear test ban, USSR 202w
Nuclear weapons tests, Information 202w
Plutonium, Export licensing 347w
Plutonium, Exports 347w
Women, United Nations 348w

Rents
Debt collection 353-4w

Repairs & maintenance
Cemeteries 50w
Council housing 469w
John W McKay 60w
Motorways 391w
Museums & galleries 544w
North Oxford canal 296-7w
Religious buildings 616-7

Roads 457w

Repatriation
Hijacking 39w
Supplementary benefits 622w

"Report on Diligence & Debtor Protection" 651-2w

Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (05.12.85) 457

"Resale of Electricity by Landlords" 287w

Rescue services
Civil defence 312w

Research
Crime 321w
Departmental coordination 241w
Educational standards 364w
Hospital closures 144w
Hospital patients 612w
Hypermarkets 808w
Mental health community care 144w
Ministry of Defence 204-5w
Radioactive waste disposal 589w, 779w
Weather modification 205w

Research finance
AIDS 126w
Civil defence 312w
Disaster relief 17-8
Earthquake 205w
Educational institutions 283w
Eye disorders 627-8w
Science & technology research 787w
Soil Survey of England & Wales 479w
Trauma 158w

Resident landlords
Private rented housing 56w

Residential care
Elderly 599w, 608w
Private health services 599w
Supplementary benefits 684w

Residential care of children
Scotland 193-8w

Residuary bodies 288, 471-2w, 475w
Training 470w

Resignations
Air force 350-1w

Resource Allocation Working Party 209-10w

Restrictive trade practices
Air transport 623-4w

Restrictive Trade Practices (Services) (Amendment) Order 1985
(02.12.85) 26, (12.12.85) 1179

Retail trade
Government assistance to industry 626w
Pharmacists 598w
Tobacco 807w

Retirement Pensions 401w
Costs 207-9w
Married womens half test 276-7w
Social security benefits uprating 207-9w

"Review of Child Care Consultation Paper" 275w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc
UNESCO (05.12.85) 450

Rhuddlan Borough Council 445w
Ministers correspondence 445w

Rhymney valley
Economic growth 613

Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Debates etc
Companies Bill, 1R (06.12.85) 532
Questions
Child benefit 173-4w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 208w
Family credit 173w
Income tax 651-2w
Personal tax allowances, One parent families 173-4w

Ribblehead viaduct 429w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Questions
Conditions of employment, working hours 145
Crime prevention, Metropolitan Police 310w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Transport 115w
Minimum wage, International Labour Organisation 180w
Wines, Diethylene glycol 483w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 639-47, 652, 657, 706
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Transport 391w
Advertising agencies, Dept of Transport 656-8w
British Airports Authority, Income 585-6w
British Rail, Capital investment 1-3
British Rail, Corporate plans 105w
Bus lanes, Greater London 107w
Channel crossing, Cost benefit analysis 771w
Channel crossing, France 104w, 772w
Channel crossing, Public expenditure 104w
Channel crossing, Road freight transport 429-30w
Channel ferries, Belgium 585w
Coastal shipping, EC Transport Council 108w
Cycling, Road safety 105-6w
Dartford tunnel, Tenders 110w
Drinking & driving, Christmas 112w
Driving instruction, Examinations 430-2w
Energy consumption, Petrol 115w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Transport 115w
Equal opportunities officers, Dept of Transport 388w
Light dues, Fees & charges 4-5
Lorries, Spray suppression 111w
Midland link motorways, Road construction 107w
Ministers domestic visits, Darlington bypass 111w
Motor vehicles 771w
Motorcycles, Noise control 107-8w
Motorcycles, Road safety 108w
Motorways, Lighting 8-9
MV Bridgeness, Oil pollution 304-5w
M1, Closed circuit television 302w
M1, Lighting 302-3w
M1, Road signs 242w
M1, Sewers 303w
North Sea, Offshore supply vessels 300-1w
Perry Oakes sludge works 300w
Railway electrification, Bradford 2
Railway fares, Railway travel 3
Railway network, Stansted Airport 772w
Road accidents, Motorways 6-7, 111w
Road construction 115w
Road construction, Capital investment 112-5w
Road construction, Local government expenditure 243w
Road safety, Buses 109w
Road traffic, A50 115w
Shipping registration, Flags of convenience 773-4w
Speed limits, Motorways 7, 8
Speed limits, Publicity 104w
Transport, Private investment 109-10w
Transport, Procurement 430w
Tyres, Motor vehicle safety 110w
Warning signs, Motorways 111-2w

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Debates etc
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 627

Rifkind, Mr Malcolm, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 333, 351-3
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 883-9
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 359
Questions
Council of Ministers 248-50w
EC reform, Science & technology 383-4w
Economic & Social Committee 203w
Economic & Social Committee, Public appointments 203w
Economic & Social Committee, Travelling expenses 203-4w
Embassies, Export promotion 636w
Equal opportunities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 37w
Gibraltar, Financial services 590w
Harman, Harriet, European Court of Human Rights 346-7w
Jews, USSR 590w
South Africa, Arms embargoes 636w
SWAPO, Peace negotiations 384w
SWAPO, United Nations 384w
SWAPO, Violence 384w
Uganda, Peace negotiations 250w
USSR, Religious freedom 636-7w

Right to buy
Flats 258w
Tenants cooperatives 779w

Rights of way 258w

Rights of Way Review Committee 258w

Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Debates etc
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 112-3

Risley Remand Centre 793w
Remand in custody 793w

Road accidents
Buses 109w, 659-60w
Christmas 802w
Death 404w
Driving 301w
Hampshire 133w
Injuries 211w
Licensing laws 417w
Motorways 6-7, 111w
M25 428-9w
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 404w
Road works 390w
Statistics 802w

Road construction 115w, 242w, 391-2w
A5 658w
Capital investment 112-5w, 659w, 693-6w
Costs 243w
Crofting 566w
Employment 243w
Felinheli bypass 41-2w
Finance 243w
Lancashire 660w
Local government expenditure 243w
Local government finance 243w
Midland link motorways 107w
M1 657w, 658w
M20 302w
Vauxhall 243w

Road freight transport
Channel crossing 429-30w

Road haulage permits 429w
Channel crossing 429w

Road safety
Buses 109w
Cycling 105-6w
Lighting 9
Motorcycles 108w
Speed limits 104-5w
Taxis 773w

Road safety barriers
Motorways 256w

Road signs
Bradford 801-2w
Heathrow 584w
M1 242w

Road tax
Prosecutions 583-4w

Road traffic
A5 658w
A40 774w
A50 115w
Leeds 802w
Motorways 388w, 803w
M1 658w
Vauxhall 243w
Woolwich 301w

Road traffic control
Hazards 111-2w

Road Traffic Regulation (Parking) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 311

Road Works
A1 242w
Bootle 111w
Greater Manchester 390w
Local government expenditure 112-5w
Local government staff 391w
Motorways 111w
M25 428w, 774w
Planning inquiries 774w
Road accidents 390w
Wales 444w

Roads
Expenditure 243w
Greater London 243w
Greenwich 301-2w
Lothian (04.12.85) 353-87
Newham 301-2w
Repairs & maintenance 457w
Scotland 457w, 693-6w
Sound insulation 658-9w

Robbery
Criminal statistics 308w
Lambeth 646w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 940
Questions
Road works, Bootle 111w

Roberts, Mr Ernie
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 967-70

Roberts, Mr Wyn, *Under-Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
Coal stocks, Wales 571w
Felinheli bypass, Road construction 41-2w
Infant mortality, Wales 572w
Languages education, Welsh language 608
Libraries, Wales 353w
Literacy, Wales 39w
Motorways, Wales 572w
Road works, Wales 444w
Special schools, Wales 447w
Welsh language 40-1w, 608

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 319-23, 324, 330, 352
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 870-1, 880-3, 886
Questions
Earthquakes, Research finance 205w
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 909
Scottish Certificate of Education 52w
Scottish Certificate of Education, Educational qualifications 199w, 200w
Scottish Examination Board 202w
Scottish Examination Board, Appeals 199w
Scottish Examination Board, Manpower 201w
Scottish Examination Board, Public appointments 201w

Robinson, Mr Mark, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
Ambulance services, Wales 40w
Bone marrow disorders, Wales 605
Chemists shops, Wales 446w
Council housing, Wales 571w
Drug abuse, Gwynedd 39w
Health services, Powys 446w
Health services, Wales 444w
Hospital beds, Wales 42w
Hospital closures, Mid Glamorgan 615
Hospital patients, Wales 605
Hospital waiting lists, Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 606
Hospitals, Wales 42w, 44w
Housing construction, VAT 607
Housing Defects Act 1984, Wales 446w
Housing finance, Wales 305w
Kidney machines, Wales 446w
Local government expenditure, Wales 230w
Mental health services, Gwynedd 446-7w
Morriston Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 447w
NHS, Wales 40w
NHS finance, Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 606
NHS finance, Wales 43w, 606, 614-5
Nurses training, Wales 605-6
Planning authorities, Wales 607
Planning authorities, Welsh Office 607-8
Prescriptions, Wales 699-700w
Refuse disposal, Wales 39-40w
Rhuddlan Borough Council, Ministers correspondence 445w
Surgery, Wales 445w
Water charges, Wales 572w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Hillsborough 5w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Drug industry, USA 286w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 273w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 434
Questions
Health services, Wales 444w
Health services finance, Private investment 606w
NHS, Vacancies 132w
Public transport, Government grants 106-7w

Rolling stock
British Rail 300w
Capital investment 3, 300w

Rolls-Royce Aeroengines
Privatisation 626w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 943, 991-7
Questions
Council house sales, Local government revenue 286-7
Council housing, Debts 379w
Council housing, Difficult to let properties 64-78w
Council housing, Housing standards 297w
Council housing, Local authorities 62-4w
Council housing, Management 377-9w
Council housing, Tenants cooperatives 296
Empty housing 60w
Housing, Legislation 378w
Housing construction, Building industry 56w
Land values, Housing benefits 60w
NATO, Ammunition 207w

Roskill Committee see Criminal Proceedings Arising from Fraud Review Committee

Ross, Mr Ernie
Questions
Prime Minister official engagements [illegible]w
Rates & rating, Departmental coor[illegible]n 4w
Travelling people, Scotland 916-7

Ross, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 641, 665-8
Questions
Air force, Disaster relief 16
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 300
Anglo-Irish talks, Departmental publications 1059
Economic situation, Northern Ireland 1055-6
Homicide, Fixed penalties 314w
Lloyds of London, Disciplinary proceedings 12
Mink, Licensing 726w
Motor vehicle registration 771w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w
Prison staff, Insurance 163w
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 163w
Prison staff, Occupational health services 245w
Public sector earnings 173w
Railway catering, Privatisation 4
Redundancy, Defence industries 150
Road accidents, Motorways 6-7
Tourist boards, Government grants 230w

Ross & Cromarty District Council
Tourist industry 138

Rost, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 813-6, 818, 839-40
Questions
Alternative medicine, Licensing 595w
Police stations, Ilkeston 702-3w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 779w

Rosyth
Cancer 459-60w
Cancer hazards 797w
Radiation hazards 746-7w

Rosyth dockyard (02.12.85) 27-106, 205-6w, 382w, 545w, 781w
Defence contracts 781w
Fixed assets 205-6w
Leukaemia 382w
Management 781w
Shipbuilding 206w

Rotherham Borough Council (06.12.85) 598-604

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 701-3
Questions
Local enterprise agencies 142
M20, Road construction 302w
Prison staff, Manpower 412
Rates & rating, Non-domestic rates 551w
Speech therapy, Teachers 621w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 778, 821-2, 836-41
Questions
Economic growth, Merthyr Tydfil 613

Royal College of Nursing 212w

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Veterinary medicine 567w

Royal Commissions
Animal welfare (11.12.85) 928
Nuclear weapons tests 422

Royal family
Speakers rulings & statements (03.12.85) 171

Royal Free Hospital 751

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore 491-2w

Royal ordnance factories
Cancer 351w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Ashford training centre 96w
Chief constables 730w
Codes of practice 1050-1

Rugby
Sporting tours 172w, 262w

Rugby Football Union 262w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Birds, EC law 57-8w
Common land, Access to countryside 551w
Crown immunity, Institution of Environmental Health Officers 257w
Dog licences 551w
Equal opportunities, Dept of the Environment 60-1w, 61-2w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, Public dividend capital 294w
Government grants to local authorities, Wolverhampton District Council 669-70w
Industrial development, Northumberland Wharf 477w
Local government, Open government 260-1w
Local government expenditure, Regional planning & development 776-7w
Local government finance, Rate support grants 264-5w
Nature Conservancy Council, Government grants 265w
Nature conservation 259w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 589w, 779w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 552w
Rate support grants, Metropolitan districts 777-9w
Rates & rating, Non-domestic rates 551w
Rights of way 258w
Rural areas, Government grants 265w
Rural development areas, Assisted areas 268w
Sites of special scientific interest 267w
Sites of special scientific interest, Land drainage 267w
Sites of special scientific interest, West Sussex 469w
Special protection areas 553w
Waste disposal, Greater London 376w
Waste disposal, Newham 470-1w
Waste disposal, Orders & regulations 376w
Waste disposal, West Yorkshire 471-2w

Rural areas
Government grants 265w

Rural development 265w

Rural development areas 268w
Assisted areas 268w

Rural Forum 687w

Rural planning
Scotland 687w

Rutherglen
Regional selective assistance 380w, 433w

Ryder, Mr Richard
Questions
"Health & Personal Social Services Statistics, England" 212w
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 21

Ryman, Mr John
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1197, 1215, 1242, 1246-8
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1209
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 574-7
Questions
Business statement 1068

Sackville, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 826-7
Questions
Drug abuse, Health education 420-1
Railway electrification 105w
Vocational training, Further education 189w

Safety
Toys & games (09.12.85) 737

Safety at Sea Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 309

Safety barriers
Motorways 693-4w

Safety belts 304w

Safety standards (04.12.85) 312

Sailing boats
Light dues 4-5

St Andrews Hospital (13.12.85) 1253-60
Hospital closures (13.12.85) 1253-60

St Johns Colliery 606-7

St Nicholas Hospital (12.12.85) 1180-6
Plumstead (12.12.85) 1180-6

St Pancras 109w

St Pancras to Sheffield railway line 109w

Salesmanship
Employment 625w
Life insurance 625w

Salford
Housing estates 777-8w

Salford City Council 777w
Housing estates 777w
Housing improvement 778w

Salmon
Poaching 917

Salop
Population 748

Sanitation
Water supply 466w

Satellite broadcasting
Broadcasting controls 31w

Satellite communications
International cooperation 544w
RAE Oakhanger 544w

Sathananthian, Dr 464w
Narcotics 464w

Saughton Prison 691-2w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 35, 43, 71, 73-6, 96

Scholarships
Overseas students 21w
UNESCO 785-6w

School administration
Judgments 161w

School buildings
Aids for handicapped 628w

School closures
Scotland 336-7w

School leaving 704w
Armed forces recruitment 92w
Educational qualifications 704-5w
Employment opportunities 141
Inner city areas 141
Social security benefits rules 130-1w

School meals (05.12.85) 459-83
State education 703w
Teachers 11-2w, 284w

School population
Greater London 225-6w
Leicestershire 225-6w
Special schools 447w

Schools
Capital investment 633-4w
Scotland 747-8w

Science & technology
EC reform 383-4w

Science & technology research
Government grants 225w, 226-7w
Research finance 787w
Strategic defence initiatives 423

Scientists
Political parties 758

Scoliosis
Greater London 491-2w

Scope of debate (04.12.85) 392, 394, 395, 396, (10.12.85) 890
Speakers rulings & statements (05.12.85) 511, 512

Scotland 689w
Agricultural advisory services 688w
Agriculture 914
Arrests 168w
Building industry 458w
Capital investment 747-8w
Care proceedings 193-8w
Cemeteries 50w
Children 733-4w
Children in care 194w, 197-8w, 254-5w
Citizens band radio 563w
Community care 696-7w
Company liquidations 381w
Complaints against police 918
Council housing 739w
Crofting 566w
Crop spraying 383w
Day nurseries 731-2w
Debt collection 651-2w
Dentistry 458w
Domestic rates 688-9w
Drinking & driving 651w
Drugs 797-8w
Employment by sector 78-80w
Employment opportunities 690-1w
Families 733-4w
Ferries (05.12.85) 522
Fish conservation 697w
Government grants to local authorities 458w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 380w
Health services 745w
Health services finance 913
Heating allowances 753
Herring 565w
High Court 652w
Higher education 459-60w
Hill livestock allowances 693w
Hip replacements 563w
Hospitals 695w
Hotel & catering industry 334-5w
Housing amenities 742-3w
Housing associations 687w, 692w
Housing improvement 734-40w
Inner city areas 564-5w
Iron & steel industry 565w, 691w, 906, 907
Legionnaires disease 256w
Legitimacy (11.12.85) 928
Leukaemia 382w
Libraries 198-9w
Liquid milk 732-3w
List D schools 902-3
Local government services 748w
Members 761
Motorways 256w, 693-4w
New towns (04.12.85) 310
NHS administration 336w
NHS finance 690w
Nuclear power stations 747-9w
Parent & child (11.12.85) 928
Pensioners 753
Poaching 917
Poll tax 689w
Prescription charges 743w, 744w
Prescription charges exemptions 744w
Prescription drugs 199w
Prime Minister domestic visits 708w
Prison overcrowding 691-2w
Prisons 694w
Public expenditure 743-4w
Rate rebates (03.12.85) 155-63, 686-7w
Rate support grants (03.12.85) 155-63
Rates & rating 688-9w
Regional development grants 433w
Regional selective assistance 379-80w, 433w
Residential care of children 193-8w
Roads 457w, 693-6w
Rural planning 687w
School closures 336-7w

Schools 747-8w
Senile dementia 256w
Severe weather payments 743-4w, 913-4, 915
Skiing 138
Slaughterhouses 691w
Smoking 797w
Social fund 753
Social workers training 255w
Tape recorded evidence 456w
Teacher training 255w
Teachers (04.12.85) 304, 565w, 687w, 688w, 692-3w, 903-4, 905
Tobacco 785w
Tourist industry 333-4w
Transient people 916
Travelling people 916-7
Unemployment 383w, 689w
University finance 330w
Viruses 693w
Voluntary work 696-7w

***Scott, Mr Nicholas,** Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement, Political parties 1051-2
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Terrorism 1052
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1051
Armagh Prison, Body searches 443-4w, 1058
Chief constables, Ireland 1056-7
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 728w
Flags, Northern Ireland 729w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Ulster Unionists 1052
Proportional representation, Northern Ireland 306w
Universities, Northern Ireland 731w

Scottish Affairs Select Committee (12.12.85) 1077
Iron & steel industry 907-8, 909, 910, 1061

Scottish Arts Council 799w

Scottish Certificate of Education 52w, 199w, 200w
Educational qualifications 199w, 200w

Scottish Certificate of Technical & Vocational Education Council 52w
Educational qualifications 52w

Scottish councils
Rate support grants 255-6w

Scottish courts
Convictions 333w

Scottish Examination Board 199w, 201w, 202w
Appeals 199w
Manpower 201w
Public appointments 201w
Teachers 698w

Scottish health boards
Capital investment 53-4w
Childbirth 51w
Expenditure 53-4w, 745-6w
Health services 52w
Hospital beds 47-8w
Hospitals 46-8w, 54w
Maternity services 50-1w
NHS finance 696w

Scottish National Farmers Union
Severe weather payments 913-4

Scottish Office
Advertising 382w
Expenditure 560-4w

Scottish Special Housing Association 690w
Glasgow 690w

Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council 459-60w

Scottish Tourist Board 333-4w

Scottish Transport Group
Government grants 697-8w

Screening 535w
Cervical cancer 490-1w, 535w, 680-1w, 681-2w, 766w

Scunthorpe
Derelict land grants 288
Employment 59w
Employment opportunities 86-7w
Job creation schemes 86w
Unemployment 86w

Sea pollution
EC action 100w
Waste disposal 100w

Seabed mining
Offshore drilling 627w

Sealink 585w

Seas & oceans
Waste disposal 588w

Seasonal workers
Social security benefits rules 207-8w

Secondary education
Languages education 284w
Mathematics education 284w
Pupil-teacher ratios 285w

Secure psychiatric units
Hospital beds 117-8w
Regional health authorities 117-8w

Security
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 795-6w, 797-8w
Anglo-Irish talks 731w
Drugs 795-6w
Northern Ireland 1047-9, 1052-3, 1056-7, 1059

Security for Private Road Works (Scotland) Regulations 1985
(03.12.85) 165, (12.12.85) 1179

Security guards
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 128w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Questions
Bellew Parry Raven, Inquiries 443w
Export credit, Nigeria 15w
Fraud, City of London 4w
Fraud, Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate 427w
Johnson Matthey, Fraud 5-6w, 15w
Jones, Keith Lionel, Prison medical services 650w
Lloyds of London, Fraud 5w
Lloyds of London, Fraud Investigation Group 5w
Pahoomal family, Arrests 5w
Public transport, Metropolitan counties 106w

Seismic monitoring 636w
Nuclear weapons tests 636w

Self-employed
EC countries 799-800w

Self-employed contributions
National insurance contributions 495w

Sellafield 291-2w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 291-2w, 638-9w

Senile dementia 256w
Government grants 256w
Scotland 256w

Sentencing
Crimes of violence 315-6w
Magistrates 793-4w

Separated people 788w

Separated wives
Clergy 616

Sequestration of assets 426w, 718-20w
Compensation 718-20w
Contempt of court 426w
Trade unions 426w
USSR 718-20w

Settle to Carlisle railway line 108w

Severe disablement allowance 605w

Severe weather payments 100w, 134w, 230-1w, 394w, (04.12.85) 400-8, 602-3w, 699w, 743-4w, 913-4
Crofting 915
Departmental publications 603w
Energy prices 754
Farmers 100w
Ireland 915
Pensioners 753-4
Scotland 743-4w, 913-4, 915
Scottish National Farmers Union 913-4
Social security benefits 600w
Tayside 914
Tenant farmers 914-5
Wales 230-1w, 699w

Severn barrage 8

Severn bridge 8, 611, (12.12.85) 1078, (13.12.85) 1205-10
Ministerial statements (13.12.85) 1205-10
Private investment 8
Standing Order No 10 applications (12.12.85) 1078
Toll bridges 8

Severn Crossing Feasibility Study 8

Sewers 466w
Capital investment 467w
M1 303w

Sex discrimination
Baking industry 145
EC law 87w

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 87w

Sexual intercourse 318w

Sexual Offences Act 1985 34w, 35w
Liverpool 34w
Merseyside 35w

Shareholders
British Telecom 718w
Dockyards 386-7w

Shares
Cable & Wireless 175w

***Shaw, Mr Giles,** Minister of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 484-93, 499, 517-21
Questions
Alley, Eric 245w, 246w
Alley, Eric, Conditions of employment 246w
Alley, Eric, Local authorities 245-6w
Channel Islands, Official visits 419
Cinemas, Access to buildings 421-2
Civil defence, Departmental correspondence 357-8w
Civil defence, Emergency planning 313w
Civil defence, Identity cards 312w
Civil defence, International Scientific Community on Problems of the Environment 311w
Civil defence, Local authorities 313w, 415
Civil defence, Nuclear shelters 311w
Civil defence, Police 312w
Civil defence, Publicity 312w
Civil defence, Rescue services 312w
Civil defence, Research finance 312w
Civil defence, Volunteer Reserve 313w
Civil defence, Wales 246w
Civil Defence College, Civil defence 313w
Civil Defence College, Libraries 312w
Civil Defence College, Local government functions 313w
Civil disorder, Public order policing 322w
Civil disorder, Tottenham 25w, 314w
Community policing 316w
Companies, Criminal investigation 463-4w
Crime, Burglary 322-3w
Crime, Merseyside 311w
Crime prevention 310w
Crime prevention, Finance 310w
Crime prevention, Metropolitan Police 310w
Crime victims, Rape 317-8w
Crime victims, Women 316w

Demonstrations, RAF Greenham Common 319w
Drug crimes, Public appointments 701w
Electromagnetic interference, Nuclear war 316-7w
Emergency centres, Government grants to local authorities 29-30w
Fire regulations, Hostels 356w
Fire services 165w
Forensic science, Leicester University 315w
Fraud, City of London 29w, 358w
Fraud squad, Manpower 649w
Hijacking 247w
Hijacking, Police 582w
Home Office, Broadcasting programmes 463w
Identity cards 313w
Local radio, Greater London 581-2w
Metropolitan Police, Bullets 792w
Metropolitan Police, Detection rates 307w
Metropolitan Police, Pay 651w
Metropolitan Police, Police sirens 319w
Metropolitan Police, Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 25w
Metropolitan Police, Powers of entry 581w
National drugs unit, Police 792w
Nuclear weapons, Injuries 317w
Plastic bullets, Public order policing 292w
Police, Death 322w
Police, Expenditure 699-700w
Police, Hampshire 163-4w
Police, Manpower 318w
Police, Overtime 700-1w
Police, Tottenham 247w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 318w
Police civilians, Hampshire 164w
Police discipline, Racial discrimination 581w
Police informers 582w
Police raids, Brailsford Road 462w
Police relations with public, Inner city areas 309w
Police stations, Ilkeston 702-3w
Police training, Motorways 462-3w
Police vehicles 164w
Prison staff, Recruitment 317w
"Protect & Survive" 322w
Public Order Bill 1985/86 701w
Public order policing, Association of Chief Police Officers 247w, 582w
Public order policing, Manchester University 420
RAF Greenham Common, Police vehicles 464w
Rape, Merseyside 34w
Rape, Metropolitan Police 34w
Satellite broadcasting, Broadcasting controls 31w
Sexual Offences Act 1985, Merseyside 35w
Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) Act 1985 319w
Tachographs, Speed limits 313w
Television licences, Tax evasion 315w
Thames Valley police, Manpower 314w
Trespass, Animal Liberation Front 416
Trespass, Transient people 415

Sheep meat
Exports 727w
France 486-7w, 727w

Sheep premiums 566w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
Compulsory seat belt wearing 304w
Employment opportunities 4w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Companies 580w
Helicopters, Air safety 660w
Open University, Student numbers 13w
Open University, Tuition fees 13w, 453w
Small business, Bureaucracy 580-1w
Unemployment, Training 139
VAT, Small businesses 591-2w
Youth training scheme 182w

Sheffield
National Freight Company 725w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1081, 1099-101
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 770

Sheltered housing
Portsmouth 266w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 924
Questions
Horticulture, Agricultural research 241w
Sickness benefits, Hereford & Worcester 338w

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Crown Immunity Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 310
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 820-2
Questions
Civil Aviation Authority, Audit 389w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Local government expenditure, Rate support grants 282-3
Local government finance, Rate support grants 264-5w
Road traffic, A40 774w
Road works, Planning inquiries 774w

Shipbuilding
Devonport dockyard 206w
Redundancy 183w
Rosyth dockyard 206w

Shipping registration
Flags of convenience 773-4w

Shipping safety
Fishing vessels (04.12.85) 309

Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 309w, 410
Sunday trading 309w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Temporary immigrants, Members correspondence (04.12.85) 306

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 210-3, 215, 243, 244, 245, 246
Temporary immigrants, Members correspondence (04.12.85) 305
Questions
Crime victims, Personal records 308w
Economic situation, Northern Ireland 1056
Equal opportunities, Dept of Employment 81-2w, 83-4w
Residential care, Elderly 608w
Unemployment 148, 723w
Wages Inspectorate, Foreign languages 539w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 538-9w, 640w
Wages Inspectorate, Prosecutions 188w

Short, Mrs Renée
Questions
Alternative medicine, Dept of Health & Social Security 596-7w
Alternative medicine, Licensing 595-6w, 597w
Alternative medicine, Ministerial advisory bodies 596w
Brain drain 226-7w
Building industry, Capital investment 467-8w
Business statement 446
Child benefit, Wolverhampton 273w
Crime prevention, Conferences 419w
Curriculum 283w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 271w, 272-4w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Security guards 128w
Drug crimes, Convictions 26-7w
Drugs, Licensing 685-6w
Education support grants 223w
Educational institutions, Research finance 283w
Educational standards, Research 364w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Distinction certificates 283w
Government grants to local authorities, Wolverhampton District Council 669-70w
Handicapped pupils 364-5w
Handicapped students, Student grants 284w
Health service staff, Compensation 825w
Higher education, Student numbers 448-9w
Hospital closures, Mental hospitals 128w
Hospital consultants 338w
Hospital consultants, Junior hospital doctors 401w
Hospital waiting lists, Wolverhampton Health Authority 754w
Hospitals, Capital investment 756-8w
Local government finance, Council house sales 467w
Mandatory student grants, Cost of living 226w
Mandatory student grants, Costs 226w
NHS finance, Capital investment 754-5w
Open University, University finance 453w
Pensions, Expenditure 755-6w
Prison sentences, Handicapped 645w
Prison staff, Dismissal 645-6w
Prison staff, Violence 645w
Remand in custody, Medical examinations 792-3w
Science & technology research, Government grants 225w
Secondary education, Mathematics education 284w
Smith houses 470w
Social security benefits overpayment 272w
Student grants, Married people 284w
Students, Social security benefits 210w
Surgery, Manpower 274w
Teachers, School meals 284w
Teachers appraisal, Headteachers 362w
Tuberculosis, Vaccination 396w, 609w
Unemployed, Student grants 227w
Unemployment, West Midlands 538w
Universities, Student wastage 449-50w
University finance 567w
University finance, Medical education 567-8w
Vaccination, Pupils 609w
Vocational education, Professional organisations 363w

Short Brothers
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1058

Shropshire Health Authority 154
Health services finance 154
NHS finance 748

Sickness benefits
Hereford & Worcester 338w
Medical examinations 338w

Silentnight (03.12.85) 210-52
Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 210-52
Opposition days (03.12.85) 210-52

Silkin, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 641, 658-63, 713

Silvester, Mr Fred
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 965-7
Questions
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 20
NHS, Property transfer 143w

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Tobacco Products (Sports Sponsorship) Bill, 1R (06.12.85) 532
Questions
AIDS, Government grants 1-2w
Antismoking campaign 600w
Tax harmonisation, Spirits 355w

Singleton Hospital 447w
Accident & emergency departments 447w

Sino-British Joint Liaison Group 248w

Sites of special scientific interest 267w
Land drainage 267w
Tree planting 267w

West Sussex 469w

Sizewell Inquiry 803-4w
Public appointments 803w

Skiing
Scotland 138

Skilled workers
Confederation of British Industry 579w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 281
Training 184w, 579w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1082, 1083
European Council (05.12.85) 435
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 933
Members interests (10.12.85) 761-1
Prime Ministers question time point of order (05.12.85) 426
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 227-31, 244, 249
Temporary immigrants, Members correspondence (04.12.85) 307-8
Questions
Bankruptcy 14w
Business statement 1066-7
Council housing, Housing standards 260w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Economic policy 146
Exports, South Africa 14w
Investment 354-5w
Licensing laws, Sunday trading 416
Minimum wage, Hairdressing 191w
Motor industry, Manpower 191w
Overseas investment, South Africa 174-5w
Part-time employment 191w
Pay 187w
Pay, Men 188w
Pay, Textile industry 187-8w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 250w
Unemployment 176w, 177w
Womens employment, Wages councils 228w

Slaughterhouses
Animal welfare 726w
Food Act 1984 479-80w
Scotland 691w
Trade competitiveness 691w

Small businesses 182-3w, 188w
Advisory services 641w
Billing 641w
Bureaucracy 55-6w, 180w, 183w, 420w, 580-1w
Clubs 145-6
Company liquidations 381w, 447w
Dept of Employment 188w
Dept of Transport 9
EC action 420w
Government assistance to industry 188w
Loan guarantee scheme 192w, 642-4w
Open Tech 185w
Sunday trading 411
Tourist industry 180w
VAT 591-2w
Venture capital 183w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 933
National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1985 (03.12.85) 259, 271

Smith Committee see Resource Allocation Working Party

Smith houses 470w
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 633
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 550-4, 580, 585
Questions
Alvey programme, Members correspondence 434w
Arts finance, Arts Council grants 620
Dysentery 682w
Fast reactors, France 804w
Fraud, City of London 1061-2
Government departments, Day nurseries 786w
Immigration controls, Bangladesh 460-1w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Defence 423w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 638-9w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 359w
Nuclear safeguards 803w
Plutonium, Export licensing 347w
Plutonium, Exports 347w, 589-90w
Plutonium, France 804w
Rate support grants, Inner city areas 283-4
Sewers 466w
Sewers, Capital investment 467w
Water authorities, Privatisation 551w
Water authorities, Public inquiries 551w
Water meters, Legislation 668-9w
Water pollution 466w
Water pollution, Water authorities 466w
Water supply, Bye laws 466w
Water supply, Sanitation 466w

Smith, Mr Cyril
Questions
Northern Ireland, Public expenditure 728w

Smith Rt Hon John
Questions
Government assistance to industry, Monklands 372w

Smith Mr Tim
Debates etc
European Council (05.12.85) 438
Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1168, 1173-5
Questions
Drug industry, USA 274-5w
Drugs, Balance of trade 251w
Inland Revenue, Law enforcement 653-4w
International trade, Taxation 252w
NHS, Management 756

Smoking 600w
Employment discrimination 126w
Prescription drugs 763w
Publicity 270w
Scotland 797w
Young people 797w, 824-5w

Smoking related diseases 797w, 824-5w
Young people 824-5w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Questions
Architecture, College closures 366w
Cancer, Medical treatments 535w
Central America, Overseas aid 360-2w
Health service staff, Speech therapy 619w
Jews, USSR 367w
Speech therapy, Manpower 620w
Speech therapy, Vacancies 619w

Snape, Mr Peter
Questions
Manchester airport, Manchester City Council 10-1
Railway fares, Railway travel 3

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 661-2w
Defence procurement 547w
Housing policy 171w
Labour mobility 541-2w
Mid Downs Health Authority, NHS finance 275w
National parks 296-7
NATO, Frontiers 349w
Poverty 496w
Private rented housing 171w
Sites of special scientific interest, West Sussex 469w
Southern Arts, Arts finance 544w

Social class
Households 758w

Social fund 607w, 754
British Association of Social Workers 754
Cash limits 754
Scotland 753

Social problems
Christianity 422
Crimes of violence 417-9

Social security abuse
Bedfordshire 579w
Hertfordshire 579w
Housing benefits 604w

Social Security Act 1985 683-4w

Social security appeals tribunals
Public appointments 228w

Social security benefits
Employment 147
Severe weather payments 600w
Students 210w

Social security benefits disqualification
Child benefit 131w
Unemployment benefits 89w

Social security benefits overpayment 272w

Social security benefits rates
Child benefit 208w
Child dependency additions 208w

Social security benefits reductions
Housing benefits 339-40w

Social security benefits rules
Aliens 141w
Availability for work 88-9w, 140
Exceptional needs payments 127w
Heating allowances 346w
Housing benefits 131-2w, 815-6w
Religious orders 274w
School leaving 130-1w
Seasonal workers 207-8w
Social security recipients 129w
Students 273w
Training allowances 131w
Unemployment benefits 89w
Young people 130w

Social security benefits uprating 605w, 821-2w
Family income 755
Pensions 605w
Retirement pensions 207-9w
Standard of living 755

Social security claims
Housing benefits 341w

Social Security Commissioners 394w

Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1165-79

Social security recipients 270w
Children 130w
Community programme 181w
Dependents 133w
Housing benefits 341-2w
Nursing homes 142w
Rates & rating 599w
Social security benefits rules 129w
Wales 617w

Social security reviews 749

Social Services Inspectorate 496w, 752w
Cruelty to children 496w
Local government social services 752w

Social Services Select Committee (06.12.85) 597

Social work
Glasgow University 329-30w
National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education 227w

Social workers 680w
Educational qualifications 679-80w
Voluntary organisations 679-80w

Social workers training
Bolton 617-8w
Child care 752-3w
Finance 151
Scotland 255w

Soft loans 169w
Dept of Trade & Industry 169w

Soil Survey of England & Wales 478w, 479w
Research finance 479w

Soley, Mr Clive

Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 75
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 486, 493-500, 506, 514, 518
Young people, Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 543, 548, 554-65
Questions
Civil disorder, Tottenham 25w
Licensing laws, Alcoholism 417
Metropolitan Police, Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 25w
Police discipline, Racial discrimination 581w
Prisoners on remand, Brixton Prison 162w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 750

Solitary confinement 27-8w
Category A prisoners 27-8w

Sound insulation
Roads 658-9w

South Africa
Armed forces training 546w
Arms embargoes 636w
British Lions 172w, 262w
Church Commissioners 617-8
Economic sanctions 15-6
Exports 14w
Food exports 768w
Imports 14w
Overseas investment 174-5w
UK companies abroad 250w

South East Asia
Prime Minister visits abroad 571-2w

South East region
Population 758w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority (12.12.85) 1180-6

South Tyneside 141w
Tuberculosis 141w

South Wales 607, 610
Coal 607
Coal mine closures 606-7, 613-4
Employment opportunities 610-1
Location of industry 610
Unemployment 612

South Yorkshire
Computer industry 190w
Microelectronics industry 190w
Public transport 391w
Textile industry 443w

South Yorkshire County Council 391w, 671-3w

South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive 391w

Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference 15
Overseas aid 15

Southern Arts 544w
Arts finance 544w

Southern Technical Services 463-4w

Spain
EC budget 337-8w
EC accession (04.12.85) 313-53, (10.12.85) 859-91

Speaker and his deputies, For rulings and statements see separate heading Speakers rulings & statements
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (02.12.85) 107, (03.12.85) 166, 210, (04.12.85) 353, (10.12.85) 767, (11.12.85) 929, (12.12.85) 1079
Disallowed questions (09.12.85) 605
Orders & regulations motions (03.12.85) 253
Prime Ministers questions (05.12.85) 423
Procedure (02.12.85) 111, 123, (12.12.85) 1161, (13.12.85) 1210
Standing Order No 10 applications, Austin Rover (09.12.85) 636
Standing Order No 10 applications, Gartcosh Steelworks (12.12.85) 1077
Standing Order No 10 applications, Inner City areas (02.12.85) 25, 26
Standing Order No 10 applications, Severn bridge (12.12.85) 1078
Standing Order No 10 applications, Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 637-8
Standing Order No 10 applications, Teachers (04.12.85) 304
Standing Order No 10 applications, Tin (10.12.85) 766
Standing Order No 10 applications, Westland Helicopters (03.12.85) 164-5

Speakers rulings & statements (11.12.85) 908
Adjournment debates (11.12.85) 1039, (12.12.85) 1183
Business statement (05.12. 85) 427, 447, (12.12.85) 1070, 1073
Calling of Members (05.12.85) 445, (11.12.85) 990-1, (12.12.85) 1071, 1075
Consolidated Fund debates (12.12.85) 1076
House of Commons debates (12.12.85) 1076
House of Commons Select Committees (02.12.85) 27, 28, (11.12.85) 901-2, 918-20, 1008
House of Lords reporting (13.12.85) 1218
Members (03.12.85) 218
Members attendance (05.12.85) 427, 428, 457
Members conduct (03.12.85) 226, 247, (05.12.85) 464, (11.12.85) 999, 1000, 1001, 1003
Members correspondence (04.12.85) 305
Members interests (10.12.85) 761-2, 763
Members interventions (02.12.85) 108, (03.12.85) 187, 226, (11.12.85) 1003, 1039, (12.12.85) 1183
Members speeches (02.12.85) 108, (03.12.85) 180, 187, 218, (09.12.85) 639, 662, (10.12.85) 801, (11.12.85) 946, 957, 1021, (12.12.85) 1125, (13.12.85) 1237, 1241
Ministerial responsibility (05.12.85) 423, 426-7
Ministerial speeches (02.12.85) 110, (03.12.85) 247
Ministerial statements (03.12.85) 157, 163, (05.12.85) 437, (09.12.85) 632, (11.12.85) 922, (13.12.85) 1207, 1209
Official Report (11.12.85) 921
Opposition days (03.12.85) 166
Oral questions (02.12.85) 18, (03.12.85) 149, 152, (05.12.85) 422, (11.12.85) 901-2
Parliamentary papers (04.12.85) 305, 307, 308, 324, 326, (13.12.85) 1211
Parliamentary privilege (04.12.85) 306
Points of order (02.12.85) 110, (12.12.85) 1052
Prime Ministers questions (05.12.85) 426-7
Private Bills (05.12.85) 427, 428, 457
Public Bills (05.12.85) 459
Public petitions (13.12.85) 1188
Royal family (03.12.85) 171
Scope of debate (05.12.85) 511, 512
Supplementary questions (09.12.85) 615
Unparliamentary expressions (02.12.85) 20, 21, (03.12.85) 139, (05.12.85) 419, (09.12.85) 645, (11.12.85) 909, 918
Vote Office (03.12.85) 163
Written questions (11.12.85) 921

Spearing, Mr. Nigel
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Rem stages (10.12.85) 862-5, 875
European Council (05.12.85) 435
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1193
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 949
Medical Act 1963 (Amendment) Bill, 1R (06.12.85) 531
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 628
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 118-9
UNESCO (05.12.85) 455
Questions
Canary Wharf, Environmental impact assessment 262w
Canary Wharf, Public inquiries 292
Channel crossing 14w
Channel crossing, Environmental impact assessment 430w
Disaster relief, Research finance 17-8
Fire services, Greater London Council 811w
London docklands railway, Railway fares 387-8w
London docklands railway, Railway network 106w
Motorways, Road traffic 388w, 803w
Roads, Newham 301-2w
UNESCO 422w
UNESCO, UK contributions 424, 707-8w
Woolwich, Road traffic 301w

Special Air Service 95w
Ashford training centre 95w

Special educational needs 13w, 161w, 223-4w, 364-5w, 454w, 628, 629-32w, 705w
Children 13w
Expenditure 223w
Handicapped pupils 365w, 630-4w
Information 228w
Inner city areas 550w
Judgments 628w
Pupils 223-4w, 629-32w
Young people 161w

Special health authorities 407-18w

Special protection areas 57-8w, 553w

Special schools
Expenditure 223-4w
Pupils 630-4w
School population 447w
Wales 447w

Spectacles
NHS 490w, 610w
Privatisation 610w

Speech therapy
Health service staff 619w
Manpower 620w
Pay 619w
Professional qualifications 765-6w
Regional health authorities 136w
Teachers 621w
Vacancies 619w

Speeches
Health services 276w

Speed, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 649, 668-71
Questions
Air transport, International cooperation 803w
USSR, Embassies 814w

Speed limits
Driving tests 301w
Motorways 7, 8
Police powers 8
Publicity 104w
Road safety 104-5w
Tachographs 313w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Catering, Equipment 296w
Crime, Burglary 322-3w
Crown Suppliers, Exports 286w
Insulation grants 808-9w
Planning permission, Land use 266w
Road tax, Prosecutions 583-4w

Spencer, Mr Derek
Questions
Community policing 316w
Leicestershire Health Authority, Contract cleaning 760
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 22-3
NHS, Expenditure 601w
Small businesses, Government assistance to industry 188w
Transport & General Workers Union, Trade union elections 153-4
Urban programme, Costs 261w

"Spending on Law & Order" 310w

Spicer, Mr Jim
Questions
Advertising agencies, Dept of Employment 537-8w
Advertising agencies, Dept of Energy 749w
Advertising agencies, Dept of the Environment 774-6w
Advertising agencies, Dept of Transport 656-8w
Advertising agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 480-1w
Advertising agencies, Ministry of Defence 593w
Advertising agencies, Treasury 768-9w
British Airways, Investment income 110w
British Airways, Public dividend capital 584w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, Public dividend capital 294w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, Dept of Energy 359w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, Dept of Trade & Industry 373w

Spicer, Mr Michael, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air fares, Europe 109w
Air safety 304w
Air safety, Fire prevention 304w
Air transport, EC Transport Council 105w
Air transport, International cooperation 803w
Air travel, Heathrow 391-2w
Aircrew, Licensing 303w
Airlines, Lines of Communication Agreement 244w
Airports, Companies 10
Airports, Privatisation 10
British Airways, Investment income 110w
British Airways, Public dividend capital 584w
Buses, Tachographs 104-5w
Civil Aviation Authority, Audit 389w
Civil Aviation Authority, Fees & charges 245w
Civil Aviation authority, Meteorology 430w
Driving tests, Basildon 6
Driving tests, Motorways 6
Driving tests, Waiting lists 7
Helicopters, Air safety 660w
Manchester Airport, Companies 10
Manchester Airport, Manchester City Council 10-1
Manchester Airport, Privatisation 392-3w
Motor vehicle registration 771w
North Sea, Helicopters 303-4w
Road tax, Prosecutions 583-4w
Road works, Bootle 111w
Taxis, Heathrow 773w
Wardair, Air routes 243-4w

Spirits
Agricultural surpluses 480w
Tax harmonisation 355w

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) Act 1985 319w

Sporting tours
Rugby 172w, 262w

Sports
Metropolitan counties 261-2w

Sports Council
Local government reform 261-2w

Sports sponsorship
Tobacco industry 467w, (06.12.85) 532

Sportsgrounds
Closed circuit television 777w

Spray suppression 111w, 390w
Lorries 111w, 390w

Squire, Mr. Robin
Debates etc
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill, IR (04.12.85) 312
Questions
Family income, Average earnings 173-4w
London Docklands Development Corporation 292

Staff-student ratios
Universities 706-7w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 314
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1047-8
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 302
Business statement 443
Extradition, Law reform 314-5w
Fraud Investigation Group, Finance 12
Social problems, Christianity 422

Standard of living
Social security benefits uprating 755

Standardisation
Citizens band radio 14w

Standing Order No 10 applications
Austin Rover (09.12.85) 636
Garcosh steelworks (12.12.85) 1077
Inner city areas (02.12.85) 25-6
Severn bridge (12.12.85) 1078
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 637
Teachers (04.12.85) 304
Tin (10.12.85) 765-6
Westland Helicopters (03.12.85) 164

Standing Order No 122 (05.12.85) 427, 428, 457

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Questions
Armed forces, Johannesburg Airport 385-6w
Armed forces deployment, 9 Signal Regiment 277w
Armed forces discharges, 9 Signal Regiment 277-8w
Armed forces discharges, 14 Signal Regiment 278w
Armed forces recruitment, School leaving 92w
Ashford training centre 95w
Ashford training centre, Armed forces training 95-6w, 96-7w
Ashford training centre, Interrogation methods 95w, 96w, 97w
Ashford training centre, Police training 96w
Ashford training centre, Special Air Service 95w
Ashford training centre, Ulster Defence Regiment 96w
Civil defence, Emergency planning 547-8w
Defence equipment 349-50w
Defence expenditure, NATO 782w
Exercise Brave Defender, NATO bases 780w
Exercise Brave Defender, Western Isles 780w
Falkland Islands, Defence equipment 350w
14 Signal Regiment, Police interrogation 783-4w
Military police, Armed forces training 97w
NATO, Frontiers 349w
9 Signal Regiment, Body searches 278w
9 Signal Regiment, Police interrogation 783w
Public footpaths, Meanwith with Darley 277w

Stansted Airport 32w, 772w
Hijacking 32-3w
Railway network 772w

Starch (02.12.85) 107-27

State earnings related pension scheme 599w, 607w, 749, 750

State education
Free school meals 703w
School meals 703w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Questions
Church of England, Inner city areas 151-2
Housing associations, Scotland 692w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 914
Strategic defence initiative, Finance 758-9
Supplementary benefits, Students 273w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 943, 947
Questions
Armed forces dependents, Education 544w
Diplomatic service education allowances, Expenditure 456w
EC grants & loans, Webbers Yard 171-2w
EC institutions, Civil servants secondment 456w
Guildhall, Dartmouth 295w
Old battery, Dartmouth castle 295-6w
Tyre industry, Licensing 392w

Sterilisation
International Planned Parenthood Federation 361-2w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Coastal shipping, EC Transport Council 108w
Interest charges, Deep discounted stock 769w
State earnings related pension scheme 607w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Questions
Civil defence, Research finance 312w
Development of Tourism Act 1969, Companies 180w

Stewart, Mr Allan, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Glasgow 692w
Building industry, Scotland 458w
Company liquidations, Scotland 381w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 690-1w
Garcosh Steelworks, Factory closures 690w
Glasgow University, Social work 329-30w
Hotel & catering industry, Scotland 334-5w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 691w
School closures, Scotland 336-7w
Schools, Scotland 747-8w
Scottish Certificate of Education 52w
Scottish Certificate of Education, Educational qualifications 199w, 200w
Scottish Certificate of Technical & Vocational Education Council, Educational qualifications 52w
Scottish Examination Board 202w
Scottish Examination Board, Appeals 199w
Scottish Examination Board, Manpower 201w
Scottish Examination Board, Public appointments 201w
Scottish Examination Board, Teachers 698w
Scottish Tourist Board 333-4w
Teacher training, Scotland 255w
Teachers, Scotland 565w, 688w, 692-3w
Unemployment, Scotland 383w
University finance, Scotland 330w
Youth unemployment, Lothian 689w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 726-7, 729
Questions
Union of Democratic Mineworkers 759

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 640
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 29
Fuel bills (04.12.85) 405
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 160
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1207
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 688w
Cancer hazards, Rosyth 797w
Exercise Brave Defender, NATO bases 780w
Exercise Brave Defender, Western Isles 780w
Severe weather payments, Crofting 915
Teachers, Scotland 905
Unemployment 539w

Stewart, Mr Ian, *Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Bank of England, Unit trusts 806w

Building societies, Companies 355w
Debts, Africa 176w
Essl Commodities, Banking supervision 103w
Inland Revenue, Law enforcement 653-4w
Interest charges, Deep discounted stock 769w
Investment 354-5w
Overseas investment, South Africa 174-5w
Public Works Loan Board, Local government borrowing 356w
Taxation, Stocks & shares 806w
Trustee Savings Banks 606w

Stobhill Hospital 52w, 381w, 912
Gynaecology 381w
Health service staff 381w
Hospital closures 52w, 381-2w, 912-3
Maternity services 52w, 381w, 912, 913

Stock Exchange
Crime 412
Prosecutions 412

Stocks & shares
Taxation 806w

Stoke on Trent
Elderly 754

Stokes, Mr John
Questions
Church & state 424

Stop & search 247w

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 655, 692, 705-9, 710
Questions
Invalid care allowances 604w
Public transport, Metropolitan counties 105w
Speed limits, Motorways 7

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill, 2R (04.12.85) 380-5
Oral question time point of order (11.12.85) 918-9
Strategic defence initiative, Standing Order No 10 applications (09.12.85) 637
Questions
Cancer, Holy Loch 459-60w, 746-7w
Cancer hazards, Children 766-7w
Civil defence, International Scientific Community on Problems of the Environment 311w
Demonstrations, RAF Greenham Common 319w
International Year of Peace 38w
Peace, Government grants 347-8w
Scottish Certificate of Technical & Vocational Educational Council, Educational qualifications 52w
Severe weather payments 603w
Teachers, Scotland 903-4
Youth training scheme 182w

Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 623-35, 637
Civil service manpower 811-2w
Finance 758-9
Ministerial statements (09.12.85) 623-35
Science and technology research 423
Standing Order No 10 applications (09.12.85) 637
Technical assistance 98w, 387w, 811-2w
Technology transfer 98w

"Strategy for Agricultural Research & Development Consultation Paper" 744-5w

Strathclyde
Railway transport 46w
Transport subsidies 46w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 939

Straw burning 268w

Stray dogs
Northern Ireland 787-8w

Strike ballots
Trade union elections 185w

Strikes
Lost working days 191w

Structure plans
Berkshire 262w

Stubble burning 268w

Student grants 453-4w
Handicapped students 284w
Married people 284w
Unemployed 227w

Student numbers
Higher education 448-9w
Initial teacher training 450-4w
Leicestershire 158w
Occupational therapy 11-3w
Open University 13w

Student wastage
Universities 449-50w

Students
Housing benefits 404w
Social security benefits 210w
Social security benefits rules 273w
Supplementary benefits 273w, 607w

Submarines
Iron & steel industry 908-9

Subsidence
Coal mining 424w

Subsidence Compensation Review Committee see Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review

Subsidiary companies
National Coal Board 749w

Suckler cow premiums 100-1w

Sudbury Prison
Prison escapes 413

Sugar
EC action (02.12.85) 107-27

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Local government reform, Waste disposal 378-7w
NHS, Energy conservation 603w
Television licences, Tax evasion 315w

Summer schools 13w, 453w
Open University 13w

Summer Time Order 1985 (05.12.85) 409

Sunday trading 410-11
Licensing laws 416
Pay 188w
Police 309w
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 309w
Small businesses 411

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements & Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 129w

Supplementary benefits 755-6
Board & lodging charges 129w, 130w, 595w, 617w
Camden 133w
Child benefit 756
Employment 756
Food 132w
Heating allowances 400-1w
Income tax 323w
Nutrition & health 600-1w
Religious orders 274w
Repatriation 622w
Residential care 684w
Students 273w, 607w
Take-up 756
Walsall 345-6w
Waltham Forest 615w
West Midlands 345-6w
Widows 1064
Young people 131w

Supplementary benefits disregards of income
Unemployed 615w

Supplementary questions
Speakers rulings & statements (09.12.85) 615

Surcharge & Disqualification of Councillors (Abolition) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 309

Surgery
Heart diseases 678w
Hip replacements 610w
Hospital waiting lists 754w
Infectious diseases 678-9w
Manpower 274w
Medical research 766w
Wales 445w

Surplus land 606w, 775w
Income 606w
Regional health authorities 606w

Sutherland
Tree planting 911

Swansea Prison 320w
Prison accommodation 320w

SWAPO 357w, 384w
Immigrant detainees 357w
Kaukungua, Shapua 357w
Nujoma, Sam 384w
Peace negotiations 384w
United Nations 384w
Violence 384w

Swindon
British Rail Engineering 2-3

Systime UK 558w
Foreign investment in UK 558w
Government grants 558w
Millshaw Park 558w

Tachographs
Buses 104-5w
Evidence 313w
Speed limits 313w

Take-away food shops
Planning permission 266w

Takeovers
Allied Lyons 425
Employment protection 81w

Tameside
Pupil-teacher ratios 704w

Tanzania
Political refugees 32-3w

Tape recorded evidence
Police interrogation 456w
Scotland 456w

Tax allowances
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 911
Finance 1060-1
Government grants to local authorities 22
Tax rates & bands 542w

Tax burden
Income tax 805w

Tax evasion
Channel Islands 419
Television licences 315w

Tax harmonisation
Spirits 355w

Tax rates & bands 651-2w
Tax allowances 542w

Tax reform
Treaties 590-1w

Tax thresholds 148-9

Tax yields 542w

Taxation
International trade 252w
Stocks & shares 806w
Take-up of employment 147

Taxicards
Greater London 303w

Taxis
British Airports Authority 773w
Fees & charges 773w
Heathrow 773w
Road safety 773w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc
Northern Ireland Loans Bill, Com & rem stages (04.12.85) 392, 395, 396, 397-8
Questions
Planning permission, Northern Ireland 45w

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Questions
Ancient monuments, Expenditure 295
Midland link motorways, Road construction 107w
Overseas trade, Hong Kong 286-7w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w
Security, Northern Ireland 1052-3
Social workers training, Child care 752-3w
Vacancies, West Midlands 189-90w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 642
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), Points of order (04.12.85) 305-6, 307
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 342
European Council (05.12.85) 432
European Regional Development Fund (11.12.85) 1028
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 721
Questions
Buses, Germany 772w
Channel crossing, Channel ferries 584w
Channel crossing, Public expenditure 104w
Crime prevention 310w
EC reform, EC economic policy 419-20w
EC reform, Voting methods 419w
European Assembly 573w
European Council, Ministerial statements 323w
Financial institutions, EC institutions 590-1w
Nitrates, Water supply 263w

Tayside
Severe weather payments 914

Teacher training
General Certificate of Secondary Education 570-1w
Scotland 255w

Teachers
Church & state 565w
Industrial disputes 628w, 688w
Job release scheme 541w
Pay 9-12w, 362w, 363-4w, 628w, 692-3w, 739, 903-4, 905
Pay settlements 628w
Religious education 454w
School meals 11-2w, 284w
Scotland (04.12.85) 304, 565w, 687w, 688w, 692-3w, 903-4, 905
Scottish Examination Board 698w
Speech therapy 621w
Standing Order No 10 applications (04.12.85) 304

Teachers appraisal 362w
Headteachers 362w

Teaching hospitals
West Lothian Hospital 912

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 930, 954, 956, 997-1006
Questions
Magistrates, Bolton 2w

Technical & vocational education initiative 185w
Local education authorities 185w

Technical assistance
Strategic defence initiative 98w, 287w, 811-2w

Technical education
Educational finance 366w

Technology transfer
Strategic defence initiative 98w

Telephone systems
Palace of Westminster 805w

Television 421-2w
Tobacco advertising (09.12.85) 638

Television Act 1964 (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (09.12.85) 638

Television licences
Tax evasion 315w

Television programmes
BBC 761
Intimidation of witnesses 761

Temperature
Air pollution 205w

Temporary employment 178w, 325-6w
Normanton 178w

Temporary immigrants
Immigrants fiancees 583w
Immigration controls 462w, 581w
Pakistan 357w

Temporary staff
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 749

10 Downing Street 419w

Tenant farmers
Severe weather payments 914-5

Tenants
NHS 399-400w

Tenants cooperatives 296, 779w
Council housing 296
Right to buy 779w

Tenders 105w, 107w, 110w, 392w, 825w
Armed forces officers 812w
Bus services 392w
Civil servants 812w
Dartford tunnel 110w

Terlezki, Mr Stefan
Questions
Bilateral aid, Aid financed trade 22-3w
Civil Defence College, Libraries 312w
Coal, South Wales 607
Coastal protection, Cardiff 446w
Motor industry, Industrial production 557w
United Nations, Drug crimes 814w

Termination of employment
Dept of Education & Science 705w
Industrial tribunals 87w

Terrorism
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1052-3
Building industry 1059
Category A prisoners 27-8w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 14
IRA 1052-3

Test tube babies (04.12.85) 310
Clinics 604w

Testing
Cervical cancer 614-5w

Textile industry
Barnsley 443w
Capital investment 16-8w
EC countries 85w
EC grants & loans 640-1w
Employment 229w
Employment opportunities 168w
European Social Fund 626w
Government assistance to industry 168w
Manpower 85w, 191-2w
Pay 187-8w
South Yorkshire 443w
Women 187-8w

Textiles
Antidumping duties 439w
EC trade 16w
Hong Kong 435w
Import controls 437-8w
Imports 435w, 436-7w

Thames Valley police 314w, 319w, 464w
Manpower 314w

Thames Water Authority 171w, 300w

Thamesmead
Council housing 296

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Debates etc
European Council, Ministerial statements (05.12.85) 429-39
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Border security in Ireland 1062-3
Anglo-Irish talks, Hillsborough 5w
Armed forces, Publicity 710-1w
Arms control, International conferences 323w, 708-9w
British Atlantic Committee, Government grants 710w
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1060-1
British War Widows & Associates, Ministers correspondence 637-8w
Cabinet papers, Thirty year rule 323-4w
Central Office of Information, Publicity 711w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Inner city areas 1061
Church & state 424
City of London, Law enforcement 424-5
Coal firing scheme 420-1w
Crime prevention, Conferences 419w
Dial-a-Ride, Motor vehicles 424
EC reform, EC economic policy 419-20w
EC reform, European Assembly 419w
EC reform, Luxembourg Summit 708w
EC reform, Voting methods 419w
Employment opportunities 4w
Espionage, Israel 324w
European Assembly 573w
European Charter of Local Self-Government 422w
European Council, Ministerial statements 323w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 709w
Football, Prime Minister domestic visits 708w
Foreign policy, Argentina 423
Fraud, City of London 4w, 1059-60, 1061-2
Government assistance to industry, Tin 1062
Government departments, Cost effectiveness 574-5w
Government departments, Day nurseries 786w
Heads of state, Official receptions 325w, 575w
Horticulture, Agricultural research 241w
House of Lords, Bishops 421w
Human rights, Iran 573w
Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate 3w
Industrial investment, Location of industry 709w
Intergovernmental Conference 324-6w
International Ocean Drilling Programme, Departmental coordination 711-2w
Intimidation of witnesses, Television programmes 761
Jews, USSR 367w
Leicestershire Health Authority, Contract cleaning 760
Liberal Party, Propaganda 759-60
Literacy, Departmental coordination 420w
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 241-2w
Luxembourg Summit, VAT threshold 573-4w
Manchester Airport, Manchester City Council 423
Manufacturing industries, EC countries 233-42w
Manufacturing industries, Exchange rates 1061

Manufacturing industries, Public investment 241w
Members, Scotland 761
Members interests, Channel tunnel 760
Mergers, Distillers Company 1063
National Pensioners Convention, Costs 578w
Neasden Hospital, Prime Minister domestic visits 708w
Northern Ireland government, Ulster Unionists 1063-4
Nuclear fuel cycle, Cancer hazards 786w
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 422, 424
Offices of profit under the Crown 573w
Oil prices, Balance of payments 757-8
Oil prices, North Sea oil 760
Opposition days, Inner city areas 1062
Peace Through NATO, Government grants 710w
Peace Through NATO, Publicity 710w
Police relations with public, Haringey 425-6
Prime Minister domestic visits, Central Scotland 323w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w, 709w
Prime Minister visits abroad, Air transport 575-7w
Prime Minister visits abroad, South East Asia 571-2w
Prime Minister visits abroad, USSR 325w
Proportional representation, Electoral reform 1062
Public appointments 422-4w
Public expenditure 709w
Public expenditure, Local authorities 712-5w
Public sector assets, Privatisation 3-4w
Public transport, Buses 712w
Rates & rating, Departmental coordination 4w
Raw materials imports, Exchange rates 1060
Regional government 709w
Regional planning & development, Environment protection 709-10w
Science & technology research, Research finance 787w
Scientists, Political parties 758
Scotland, Prime Minister domestic visits 708w
Scottish Affairs Select Committee, Iron & steel industry 1061
Small businesses, EC action 420w
Social problems, Christianity 422
Strategic defence initiative, Finance 758-9
Strategic defence initiative, Science & technology research 423
Supplementary benefits, Income tax 323w
Takeovers, Allied Lyons 425
Teachers, Pay 759
Television 421-2w
Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee, Autumn statement 758
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1985/86 760
UNESCO 3w, 422w
UNESCO, UK contributions 424
Union of Democratic Mineworkers 759
War Cabinet, Official secrets 572-3w
West, Harry, Members correspondence 4w
Widows, Supplementary benefits 1064

Theft
Crime 322-3w
Handicapped 645w
Homeowners insurance 702w

Thirty year rule 323-4w
Cabinet papers 323-4w

Thomas, Mr D E
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 824
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 632
Questions
Alley, Eric 245w, 246w
Alley, Eric, Conditions of employment 246w
Alley, Eric, Local authorities 245-6w
Civil defence, Departmental correspondence 357-8w
Civil defence, Emergency planning 547-9w
Civil defence, Wales 246w
"Faith in the City" 614
Languages education, Welsh language 608
Plastic bullets, Public order policing 292w

Thomas, Dr Roger
Questions
Bone marrow disorders, Wales 605
Chemists shops, Wales 446w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 187-90

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Airports, Companies 10
Arms control, International conferences 323w
Council house sales, Norwich 257w
Industrial training, Graduates 639w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 748-9
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 410

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 78-9
Questions
Civil defence, Publicity 312w

Thorne, Mr Stan
Questions
Pensions, Social security benefits uprating 605w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 308w
Unemployment 176w

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 19

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Prime Ministers question time point of order (05.12.85) 426-7
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 218, 219, 220, 240
Questions
"Better Schools White Paper" 568w
Community programme 181w
Congenital abnormalities 608w
Derelict land, Land acquisition 289-90
Embassies, Export promotion 636w
Government departments, Cost effectiveness 574-5w
Manchester Airport, Manchester City Council 423
Manchester Airport, Privatisation 392-3w
Planning appeals 170w
Planning appeals, Birtenshaw farm 170w
Road works, Road accidents 390w
Venture capital, Bolton 144

Tin
Government assistance to industry 1062
Mining 1062
Standing Order No 10 applications (10.12.85) 765-6

Tobacco (06.12.85) 531-2
Advertising controls 817w
Children (04.12.85) 311
Children & Young Persons Act 1933 794-5w
Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 785w
Retail trade 807w
Scotland 785w
Young people 807w

Tobacco advertising (06.12.85) 531-2, 683w
Health warnings 394w
Television (09.12.85) 638

Tobacco industry
Sports sponsorship 467w, (06.12.85) 532

Tobacco Products (Advertising) Bill 1985/86
1R (06.12.85) 531-2

Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.12.85) 311

Tobacco Products (Sports Sponsorship) Bill 1985/86
1R (06.12.85) 532

Toll bridges
Severn bridge 8

Torney, Mr Thomas
Questions
Housing investment programmes, Housing capital allocations 257w
State earnings related pension scheme 599w

Tottenham
Civil disorder 25w, 314w
Police 247w
Public order policing 247w

Tourism
Economic regions 723-4w
Historic Buildings Council 137-8
United Kingdom 178-9w

Tourist boards
Government grants 179w, 230w

Tourist industry
Employment opportunities 137, 143
Government assistance to industry 179w
Manpower 177w
Regional aid 142-3
Ross & Cromarty District Council 138
Scotland 333-4w
Small businesses 180w
Vacancies 137
Vocational guidance 327-8w
Wages councils 143

Town & country planning 266w
Central-local government relations 55w
Local authorities 266w

Town & Country Planning Act 1971 55-6w

Townend, Mr John
Questions
Tourist industry, Small businesses 180w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 32

Toys & games
Safety (09.12.85) 737

Tracey, Mr Richard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sport)
Questions
Ancient monuments, Expenditure 295
Archaeological sites, Cresswell crags 294w
British Lions, South Africa 172w, 262w
Construction, Basildon 258-9w
County Hall 477w
Defective housing, Coventry 295
EC grants & loans, Webbers Yard 171-2w
Ecology, Greater London Council 292w
Emerald Club, Asbestos stripping 297-8w
Fire services, Greater London Council 811w
Football Association 263-4w
General development orders, Public participation in planning 266w
Guildhall, Dartmouth 295w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 810w
Historic buildings, Demolition 281-2
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission, Skilled workers 281
Hypermarkets, Research 808w
Job creation schemes, Brixton 55w
Land pollution, Greater London Council 298-9w
Listed buildings, Architectural conservation 281
Local government expenditure, Greater London Council 298w, 671w
Local government expenditure, Local government reform 297-8w, 671-3w
Local government reform, Consultants 470w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 470w
Local government reform, Greater London Enterprise Board 477-8w
Local government reform, Local government staff 376w
Local government reform, Property transfer 292-3w
Local government reform, Sports Council 261-2w

London Residuary Body 284-5
London Residuary Body, Capital assets 285
London Residuary Body, Training 470w
New towns, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 268w
Old battery, Dartmouth castle 295-6w
Planning appeals 170w
Planning appeals, Administrative delays 169-70w
Planning appeals, Birtenshaw farm 170w
Planning permission 266w
Planning permission, Land use 266w
Planning permission, "Lifting the Burden White Paper" 810w
Planning permission, Planning authorities 171w
Sheltered housing, Portsmouth 266w
Sports sponsorship, Tobacco industry 467w
Sportsgrounds, Closed circuit television 777w
Structure plans, Berkshire 262w
Town & country planning, Central-local government relations 55w

Trade competitiveness
Slaughterhouses 691w

Trade descriptions
Prices 717-8w

Trade union elections
Government grants 185w
Strike ballots 185w
Transport & General Workers Union 153-4

Trade unions
Political levy 186w
Sequestration of assets 426w

Traffic Commissioners 392w

Training 541-2w
Air force 350w
Coal mine closures 89-90w
Community programme 138, 139
Enterprise allowance scheme 146, 184-5w
Local enterprise agencies 187w
London Residuary Body 470w
Management 187w
Manpower Services Commission 610
Motorcycles 108w
Racial discrimination 152
Residuary bodies 470w
Skilled workers 184w, 579w
Unemployment 138-9

Training allowances 131w, 368w, 540-1w
Job start scheme 540-1w
Social security benefits rules 131w
Training opportunities scheme 368w

Training opportunities scheme
Training allowances 368w

Transient people
Procurator Fiscal Service 916
Scotland 916
Trespass 415

Transplant surgery
Bone marrow disorders 605
Human organs 617w
Kidneys 749
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 134w

Transport
Agricultural produce (04.12.85) 312
Buy British 430w
Horticulture (04.12.85) 312
Infrastructure 109-10w
Private investment 109-10w
Procurement 430w

Transport Act 1968 46w

Transport Act 1985 712w

Transport & General Workers Union
Trade union elections 153-4

Transport of Animals
EC law 586w

Transport subsidies
Strathclyde 46w

Transport Users Consultative Committee 108w

Trauma
Medical research 158w
Research finance 158w

Travel
Government grants 391w
Greater Manchester 11-2

Travel concessions
Local government expenditure 303w

Travel restrictions
Buses 772w

Travel-to-work areas
Vacancies 183-4w

Travelling expenses
Economic & Social Committee 203-4w

Travelling people
Dundee District Council 916-7
Scotland 916-7

Treasury
Advertising agencies 768-9w
Equal opportunities 103-4w
Nairobi Conference 103-4w

Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee
Autumn statement 758

"Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee on Autumn Statement" (12.12.85) 1079-164

Treaties
Minimum wage 180w
Tax reform 590-1w

Treaty of Rome 36-7w, 383-4w
European monetary system 36-7w

Tree planting
Caithness 911
Forests 50w
Killin 563-4w
Sites of special scientific interest 267w
Sutherland 911

Trendhart
Inquiries 435w

Trespass
Animal Liberation Front 416
Indictable offences 317w
Transient people 415

Trials
Drug crimes 554-5w
Dunbar, Rony Kevin 555w
Legal costs 769w
Official secrets 277w, 278w, 783-4w

Trident
Design 97w
Nuclear test ban 385w

Trident missiles
Costs 97w
Design 97w, 98w

Trident submarines
Costs 97w
Design 97w, 98w
Nuclear reactors 97-8w

Trippier, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Area manpower boards, Leicester 579-80w
Development of Tourism Act 1969, Companies 180w
Employment opportunities, Local enterprise agencies 144-5
English Tourist Board, Government grants 179w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Companies 184w, 580w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Economic policy 146
Enterprise allowance scheme, Training 146, 184-5w
Foreign tourists, Australia 179w
Hotel & catering industry, Employment opportunities 328w
Hotel & catering industry, Vocational guidance 327-8w
Hotel & catering industry, Youth training scheme 328w
Industrial training, Adult education 176w
Industrial training, Graduates 639w
Local enterprise agencies 142, 143-4, 187w
Local enterprise agencies, Training 187w
Local enterprise agency grant scheme 90-1w
Manpower Services Commission, Adult training strategy 176w
Manpower Services Commission, NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 89-90w
Manpower Services Commission, Open Tech 185w
Pay, Sunday trading 188w
Skilled workers, Confederation of British Industry 579w
Skilled workers, Training 184w
Small businesses 182-3w, 188w
Small businesses, Billing 641w
Small businesses, Bureaucracy 183w, 580-1w
Small businesses, Clubs 145-6
Small businesses, Government assistance to industry 188w
Small businesses, Loan guarantee scheme 192w, 642-4w
Small businesses, Open Tech 185w
Small businesses, Venture capital 183w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Local education authorities 185w
Tourism, Economic regions 723-4w
Tourism, United Kingdom 178-9w
Tourist boards, Government grants 179w, 230w
Tourist industry, Government assistance to industry 179w
Tourist industry, Manpower 177w
Tourist industry, Small businesses 180w
Unemployment 142
Venture capital, Bolton 144
Vocational training, Further education 189w
West Yorkshire Enterprise Board, Local government reform 144
Youth training scheme 181-2w
Youth training scheme, Leeds 641-2w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 182w

Tropical Development & Research Institute 17-8

Trotter, Mr Neville
Debates etc
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 180-3

Trustee savings banks 806w
Judgments 915

Tuberculosis
Death 134-5w
Disease control 395w
Notifiable diseases 135-6w, 140w, 141w, 394-5w
Portsmouth 134-5w, 135-6w
South Tyneside 141w
Vaccination 395-6w, 609w

Tuition fees
Open University 13w, 453w

Turkey
Cotton velvet 17w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Civil Defence College, Local government functions 313w
Transport, Private investment 109-10w

Tyne & Wear Metro
Government grants 244w

Tyre industry
Licensing 392w

Tyre tread depths 110w

Tyres
Motor vehicle safety 110w

Uganda
Peace negotiations 250w

Ulster Defence Regiment 1049
Ashford training centre 96w

Ulster Polytechnic 731w

Ulster Unionists
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1047-9, 1051-2
Northern Ireland Assembly 1052
Northern Ireland government 1063-4

UN agencies
UK contributions 813w

UN Decade for Women 1976-85 33w

UN Relief & Works Agency
UK contributions 21-2w

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1985/86 760
1R (04.12.85) 310

Unemployed
Part-time education 227w
Prescription charges 115-6w
Student grants 227w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 615w

Unemployment 139-40, 141-2, 148, 176w, 177w, 326w, 539w, 721w, 722-3w
Batley 538w
Building industry 264w, 589w
Economic policy 147
Ethnic monitoring 799w
Glanford 86w
Government grants 538w
Gravesham 537w
Job centres 190w
Job start scheme 186w
Lambeth 579w, 799w
North West region 177w
Northern Ireland 1054-5
Northern region 77-8w
Ogmore 613-4
Parliamentary constituencies 327w
Scotland 383w, 689w
Scunthorpe 86w
South Wales 612
Statistics 165w, 368-71w, 383w
Training 138-9
Vacancies 723w
Wales 154-6w, 611, 612, 613, 614
West Midlands 79-80w, 538w
Women 77w

Unemployment benefits
Availability for work 88-9w
Earnings rules 616w
Social security benefits disqualification 89w
Social security benefits rules 89w

UNESCO 3w, 422w, 786w
Civil servants 785w
Ministerial statements (05.12.85) 448-57
Scholarships 785-6w
UK contributions 424, 707-8w, 785w, 786w

Unfair dismissal
Falkland Islands 188-9w

Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Limits of Basic & Special Awards) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 457

Unfair trading practices
Japan 148-9

Uniforms 763-5w
Fire resistant materials 763-5w
Nurses 763-5w

Union of Democratic Mineworkers 759

Unit trusts
Bank of England 806w
Licensing 434w

United Kingdom
Tourism 178-9w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Fast reactors 639w

United Nations
Drug crimes 814w
Namibia 384w
SWAPO 384w
Women 348w

Universities
Higher education 329-30w
Mergers 731w
Northern Ireland 731w
Staff-student ratios 706-7w
Student wastage 449-50w

University College, Aberystwyth 788w

University finance 160w, 567w
Medical education 567-8w
Open University 453w
Scotland 330w
University Grants Committee 161w, 633-5w

University Grants Committee 362-3w
University finance 161w, 633-5w
Veterinary medicine 567w

University of Ulster 731w

University teachers 226w
Conditions of employment 455w, 707w
Pay settlements 704w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speakers rulings & statements (02.12.85) 20, 21, (03.12.85) 139, (05.12.85) 419, (09.12.85) 645, (11.12.85) 909, 918

Uranium
Production 279-80w

Urban development corporations 291, 292-3

Urban development grants 777-8w
Expenditure 374w, 778w
Housing finance 778w
Housing improvement 777-8w

Urban planning
Government grants 374w

Urban programme 264w
Costs 261w
Government grants to local authorities 810w
Music 808w
Planning authorities 778w
Private sector 58w

Urinary system disorders
Aids for handicapped 394w

USA
Anglo-Irish Agreement 728w
Defence research (09.12.85) 623-35
Drug industry 274-5w, 286w
Export controls 168w, 373w
Foreign investment in UK 1055
International trade 168w
Vaccination 817w

USSR
Butter 485w
Embassies 814w
Human rights 367w
Jews 367w, 590w
Nuclear test ban 202w
Prime Minister visits abroad 323w
Religious freedom 636-7w
Sequestration of assets 718-20w

Vacancies
Advertising 132w
Hotel & catering industry 305w, 306w, 329w, 335w
Job centres 178w, 180w
Minimum wage 180w
NHS 132w
Speech therapy 619w
Tourist industry 137
Travel-to-work areas 183-4w
Unemployment 723w
West Midlands 189-90w

Vacant land
Bolton 289-90
Land use 290
Manchester 287
Nationalised industries 290
Public sector 261w
Water authorities 290

Vaccination 817-8w
Cost benefit analysis 609w
Death 818w
Japan 817-9w
Pupils 609w
Tuberculosis 395-6w, 609w
USA 817w
Whooping cough 817-9w, 820w

Vaccine damage tribunals 823w, 824w

Vaccine damaged children
Compensation 822-4w
Pensions 819w

van Straubenzee, Sir William
Questions
Church & state, Church of England 618, 619
Church Commissioners, Expenditure 616-7
Church Commissioners, Finance 616
Church Commissioners, Investment 617-8
Church of England, Inner city areas 299w
Clergy, Divorce 615-6
Clergy, Pay 447-8w
Flats, Construction 448w
Holy Trinity church, Paddington 299w
Redundant churches, Durham 618
Redundant churches, Lincolnshire 618-9
Structure plans, Berkshire 262w
Thames Valley police, Manpower 314w
Youth training scheme 181-2w

VAT
Building alterations 769w
Housing construction 607
Small businesses 591-2w

VAT threshold
Costs 253w
Luxembourg Summit 573-4w

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Debates etc
Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 311

Vauxhall
Road construction 243w
Road traffic 243w

Venture capital 183w
Bolton 144
Local enterprise agencies 183w
Small businesses 183w

Veterinary medicine 567w
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons 567w
University Grants Committee 567w

Veterinary services
Government laboratories 687w
Lasswade 687w, 914

Video piracy
Indonesia 442w
Live Aid 442w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 778
Meat, Hormones (09.12.85) 730-1, 733
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 628
Questions
Take-up of employment, Taxation 147

Violence
Detention centres 645w
Prison staff 645w
SWAPO 384w

Violence on television 421-2w

Viruses
Blood 125w
Scotland 693w

Visas
Argentina 813w
Foreign tourists 311w
Hungary 637w

Vocational education
Architects 788-9w
Educational qualifications 450w
Professional organisations 363w

Vocational guidance
Hotel & catering industry 327-8w, 329w, 334-5w
Tourist industry 327-8w

Vocational training
Further education 189w

Voluntary organisations
Forestry Commission 47w
Greater Manchester 288-9
Health services 612w
Local government reform 612w
Social workers 679-80w
Yorkshire & Humberside 289
Youth training scheme 182w

Voluntary schools
HM Inspectorate of Schools 627w

Voluntary work
Scotland 696-7w

Volunteer Reserve
Civil defence 313w

Vote Office
Speakers rulings & statements (03.12.85) 163

Voting methods
EC reform 419w

Waddilove Committee see Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review

Waddington, Mr David, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Asties, Bob, Entry clearances 651w
Equal opportunities 33w
Equal opportunities, Departmental coordination 33-4w
Equal opportunities, Home Office 34w
Equal Opportunities Commission, Finance 36w
Equal Opportunities Commission, Manpower 36w
Fasih, Mohammed, Political refugees 794w
Foreign tourists, Air fares 25-6w
Hijacking, Stansted Airport 32-3w
Immigrant detainees, Members correspondence 792w
Immigrants fiancees, Temporary immigrants 583w
Immigration, Civil service unions 26w
Immigration, Members correspondence 310-1w
Immigration controls, Bangladesh 460-1w
Immigration controls, Interviews 462w
Immigration controls, Pakistan 357w
Immigration controls, Temporary immigrants 462w, 581w
Immigration rules 581w
Members correspondence 36w
Political refugees, Administrative delays 794w
Racial discrimination, Government contracts 164-5w
Racial discrimination, Young people 164w
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 410
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86, Sunday trading 309w
Sunday trading 410-1
Sunday trading, Police 309w
Sunday trading, Small businesses 411
SWAPO, Kaukungua, Shapua 357w
UN Decade for Women 1976/85 33w
Visas, Foreign tourists 311w

Wages councils
Employment opportunities 180w
Part-time employment 228w
Tourist industry 143
Women 180w
Womens employment 228w

Wages Inspectorate
Foreign languages 539w
Manpower 538-9w, 640w
Prosecutions 188w

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Questions
Child benefit 605w
Economic situation, Interest rates 148
Unemployment 140
Unemployment, Job start scheme 186w
Youth training scheme, Government grants 541w

Waiting lists
Driving tests 7
Kidney donor cards 749
Occupational therapy 137w

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Minister of State for the Environment (Countryside & Local Government)*
Questions
EC Environment Council 259w
Environmental Pollution Royal Commission 294-5w
Liverpool City Council, Local government finance 264w
Local government borrowing 267-8w
Local government expenditure, Publicity 257-8w
Local Government Practices & Procedures Inquiry 379w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land acquisition 375-6w
Marine nature reserves 258w
National parks 296-7
Norfolk broads 297
Norfolk broads, Hybrid Bills 471w
Ports, Maryport Harbour 291
Rate support grants, Local authorities 172w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Finance 469w

Walden, Mr George, *Under-Secretary of State for Education & Science*
Questions
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Agricultural research 790w
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Expenditure 790-1w
Agricultural & Food Research Council, Public appointments 790w
Brain drain 226-7w
CERN, UK contributions 450w
Educational buildings, Property transfer 449w
Handicapped students, Student grants 284w
Higher education, Education & industry 157w
Initial teacher training, Student numbers 450-4w
Mandatory student grants 159w
Mandatory student grants, Cost of living 226w
Mandatory student grants, Costs 226w
Medical Research Council 789w
Occupational therapy, Student numbers 11-3w
Open University, Student numbers 13w, 453w
Open University, Tuition fees 13w, 453w
Open University, University finance 453w
Overseas students, Welsh plant breeding station 788w
Polytechnics, Educational finance 159-62w
Polytechnics, Government grants 11w
Science & technology research, Government grants 225w
Social work, National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education 227w
Student grants 453-4w
Student grants, Married people 284w
Trauma, Medical research 158w
Universities, Student wastage 449-50w
University finance 160w
University finance, University Grants Committee 161w
University teachers 226w
Vocational education, Architects 788-9w
Welsh plant breeding station, Agricultural research 789-90w
Welsh plant breeding station, Conditions of employment 791w

Wales
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 192-3w
Ambulance services 40w
Animal husbandry 42w
Bone marrow disorders 605
Capital investment 609, 654-6w
Chemists shops 446w
Civil defence 246w
Coal mine closures 610
Coal stocks 571w
Coking coal 606-7
Company liquidations 447w
Council housing 571w
District health authorities 154w
Ear disorders 445w
Economic growth 612-3, 614
Health services 444w
Hospital beds 42w
Hospital patients 605
Hospitals 42w, 44w
Hotel & catering industry 305w
Housing capital allocations 608-9
Housing Corporation 155w
Housing Defects Act 1984 446w
Housing finance 305w
Infant mortality 572w
Kidney machines 446w
Libraries 353w
Literacy 39w
Local enterprise agency grant scheme 612-3
Local government expenditure 230w
Local government finance 608-9
Local government staff 230w
Marriage (06.12.85) 531
Motorways 572w
National Coal Board 447w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 609-10
NHS 40w
NHS finance 43w, 444w, 606, 614-5
Nurses training 605-6
Pigs 445w
Planning appeals 155-7w
Planning authorities 155-7w, 607
Prescriptions 699-700w
Public expenditure 605
Quangos 232w
Refuse disposal 39-40w
Rent arrears 59-60w
Road works 444w
Severe weather payments 230-1w, 699w
Social security recipients 617w
Special schools 447w
Surgery 445w
Unemployment 154-6w, 611, 612, 613, 614
Water charges 572w
Youth unemployment 612

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 61-8
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 1000
Questions
Business statement 1067
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 693w
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 907-8
Lord Advocate 915-6
Nuclear weapons, Injuries 317w
Severe weather payments, Tayside 914

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Hillsborough 731w

Walker, Leo 463-4w

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, *Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 767-79, 781-2, 840
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Energy 359-60w
Advertising agencies, Dept of Energy 749w
British Gas Corporation, External financing limits 291w
British Gas Corporation, Licensing 426w
Dept of Energy, Public appointments 166-7w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Energy 166w, 167-8w
Weather modification, Air pollution 6w

Wall, Sir Patrick
Questions
International organisations, UK contributions 37-8w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Bill, 2R (02.12.85) 36
European Council (05.12.85) 437

Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 626
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 729w
Citizens band radio, Scotland 563w
EC Environment Council 259w
Fast reactors 359w
Hip replacements, Scotland 563w
List D schools, Scotland 903
Lord Advocate, Judgments 915
Prime Minister 166w
Prime Minister official engagements 324w, 574w
Rates & rating, Scotland 688-9w
Severe weather payments 603w
Strategic defence initiative, Technical assistance 811-2w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Fast reactors 639w
Vacancies, Travel-to-work areas 183-4w

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 218, 232, 238
Questions
Cycling, Road safety 106w

Walsall
Supplementary benefits 345-6w

Walters, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 309

Waltham Forest
Housing investment programmes 809w
Private rented housing 809w
Supplementary benefits 615w

War Cabinet 165w, 572-3w
Official secrets 572-3w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Police relations with public, Criminal investigation 411

Wardair
Air routes 243-4w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc
Electrical safety, Domestic electrical appliances (06.12.85) 588-92
Questions
Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate 3w
Local government finance, Wales 608-9
Wines, Austria 268-9w

Wardle, Mr Charles
Questions
Probation & aftercare 795w
Tourist industry, Manpower 177w

Wareing, Robert N
Debates etc
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 939, 990
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1210
Questions
Crime, Merseyside 311w

Warning signs
Closed circuit television 6-7
Motorways 111-2w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1248-50
Strategic defence initiative (09.12.85) 628-9
Questions
Strategic defence initiative, Technical assistance 98w
Strategic defence initiative, Technology transfer 98w

Warships (04.12.85) 311

Waste disposal
Greater London 376w
Hazardous wastes 549-50w, 588w
Local government reform 376-7w, 470-1w, 471-2w
Newham 470-1w
Orders & regulations 376w
Sea pollution 100w
Seas & oceans 588w
West Yorkshire 471-2w

Water authorities
Capital investment 59w
Civil defence 299w
External financing limits 58-9w
Loans 59w
Privatisation 466w, 551w
Public inquiries 551w
Vacant land 290
Water pollution 263w, 466w
Water supply 171w

Water charges 56w, (04.12.85) 311
Wales 572w
Yorkshire Water Authority 58w

Water meters 258w, 668w
Legislation 668-9w

Water pollution 466w
EC law 171w
Refuse disposal 39-40w
Water authorities 263w, 466w

Water supply
Bye laws 466w
EC law 59w
Nitrates 59w, 263w
Sanitation 466w
Water authorities 171w

Watson, Mr John
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (03.12.85) 219-22, 228, 234-5
Questions
Settle to Carlisle railway line 108w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
British Airports Authority, Income 585-6w
Buses, Motor vehicle safety 659w
Buses, Road accidents 659-60w
Companies, Criminal investigation 463-4w
Heating allowances, Pensioners 753
Local government finance, Liverpool City Council 22
Raw materials imports, Exchange rates 1060
Road safety, Buses 109w
Trendhart, Inquiries 435w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 810w

Weather modification
Air pollution 6w, 205w
Research 205w

Webbers Yard 171-2w
EC grants & loans 171-2w

Weedon
Bridges 296w

Weekly Information Bulletin 619
Costs 619

Weetch, Mr Ken
Questions
Dental charges 755-6w
Dentistry, Appeals 682-3w
Dentistry, Dental charges 753w
Dentistry, Hospital waiting lists 753w
Regional health authorities, Housing 603-4w

Weights & Measures Act 1963 (Various Foods) (Amendment No 2) Order 1985 (05.12.85) 522

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 926-7
UNESCO (05.12.85) 451
Questions
Air force, Disaster relief 16

Wells, Sir John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (09.12.85) 660, 680-2
Horticultural Produce Bill, 1R (04.12.85) 312
Sugar, EC action (02.12.85) 110

Welsh, Mr Michael
Questions
Motorways, Repairs & maintenance 391w
Public transport, Government grants 109w
Public transport, South Yorkshire 391w
Training opportunities scheme, Training allowances 368w
Unemployment 176w

Welsh Association of District Councils 608-9

Welsh Development Agency
Expenditure 445w

Welsh fourth channel 796-7w

Welsh Joint Education Committee 608

Welsh language 40-1w, 608
Languages education 608
Post Office 285-6w

Welsh Office
Advertising 353w
Equal opportunities 42-3w, 43-4w
Government grants 699w
Nairobi Conference 42-3w, 43-4w
Planning authorities 607-8
Public appointments 41w

Welsh plant breeding station 788w, 789-90w, 790-1w
Agricultural research 789-90w
Conditions of employment 791w
Overseas students 788w

Welwyn Hatfield 579w

West Derbyshire District Council 670w
Derelict land 670w
Land reclamation 670w

West Lothian Hospital 911-2
Construction 911-2
Health services finance 912
Paediatrics 911-2
Teaching hospitals 912

West Midlands
Supplementary benefits 345-6w
Unemployment 79-80w, 538w
Vacancies 189-90w

West Midlands County Council 286-7w, 297-8w
Export promotion 286-7w

West Norfolk & Wisbech Health Authority 490w

West Sussex
Sites of special scientific interest 469w

West Yorkshire
Nursing homes 403w
Old peoples homes 403w
Waste disposal 471-2w

West Yorkshire County Council 297-8w

West Yorkshire Enterprise Board
Local government reform 144

West, Harry 4w
Members correspondence 4w

Western Europe
Employment opportunities 147-8

Western Isles
Exercise Brave Defender 780w

Westland Helicopters 150, (03.12.85) 164, 438w, 545w
Defence contracts 545w
Government assistance to industry 150, 438w
Standing Order No 10 applications (03.12.85) 164

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
Employment, EC countries 799-800w
Land use, Land Registry Office 775w
Tenants cooperatives, Right to buy 779w

White, Mr James
Questions
Consolidation Bills 655-6w

Whitney, Mr Ray, Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security
Debates etc

St. Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead (12.12.85) 1184-6
Questions
Acute beds, Hampshire 148w
Advertising, Dept of Health & Social Security 402w
Alternative medicine, Dept of Health & Social Security 596-7w
Alternative medicine, Licensing 595-6w, 597w
Alternative medicine, Ministerial advisory bodies 596w
Ambulance services, Driving instruction 614w
Ambulance services, Overtime 604w
Antismoking campaign 600w
Antismoking campaign, Government grants 396w
Antismoking campaign, Opinion surveys 270w
Antismoking campaign, Young people 816-7w
Aspartame, Epilepsy 685w
Birth rate, Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 605-6w
Blood, Imports 125w
Blood products laboratory, Finance 393-4w
Cancer, Health Education Council 493-4w
Cancer, Medical research 345w
Cancer, Medical treatments 751-2
Cancer, Patients 751
Cancer, Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 344-5w
Cervical cancer, Death 401w
Cervical cancer, Testing 614-5w
Children, Nutrition & Health 610-1w
Children in care, Cruelty to children 618-20w
Childrens hospitals, Wrightington Hospital 598w
Community health services 600w
Community health services, District health authorities 400w
Congenital abnormalities 608w
Coronary bypass operations 602w, 678w
Coronary bypass operations, Death rate 678w
Coronary bypass operations, Hospital waiting lists 602w
Cot deaths 820-1w
Cruelty to children 275-6w
Cruelty to children, Child safety 752w
Cruelty to children, Health services 606-7w
Cruelty to children, Information 496w
Cruelty to children, Local government social services 763w
Cruelty to children, Personal records 275w
Cruelty to Children, Social Services Inspectorate 496w
Dentistry, Hospital waiting lists 753w
District health authorities, Economic planning 399w
District health authorities, Hospital beds 133w
District health authorities, Hospitals 133w
Drug abuse, Acupuncture 339w
Drug rehabilitation centres, Hemel Hempstead 610w
Dysentery 682w
Educational health services 611w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Health & Social Security 534-5w
Government grants, Interest groups 132-3w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Action on Smoking & Health 116w
Handicapped children, Blind 685w
Health Education Council, Antismoking campaign 116-7w
Health Education Council, Finance 494w
Health Service Commissioner, Disclosure of information 682w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985" 142w, 497w, 498w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985", Costs 142w, 497-8w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985", HMSO 497w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985," Production 497w
"Health Service in England Annual Report, 1985", Press releases 498w
Health service staff, Manpower 612w
Health service staff Pay 613w, 679w
Health service staff, Speech therapy 619w
Health services, Voluntary organisations 612w
"Health & Personal Social Services Statistics, England" 212w
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 602w, 610w
Hip replacements, Surgery 610w
Hospital admissions 686w
Hospital bed occupancy rates, NHS 601w
Hospital catering, Margarine 616w
Hospital closures, Mental hospitals 128w, 144-5w
Hospital closures, Research 144w
Hospital patients, Research 612w
Hospital waiting lists 396w
Hospital waiting lists, Consultants 401w
Hospital waiting lists, Out-patients 491w
Hospital waiting lists, Regional health authorities 753-4w
Hospital waiting lists, Wolverhampton Health Authority 754w
Hospitals, Capital investment 756-8w
Hospitals, Construction 404-8w
Households, Population 758w
Hypothermia, Health education 134w
Infant mortality, Leeds Eastern Health Authority 130w
Infant mortality, Leeds Western Health Authority 620w
Injuries, Death 211w
Kent University, Personal social services research unit 145-7w, 534w
Kidney donor cards, Computer applications 749
Kidney failure, Death 533-4w
Kidney patients, Death 533-4w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 678w, 748-9
Kidneys, Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 134w
Kidneys, Transplant surgery 749
Local government social services, Community care 746
Local government social services, Government grants to voluntary organisations 617w
Medical research, Cholesterol 128w
Mental health community care, Day centres 143-4w
Mental health community care, Expenditure 602w
"Mental Health Community Care Government Response" 598w
Mental hospitals, Child patients 758-64w
Mental illness, NHS Health Advisory Service 144w
Mental patients, Young people 212-22w
Mentally ill, Expenditure 143w
NHS, Capital investment 613w, 614w
NHS, Efficiency scrutinies 825-6w
NHS, Energy conservation 603w
NHS, Expenditure 598w
NHS, House purchase 399w
NHS, Housing 403w
NHS, Property transfer 143w
NHS, Rented housing 399w
NHS, Tenants 399-400w
NHS, Vacancies 132w
NHS finance, Capital investment 754-5w
Occupational therapists, Local government social services 138-40w
Occupational therapists, Manpower 137-8w
Occupational therapy, Waiting lists 137w
One parent families, Mothers 127w
Parliamentary constituencies, Hampshire 464-5w
Population, Hampshire 399w
Population, South East region 758w
Prescription drugs, Smoking 763w
Property transfer, NHS 606w
Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth 211w
Regional health authorities, Cost effectiveness 597-8w
Regional health authorities, Secure psychiatric units 117-8w
Regional health authorities, Surplus land 606w
Registered homes, Portsmouth 495w
Registered Homes Act 1984, Elderly 495w
"Review of Child Care Consultation Paper" 275w
Road accidents, Death 404w
Road accidents, Hampshire 133w
Scoliosis, Greater London 491-2w
Smoking, Young people 824-5w
Social workers 680w
Social workers, Educational qualifications 679-80w
Social workers training, Bolton 617-8w
Social workers training, Child care 752-3w
Special health authorities 407-18w
Speech therapy, Manpower 620w
Speech therapy, Professional qualifications 765-6w
Speech therapy, Regional health authorities 136w
Speech therapy, Teachers 621w
Speech therapy, Vacancies 619w
Surgery, Medical research 766w
Tobacco, Advertising controls 817w
Tobacco advertising 683w
Tobacco advertising, Health warnings 394w
Transplant surgery, Human organs 617w
Tuberculosis, Death 134-5w
Tuberculosis, Disease control 395w
Tuberculosis, Notifiable diseases 135-6w, 140w, 141w, 394-5w
Tuberculosis, Vaccination 395-6w, 609w
Urinary system disorders, Aids for handicapped 394w
Vaccination 817-8w
Vaccination, Pupils 609w
Vaccine damage tribunals 824w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 822-4w
Vaccine damaged children, Pensions 819w
West Yorkshire, Nursing homes 403w
West Yorkshire, Old peoples homes 403w
Whooping cough, Death 820w
Whooping cough, Hospital admissions 819-20w
Whooping cough, Vaccination 817-20w
World Health Organisation, Health surveys 148w

Whooping cough 817-9w, 819-20w
Death 820w
Hospital admissions 819-20w
Publicity 820w
Vaccination 817-9w, 820w

Widdicombe Committee see Local Government Practices & Procedures Inquiry

Widows
Maternity benefits 1064
Supplementary benefits 1064

Widows benefits
Clergy 615-6

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Questions
Civil Aviation Authority, Fees & charges 245w
Civil Aviation Authority, Meteorology 430w
Meteorological Office 279w, 546w, 547w
Meteorological Office, Costs 279w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Wales 192-3w
Ambulance services, Wales 40w
Cardiff Prison, Prison accommodation 320w
Citizens band radio, Standardisation 14w
District health authorities, Wales 154w
Drug abuse, Gwynedd 39w
Felinheli bypass, Road construction 41-2w
Food Act 1984, Slaughterhouses 479-80w
Handicapped, Access to buildings 346w
Handicapped workers, Manpower 81w
Housing & elderly, Arfon 155w
Housing Corporation, Wales 155w
Literacy, Wales 39w

Local government expenditure, Wales 230w
Local government staff, Wales 230w
Mental health services, Gwynedd 446-7w
NHS, Wales 40w
Planning appeals, Wales 155-7w
Post office, Welsh language 285-6w
Refuse disposal, Wales 39-40w
Special educational needs, Expenditure 223w
Special schools, Wales 447w
Unemployment, Wales 154-6w
Urinary system disorders, Aids for handicapped 394w
Welsh language 40-1w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 258w, 259w, 469w
Finance 469w

Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985
Forestry Commission 459w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 770-1
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 172
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1227-31, 1236, 1237
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 1003
Parliamentary papers (13.12.85) 1211
Severn bridge (13.12.85) 1205-6
Severn bridge, Standing Order No 10 applications (12.12.85) 1078
Written questions, Government grants (11.12.85) 921
Questions
Employment opportunities, Government grants 19-20w, 287-91w
Employment schemes, Government grants 439-42w
Morriston Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 447w

Wilson, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Fuel bills (04.12.85) 400-2, 403, 405, 406
Gas Bill, 2R (10.12.85) 776, 782, 794, 822-6, 845
Questions
Bank of England, Unit trusts 806w
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 909
List D schools, Scotland 902-3
North Sea, Offshore supply vessels 300-1w
Social fund, Scotland 753
Trustee savings banks 806w

Wines
Agricultural surpluses 486w
Austria 268-9w
Diethylene glycol 483w
Poisoning 268-9w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (11.12.85) 922
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 959-60, 990
Members interests (10.12.85) 762
Private notice question intervention (02.12.85) 21
Temporary immigrants, Members correspondence (04.12.85) 306
UNESCO (05.12.85) 454
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Border security in Ireland 1053
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ministerial speeches 301
Business statement 1075
Church & state, Church of England 618
Church of England, Inner city areas 152-3
Council housing, Building repairs 293-4
Employment schemes 325-6w
Heating allowances, Low pay 752
Heating allowances, Social security benefits rules 346w
Supplementary benefits, West Midlands 345-6w
Unemployment 326w
Unemployment, West Midlands 79-80w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
El Salvador, International Planned Parenthood Federation 361-2w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Abortion 361w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Government grants 361w, 362w
Pharmacists, Hospitals 147-52w
Sunday trading, Small businesses 411

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Clothing, Prices 85-6w
Clothing industry, Employment 229w
Clothing industry, Employment level 229-30w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 286
Government grants, Interest groups 132-3w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Action on Smoking & Health 116w
Health Education Council, Antismoking campaign 116-7w
Manufacturing industries 15-6w
Manufacturing industries, EC countries 233-42w
Manufacturing industries, Manufactured exports 169w
Manufacturing industries, Public investment 241w
Public houses, Licensing hours 32w
SWAPO, Immigrant detainees 357w
SWAPO, Kaukungua, Shapua 357w
SWAPO, Peace negotiations 384w
SWAPO, United Nations 384w
SWAPO, Violence 384w
Tax thresholds 148-9
Textile industry, Capital investment 16-8w
Textile industry, Manpower 85w, 191-2w
Textiles, EC trade 16w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Industry Year 1986 (13.12.85) 1232, 1250-2

Wolverhampton
Child benefit 273w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 272-4w

Wolverhampton District Council 669-70w
Government grants to local authorities 669-70w

Wolverhampton Health Authority 754w
Hospital waiting lists 754w

Women
Agricultural production 23w
Community programme 181w
Crime victims 316w
Crimes of violence 583w
Diplomatic service 348w
Employment statistics 167w
Health surveys 148w
Homelessness 25w
Industrial health & safety 82-3w
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless 25w
Overseas aid 23w
Public appointments 17w, 41w
Refugees 24w
Textile industry 187-8w
Unemployment 77w
United Nations 348w
Wages councils 180w

Womens employment
Statistics 18-9w, 82w
Wages councils 228w
Working hours 145

Wood
Industries (02.12.85) 128-36

Wood, Mr Timothy
Debates etc
Social Security (Contributions Rerating) Order 1985 (12.12.85) 1176
Questions
NHS, Procurement 402w
Taxation, Stocks & shares 806w
Youth training scheme 182w

Woodcock, Mr Mike
Questions
British Telecom, Shareholders 718w

Woolwich
Road traffic 301w

Woolwich ferry 301w

Woolwich Prison 294w, 319-20w
Construction 320w
Land pollution 294w
Prison accommodation 319-20w
Prison staff 320w

Work experience programme
Pupils 705w

Working hours
Conditions of employment 145
Womens employment 145

World Bank
Rain forests 22w

World Health Organisation
Health surveys 148w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.12.85) 1104-9, 1114
Industrial development, Northern region (03.12.85) 176-80

Wrightington Hospital 598w
Childrens hospitals 598w

Written questions
Speakers rulings & statements (11.12.85) 921

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1047-9
Oil prices, Balance of payments 757-8
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 599w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Carpet industry 437w
Housing investment programmes 552w
Regional aid 717w
Regional development grants 19w, 716-7w
Regional selective assistance 19w
Voluntary organisations 289

Yorkshire Water Authority 58w, 100w
Capital investment 58w
Debts 58w
Water charges 58w

Young, Mr David
Debates etc
European Communities (Spanish & Portuguese Accession) Bill (HL), 2R (04.12.85) 319, 342-3
Questions
AIDS 766w
AIDS, Mersey Regional Health Authority 494w
AIDS, Notifiable diseases 494w
Blood diseases, AIDS 616w
Cruelty to children, Information 496w
Cruelty to children, Social Services Inspectorate 496w
Gibraltar, Dockyards 38w
Gibraltar, Pensions 38w, 448w
Lorries, Spray Suppression 111w
Magistrates, Bolton 2w
Road accidents, Motorways 111w
Social workers training, Bolton 617-8w
Warning signs, Motorways 111-2w

Young, Sir George, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc
Defective housing (06.12.85) 601-4
Inner city areas (11.12.85) 948
Questions
Building industry, Employment 468w
Building industry, Unemployment 264w
Canary Wharf, Employment opportunities 262-3w

Canary Wharf, Environmental impact assessment 262w
Canary Wharf, Industrial development 263w
Catering, Equipment 296w
Cement, Industrial production 552w
Council house rents, Rent arrears 59-60w, 263w, 468w
Council house sales, Council tenants 257w
Council house sales, Norwich 257w
Council housing, Housing standards 55w, 260w
Council housing, Nottingham City Council 552-3w
Council housing, Repairs & Maintenance 469w
Council housing, Tenants cooperatives 296
Derelict land, Greater London 262w
Derelict land, Inner city areas 262w
Derelict land, Land reclamation 374w
Derelict land, West Derbyshire District Council 670w
Disabled Persons Act 1981 779w
Empty housing, Hampshire 64w
Empty housing, Kirklees District Council 468-9w
Ethnic minorities, Music 808w
Falkland Islands, Government contracts 298
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Local government reform 288-9
Handicapped, Access to buildings 346w
Homelessness, Government grants to local authorities 257w
House prices 776w
House prices, Price increases 775-6w
House renovation grants 296w
House renovation grants, Building repairs 171w
Housing, Capital investment 669w
Housing, Hampshire 469-70w
Housing associations, Management techniques 259-60w
Housing construction, Inner city areas 778w
Housing estates, Salford 777-8w
Housing estates, Salford City Council 777w
Housing improvement, Local government expenditure 260w
Housing improvement, Local government reform 377w
Housing improvement, Salford City Council 778w
Housing investment programmes, Lambeth 374-5w
Housing investment programmes, Waltham Forest 809w
Housing investment programmes, Yorkshire & Humberside 552w
Housing policy 171w
Housing starts, Leicester 260w
Housing subsidies, Lambeth 775w
Inner city areas, Government grants to local authorities 264w
Inner city areas, Nursery schools 550w
Insulation grants 264w, 808-9w
Land use, Land Registry Office 775w
Local government finance, Council house sales 467w
Local government property, Greater London Council 377w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Expenditure 60w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land acquisition 375w
Private rented housing 171w
Private rented housing, Housing stock 57w
Private rented housing, Judgments 57w
Private rented housing, Rent control 56-7w
Property Services Agency, Industrial health & safety 779-80w
Public participation in planning, Canary Wharf 470-1w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 477w
Regional aid, Glanford 59w
Rented housing, Bradford 172w
Resident landlords, Private rented housing 56w
Tenants cooperatives, Right to buy 779w
Urban development grants, Expenditure 374w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 810w
Urban programme, Planning authorities 778w
Urban programme, Private sector 58w
Woolwich Prison, Land pollution 294w

Young offenders
Borstals 307w
Detention centres 645w
Habitual offenders 307-8w
Youth custody 307w

Young people (04.12.85) 309
Antismoking campaign 816-7w
Contraceptives 597w
Crimes of violence (06.12.85) 533-87
Employment discrimination 164w
Further education 161w
Housing benefits 131-2w
Mental patients 212-22w
Oral contraceptives 339w
Private Members motions (06.12.85) 533-87
Racial discrimination 164w
Rent allowances 131w
Smoking 797w, 824-5w
Smoking related diseases 824-5w
Social security benefits rules 130w
Special educational needs 161w
Supplementary benefits 131w
Tobacco 807w

Younger, Rt Hon George, *Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Rate support grants, Scotland (03.12.85) 155-63
Questions
Advertising, Scottish Office 382w
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 688w
Agricultural research 744-5w
Cancer hazards, Rosyth 797w
Cemeteries, Scotland 50w
Drugs, Scotland 797-8w
"Future Strategy for Higher Education in Scotland" 459-60w
Gartcosh Steelworks, Factory closures 690w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Scotland 380w
Housing associations, Scotland 692w
Housing support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 330-4w
Iron & steel industry, British Steel Corporation 910
Iron & steel industry, Gartcosh 908-9, 910
Iron & steel industry, Manufactured goods 906-7
Iron & steel industry, Ravenscraig Steelworks 906
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 565w, 906, 907
Iron & steel industry, Scottish Affairs Select Committee 907-8, 909, 910
Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985 566-7w
Legionnaires disease, Scotland 256w
Ministers domestic visits, Gartcosh 907
Nuclear power stations, Scotland 747-9w
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 330w
Regional selective assistance, Rutherglen 380w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 379-80w
Rural planning, Scotland 687w
Scottish health boards, Expenditure 745-6w
Scottish Office, Expenditure 560-4w
Scottish Transport Group, Government grants 697-8w
Senile dementia, Scotland 256w
Severe weather payments, Crofting 915
Severe weather payments, Scotland 743-4w, 913-4, 915
Severe weather payments, Tayside 914
Severe weather payments, Tenant farmers 914-5
Teachers, Scotland 687w, 688w, 903-4, 905
Unemployment, Scotland 689w
Veterinary services, Lasswade 914
Youth unemployment 689w

Youth custody 645w
Young offenders 307w

Youth employment 326-7w
Hotel & catering industry 328w

Youth training scheme 181-2w
Civil service 542w
Ethnic groups 641-2w
Finance 182w
Government grants 541w
Hotel & catering industry 305w, 306w, 328w, 335w
Leeds 641-2w
Voluntary organisations 182w

Youth unemployment 689w
Lothian 689w
Wales 612